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Latina/o Students In Community College: Institutional Actions And Persistence

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LATINA/O STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE:
INSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS AND PERSISTENCE

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2022

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my little bird and my remarkable husband and best friend. You two are my heroes, every day. I love you, always.

LATINA/O STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE:
INSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS AND PERSISTENCE

by

YVETTE V. HUERTA, MA

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the institutional actions related to Latina/o student success at a two-year institution in the southwest on the United States-Mexico border. Research has shown that institutional actions play a role in student persistence and completion and thus contribute to student success outcomes. Determining the institutional actions that contribute to student success will add to the limited higher education Latina/o research on institutional factors and provide information to community college leaders to improve student outcomes. The study examines three institutional actions and their relationship with three student persistence and achievement efforts.

Keywords: *Latina/o*, student persistence, institutional actions, institutional agents, institutional factors, institutional characteristics, institutional practice, institutional strategies.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine the institutional actions related to Latina/o student persistence at El Paso Community College, a two-year institution located in the southwest on the United States-Mexico border. Much research on student attrition and student persistence has been conducted among traditional college students, that is, full-time students residing on campus (Bean & Metzner, 1984; Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 1975, 1993; Webb, 1989). However, there is relatively less research on student attrition and persistence at two-year institutions which serve the majority of low-income, ethnic minority, and nontraditional college students (McCallen & Johnson, 2019). There is also little research on the types of institutional actions that yield positive student outcomes for nontraditional students related to their college-going experiences (Arbona & Nora, 2007). Moreover, research limitations exist in exploring Latina/o community college students and the relationship between the institutional actions that can influence student persistence in a two-year community college (Bailey et al., 2005, Bailey et al., 2006; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Jenkins, 2007). This paper will use the term *Latina/o* to refer to a majority minority group “that are experiencing the greatest achievement gaps as measured by traditional educational indicators such as attainment of” a community college degree or certificate of completion (i.e., Associate of Arts, Associate of Sciences, Associate of Applied Arts, and certificates) (Bensimon, 2005).

Background of the Problem

Student attrition and persistence are widely researched concepts in higher education (Bean & Metzner, 1984; Kuh, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979; Tinto, 1975, 1993). Yet few research studies explain what institutional actions influence community college student persistence (Bailey et al., 2015; Edenfield & McBrayer, 2020). Much of the research has focused

on four-year university students and their pre-entry characteristics (Brunsden et al., 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Tinto, 1975, 1993). Historically, the central focus of the research was on the individual and the attributes or background traits students bring with them when they enter four-year institutions (such as race, academic aptitude, family history, economic status) (Attinasi, 1989; Brunsden et al., 2000). Research that explores community colleges and aims to understand the institutional actions that lead to student success for nontraditional students is relatively more recent and scarcer to locate (Bailey et al., 2005; Bailey et al., 2015; Edenfield & McBrayer, 2020; Jenkins et al., 2006; Nora & Crisp, 2009).

Not understanding community college Latina/o student attrition and persistence, researchers miss opportunities to understand the institutional factors that impact student success outcomes for Latina/o students. Research on higher education has found that student success outcomes are influenced by many personal and exogenous factors (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Tinto, 1972, 1993, 2004). Prior and current research has found that a student's "family background continues to be a significant determinant of college access and success" (McCallen & Johnson, 2019, p. 1). Tinto's integration model (1975), which will be highlighted in the literature review, linked student persistence to formal and informal academic experiences and to the social integration that occurred at school. He postulated that social and academic integration led to a greater commitment to persist (1975, 1993). Astin (1984) examined the theory of student involvement and the active role the student takes in their own learning. Yet, there are also social, economic, and environmental factors impacting student persistence as noted by Arbona (2003), Arbona and Nora (2007), Astin (1984), Jabbar et al. (2019), Pascarella and Chapman (1983), and Pascarella and Terenzini (1983). The work of Stanton-Salazar (1997) examined the role of institutional agents in relation to Latina/o students. The term he used to explain the role of

teachers and counselors in relation to minority students is coined “institutional agents”, derived from a sociological term to explain the resources and knowledge of individuals to promote positive outcomes for Latina/o students (Bensimon et al., 2019; Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Moreover, the external factors impacting student persistence may be a direct consequence of the student’s socioeconomic status, employment, or familial responsibilities (Jabbar et al., 2019). For Latina/o students, the combination of all of these factors can contribute to their decision to stop out or drop out of college altogether (Michel & Durdella, 2019).

Additionally, there are factors within the institution that impact student success outcomes (Bensimon et al., 2019). These features can include the characteristics and organizational structure of the community college such as practices in policy design, program implementation, and management (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Bailey, 2006; Bailey et al., 2015; Bensimon, 2005; Edenfield & McBrayer, 2020; Lei, 2016). The institutional structures, policies, and practices, whether academic or non-academic (e.g., class schedules, office hours, advising experiences, faculty roles) can affect a student’s academic goals and make all the difference as to whether the student persists (Arbona, 2003; Arbona & Nora, 2007; Astin, 1984; Bailey et al., 2015; Herrera et al., 2017). Various research studies report that community college students lag behind upon entry and many students fail to complete their objectives (Bensimon, 2005; Karp & Bork, 2012; Nora & Crisp, 2009). Many community colleges are unable to graduate their students even eight years after their initial enrollment (Itzkowitz, 2019). Thus, research investigating the institutional actions that community colleges take is needed for Latina/o students to improve student success outcomes (Bailey et al., 2015; McCallen & Johnson, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Research has demonstrated that completion at two-year institutions is low, more so for Latina/o students (Bailey et al., 2015; Itzkowitz, 2019; Jabbar et al., 2019; McCallen & Johnson, 2019). With over 80% of students entering community colleges expressing intent to transfer to a four-year institution, about 25% do so within five years (McCallen & Johnson, 2019). As for community college students fixed on completing their associate's degree or a certificate, less than half do (Bailey et al., 2015; Itzkowitz, 2019). Research on Latina/o community college students is needed as they are the largest minority group pursuing higher education across the nation (Jabbar et al., 2019; Martinez et al., 2017; Peña & Rhoads, 2019). Latina/o students are more likely than other ethnic groups to begin higher education at two-year institutions and to be first-generation college students (Martinez, et al., 2017; McCallen & Johnson, 2019; Peña & Rhoads, 2019). Moreover, Latina/o students are the least educated group in the United States, less likely than other children to attend preschool, and more likely to drop out of high school (Nora & Crisp, 2009).

Much research on higher education has focused on a picturesque image of the college-goer enrolled at a four-year private institution. Historically, to understand student attrition, traditional “middle- or upper-class White individuals aged 18-24 attending college full-time away from home---and who have college-educated parents” (McCallen & Johnson, 2019, p. 1) have been examined (Stevens, 2015). Yet, the traditional college student has become a smaller and smaller minority (Deil-Amen, 2015; Edgecombe, 2019). The landscape has changed, and the student demographic is a lot more ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Edgecombe, 2019; Sáenz et al., 2011). A response to this change in the student population is the idea of *demography as opportunity*: “a simple idea grounded in a commitment

to affirm the worth of the students who attend community colleges by being responsive to their life circumstances” (Edgecombe, 2019, p. 6). This is a significant concept given the forecast that the United States will be a majority minority by 2045. To improve student success, it is essential that institutional leaders consider programs, policies, and procedures that represent the new demography (Edenfield & McBrayer, 2020). Thus, my research is framed around the central principle of demography as opportunity, as it looks to strengthen community college goers by investing in them. This idea also dispels deficit orientations toward the populations community colleges enroll (Edgecombe, 2019, p. 6)

Demography as opportunity can prove helpful to institutions serving Latina/o students and add to the higher education research literature that examines institutional actions across community college settings that are equity-minded. This type of grounded research can offer recommendations for improving student success outcomes through asset-and strength-based institutional policy and organizational, structural, and programmatic practice (Bensimon, 2005; Edgecombe, 2019). One study that examined the level of fit between the institution and the minority student focused on the perception of prejudice and discrimination (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). The study found that minority students attending predominantly White institutions were able to persist and “negate perceptions of discriminatory behavior” (Nora & Cabrera, 1996, p. 142). However, other culturally related environmental and institutional factors may negatively influence persistence (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). A separate study on university STEM students (and not community college students) examined institutional agents, the sociological term coined by Stanton-Salazar (1997) and the effect on minority students (Bensimon et al., 2019). As institutional agents, faculty have direct experience, knowledge, or an “understanding of institutionalized oppressiveness” affecting minority students and why they might be more likely

to depart from school (Bensimon et al., 2019, p. 1691). Consequently, these institutional agents use their knowledge to help minority students succeed in college, and more specifically, in STEM areas of study. The support the faculty offer is through mentorship and by fostering equity minded practices for students from different racial and ethnic groups (Bensimon et al., 2019). They also transform institutional contexts to provide equal academic opportunities for these same students who have been historically marginalized from higher education (Bensimon et al., 2019). Thus, research through the lens of demography as opportunity can expand the body of research on Latina/o college persistence in relation to institutional factors that look beyond the students' attributes and puts the responsibility on the institution (Bailey et al., 2008; Bensimon, 2005; Edenfield & McBrayer, 2020).

Additionally, Bensimon (2005) brings an interesting perspective to the student attrition research that furthers the argument of institutional actions. She maintains that institutional practices “develop from and reflect the shared cognitive frames of institutional participants” (Bensimon, 2005, p. 99). Thus, it is these cognitive frames, also known as “mental” or “conceptual maps” that “governs the attitudes, beliefs, values and actions of the individual” (2005, p. 100). Bensimon explains that this mental model exists within the individual and frames opinions about students via a predisposition of diversity or deficit thinking. Hence, she argues that it is the individuals' responsibility (such as community college staff, faculty, and stakeholders) to develop equity mindfulness within the mental model (cognitive frame) in order to enact positive outcomes for the students (Bensimon, 2005).

Moreover, it is research like this that can help higher educational scholars and practitioners (i.e., faculty members, administrators, counselors, and institutional leaders) understand and confront the problem as to why disparities exist in educational outcomes,

specifically, between racial and ethnic groups (Bensimon, 2005; Edenfield & McBrayer, 2020; Edgecombe, 2019). Deeper, focused research in this area can support student success efforts in community colleges that serve nontraditional students and minority students, who are usually disenfranchised from institutions of higher education and often express feelings of isolation and not belonging (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Michel & Durdella, 2019; Peña & Rhoads, 2019; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Lastly, integrating a strength-based perspective in higher education and understanding Latina/o students' lived realities can contribute to policy and practice that celebrates these students' experiences as opposed to punishing them for their lives (Carales & López, 2020). Moreover, adopting the idea of demography as opportunity can leverage the benefits of the changing community college goers and embrace their experiences. Thus, the focus of this study is the persistence of full-time and part-time community college Latina/o students in relation to institutional actions.

Research Question

In educational research, the objective is to relate variables (Creswell, 2012). The research question for this study is: What institutional actions are related to achievement and persistence for Latina/o community college students? Although research has shown that student characteristics are associated with college persistence, this paper will focus on institutional actions and their relationship with student outcomes for Latina/o students at a two-year community college. A correlational study will be used to garner a better understanding of this particular student population by identifying which institutional actions are associated with student achievement and persistence.

Overview of the Research Design

This study seeks to determine which institutional actions best correlate with the student's intention to persist and complete their academic goals. A quantitative correlational study will be conducted utilizing a secondary dataset consisting of self-reported student responses to an institutional survey. This study will examine three institutional actions believed to predict positive student outcomes, based on current research and explained further in the literature review: (1) faculty feedback (provided to the student within the semester); (2) provision of an academic plan (provided to the student by a counselor or advisor); and (3) college contact by faculty/staff (if the student is struggling). The three student outcomes include: (1) self-declared grade point average; (2) likelihood of withdrawal from school; and (3) intention to re-enroll.

This study will analyze data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), also referred to as Cessie. The research will examine students' CCSSE survey responses for associations between institutional actions that occur at the community college and student persistence for both full-time and part-time Latina/o students. The sample for this study consists of Latina/o community college students enrolled full-time or part-time who participated in the 2017 Spring semester CCSSE survey. The institutional factors in this study are examined as they were reported by this particular college cohort during the 2016-2017 academic school year.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The researcher made the following assumptions: (1) the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) is an accurate measure of student engagement; (2) survey participants responded honestly; (3) survey participants understood the questions and had a general understanding of the terms used in the survey (i.e., advisor, academic plan, personalized plan,

defined sequence of courses); and, (4) survey responses were collected from those students who were in class on the day the survey was administered.

Delimitations of the study include (1) the choice of the sample demographics (e.g., race, ethnicity), such that the student population may not fully represent a national sample; (2) the students in this research study (i.e., Latina/o, low-income, and nontraditional) may not resemble student populations in other community colleges across the nation; (3) the responses of students in the sample may not be comprehensive of the student population, as the students who answered the survey may be more engaged, given they were in class and answered the survey, and responses exclude those of students who were unable to attend class on the day the survey was administered.

Summary

There is limited research in higher education that examines the effects of institutional actions on attrition in community colleges serving Latina/o students. The results of this study may help educational leaders make decisions on institutional actions to improve student success outcomes, and hence contribute to the retention and persistence of Latina/o students in the two-year college setting.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Although community colleges are regarded for their open access efforts across all types of learners, this chapter will explore the institutional actions related to student persistence for the Latina/o student population. The chapter will begin by reviewing attrition theoretical models as a foundation for the study, followed by a historical background on community colleges and the learners they serve, including nontraditional students, minority students, and Latina/o students. Research will be reviewed that is concerned with why many Latina/o students begin postsecondary work at two-year institutions yet fail to persist (complete or transfer). A discussion of the systemic racism Latina/o students have encountered in their pursuit of higher education will be introduced to explain the role institutions have played in perpetuating missed opportunities for Latina/o students. Finally, the chapter will consider the role of institutional actions in student success and persistence, particularly in community college settings. Demography as opportunity is identified as an institutional mechanism that can enable student success.

Theories of Student Attrition

Student attrition is one of the most critical issues in higher education (Alijohani, 2016; Tinto, 2006). Early research examined traditional students attending residential four-year institutions (Tinto, 1975, 1993). Tinto's explanatory theoretical model (1975, 1993) examined traditional student withdrawal by looking at students' background traits (e.g., family background, individual attributes, precollege schooling). Tinto's interactionist theory maintained that individual characteristics directly influence college departure (Braxton et al., 2004) and neglected to examine nontraditional students at commuter institutions and their specific precollege characteristics or the distinctive reasons to persist/withdraw. The relationship between

individuals and the institution were not examined, nor were “students of different gender, race, ethnicity, income, and orientation” (Tinto, 2016, p. 3).

Bean and Metzner (1985), who first reported an increase in nontraditional undergraduate students due to shifts in demographics and economic factors influencing enrollment trends, began to examine the nontraditional student population, which was unusual for its time. Bean and Metzner (1985) noted that older part-time and commuter students began to make up the undergraduate student body, especially across community colleges. The growth in student enrollment made higher education more accessible for minority and lower socioeconomic status students who are by definition, nontraditional students. Across the country, four-year and two-year institutions saw a growth in student enrollment for nontraditional and minority students, yet research showed that the likelihood of these students completing was low when compared to traditional students (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Schuetz, 2008). In Bean & Metzner’s (1985) *Conceptual Model of Nontraditional Undergraduate Student Attrition*, the researchers argued that persistence for nontraditional students was not directly related to relationships with faculty or peers, not because of disinterest, but because less interaction exists with peers and faculty due to time constraints and work/family responsibilities. Nontraditional commuter students expressed an interest “in the practical benefits of college attendance for future employment,” thus embracing the concept of utility or practical value as a decision-making factor in their college attendance and persistence (Bean & Metzner, 1985, p. 522). Bean & Metzner’s (1985) model substantiated the importance of external factors in nontraditional student attrition.

The work of Nora (2003) began to explore whether access to higher education for Latina/o students is “real or illusory”. Thus, as the subtitle of the article suggests, the research examined access to higher education and questioned whether higher education was a reality for

Latina/o college students or simply an illusion. In the paper, Nora (2003) delved into the many barriers this specific student group has encountered and found that "...despite thirty years of educational reforms, Latino students continue to lag behind students from the dominant culture" (Nora, 2003, p. 47). Looking beyond the student's personal characteristics and seeing the collective impact on student persistence, Nora (2003) "conceptualized the choice between withdrawal and persistence as directly impacted by the collective sum of all these factors, from precollege characteristics to institutional factors to environmental pulls" (Arbona & Nora, 2007, p. 250). Nora's (2003) *Student/Institution Engagement Model* examined the interaction between the student and the institution, accounting for environmental pull factors that derive from home and school environments, such as family/life responsibilities, integration, and sense of allegiance to the institution. Nora (2003) expanded research on Latina/o attrition by identifying four major groupings that impact persistence for Latina/o students in pursuit of higher education: (1) educational goal commitments (educational aspirations), (2) financial assistance, (3) social integration or experiences, and (4) institutional commitments (institutional fit).

Braxton et al. (2004) also pointed out the inapplicability of Tinto's theoretical model for nontraditional minority students. Citing a research gap in understanding Latina/o college student persistence, Braxton et al. (2004) recommended more rigorous research in understanding this specific ethnic group. Research by Braxton et al. (2004) indicated that attrition was markedly higher for nontraditional students whose external stressors often impeded their college persistence and completion goals, thus confirming Bean and Metzner's (1985) early model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. One important factor that contributed to attrition for minority students was the inability to pay (Braxton, 2004).

The above theories and frameworks are meaningful for conceptualizing the internal and external factors that influence student attrition. Aljohani (2016) provides a historical timeline on student retention, demonstrating an evolution in research focus, starting from the 1960s to present. During the span of four decades, systemic and theoretical studies were developed and tested (Aljohani, 2016). These contributions furthered attrition research beyond the individual characteristics of the students to institutional relationships and its climate (Aljohani, 2016; Schuetz, 2008). Indeed, more recent research could not have been accomplished without the theoretical models cited in this study, which although outdated, laid the groundwork for understanding attrition at a purely basic level and instigated attempts to answer the question as to why attrition happens. The study and practice of student attrition “has undergone a number of changes” and the “understanding of the experience of students of different backgrounds has been greatly enhanced” (Tinto, 2016, p. 3). Attrition research has become more sophisticated, expansive, and inclusive, to include student populations normally not represented in higher education research (Aljohani, 2016; Tinto, 2016). Further underscored in the research is the idea of demography as opportunity and asset-strength-based literature, which understands and addresses “the accumulated disadvantage experience of much of their student body” (Edgecombe, 2019, p. 2) yet shifts the view to one of optimism.

At present, few theoretical and empirical models of attrition fully contribute to the higher education research literature in understanding why Latina/o students continue to trail behind their peers in college attendance and degree completion. No one model on student attrition, with absolute certainty, can identify or explain the reasons as to why students, especially Latina/o community college students, stop-out or drop-out of college. What is understood from previous frameworks and models is that although students come to college with pre-enrollment attributes,

there are external factors that may be directly related to persistence. Not only do the frameworks provide a historical foundation on student attrition research, but the theories also show an evolution of thought that build upon each other to attempt to explain and understand student attrition, and the changing student population. Beyond the individual, there are external factors related to the academic and social experiences within the institution that impact student persistence, such as: formal or informal interactions with faculty; encouragement and support from faculty and staff; and, mentoring from faculty, peers, and counselors/advisors (Arbona, 2003; Arbona & Nora, 2007).

Before discussing the primary issue of Latina/o student success and persistence in relation to the institutional actions of community colleges, it is necessary to provide a historical background on community colleges and the learners they serve.

Community Colleges

Throughout history, higher education has been seen as the great equalizer (Bailey et al., 2015; Levin, 2001; Lewis & Dentice, 2015). Completion of higher education has provided many individuals with opportunities for social and economic mobility. However, while higher education continues a legacy of developing a well-rounded individual, it also perpetuates a system that caters to the preservation of social advantage and the provision of social access (Labaree, 2015). Thus, for many scholars, the concern is that higher education maintains the status quo and fails to respond to the changing demographics of its student body. Research has shown that disparities exist in the persistence and graduation rates of students from historically underrepresented groups (Bensimon, 2005; Carnevale & Fasules, 2017; Edgecombe, 2019; Quayle & Harper, 2014). Unlike four-year institutions, two-year institutions serve a larger number of nontraditional students (Carnevale & Fasules, 2017; Levin, 2014; Perna & Jones,

2013). As open-door institutions, community colleges are expected to serve every type of student regardless of the student's academic preparation (Ammon et al., 2008; Bailey et al., 2015; Levin, 2001; Meier, 2013). Notably, community colleges came into being as a response to social, economic, or political pressures (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Levin, 2001). Their mission and purpose are not only to answer to the changing political and economic tides of the times but to also fulfill the workforce demands of the community they serve (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Levin & Kater, 2013).

In the book, *Understanding Community Colleges*, author Ken Meier (2013) provides historical context about the initial creation of community colleges. He explains that community colleges had “no clear mission” or “framework” (p. 3). The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education states that the “most striking structural development in higher education has been the phenomenal growth of the community college” and the roles of community colleges “are so diverse as to be bewildering” (as cited in Meier, 2013, p. 3). Thus, at its most fundamental level, the community college serves students from all walks of life with differing academic aptitudes and goals (Ammon et al., 2008). Analyses of community colleges have determined that they are “non-specialized by design,” (Levin & Kater, 2013, p. 4) mandated to offer a comprehensive curriculum while serving a wide range of community needs. This was further exacerbated by a national democratic sentiment that college attendance is not a privilege but a right. The egalitarian belief has been echoed across time, with an emphasis on community colleges serving a diverse group of students, which is why enrollment across nontraditional and minority students has risen (Levin & Kater, 2013). Currently, the political tides have shifted, and many policymakers question whether community colleges have stayed true to their purpose of open access and upward mobility. Moreover, stakeholders are under pressure to improve community

college completion rates and improve accountability and performance measures (Bailey et al., 2005; Belfield, 2013; Edenfield & McBrayer, 2020; Natale & Jones, 2018). These accountability measures range from college score cards on completion to performance budgeting (Bailey et al., 2005; Natale & Jones, 2018).

Despite the all-encompassing design of community colleges to serve everyone, community colleges continue to struggle with the graduation of their students (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Bailey et al., 2015; Itzkowitz, 2019; Levin et al., 2010; Peña & Rhoads, 2019). Research indicates that most community college students do not achieve their long-term educational objectives (Bailey et al., 2015, p.1; Jabbar et al., 2018; Peña & Rhoads, 2019). Research has found community college students take longer than three years to complete an associate's degree, students complete at higher rates in smaller community colleges, and only about one third of all community college students obtains a degree or certificate (Bailey et al., 2005; Jabbar et al., 2018; Karp & Bork, 2012). For those students who aspire to earn a bachelor's degree and initially enroll in community college, they are less likely to complete a bachelor's degree in the same period as similar students who initially enroll in a four-year institution, regardless of race or ethnicity (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Itzkowitz, 2019; Levin & Kater, 2013; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Itzkowitz (2019) found that at most two-year institutions, only 29% of students completed a certificate or degree. Moreover, completion is still a challenge for many Latina/o students beginning their academic careers at community colleges—with many enrolling but not completing (Arbona & Nora, 2017; Ma & Baum, 2016; Shapiro et al., 2017).

Research on post-secondary institutions led by the Community College Research Center has questioned the original purpose of community colleges and asked whether its structure, built in the 1960s, is still a functioning structure that serves its students well (Belfield, 2013). Work

from Levin (2001) argued that community colleges are now “entrepreneurial in their behavior” and that their missions have changed to include “economic development” and “workforce training” because of government and business influence and the desire to provide workers with skill acquisition opportunities (Levin, 2001, p. 238). This change started in the 1990s, and since has been customary for community colleges to respond to economic and political forces (Carnevale et al., 2013; Levin, 2001).

This response is referred to as *anticipatory subordination* and rooted in the recognition by community colleges that if they compete with better more prestigious institutions, they risk losing power and influence (Brint & Karabel, 1989). “This deference to the perceived needs of more powerful institutions” (i.e., business, other higher-education institutions, elected officials, coordinating bodies, state and federal government) is the community colleges’ response to remain competitive and relevant (Brint & Karabel, 1989, p. 17). It attempts to fit into the structure of power—by partnering with businesses and even allowing for industry to influence curriculum to remain competitive and solvent—thus accommodating itself to the structure of economic and political power and subjecting to the influences and demands of local and business interests (Brint & Karabel, 1989).

Community colleges are not only being asked to respond to the call to react to global economic competitive forces, but they are also facing “numerous policymakers and higher education leaders” and “government officials in promoting the college completion agenda” (Perna & Jones, 2013, p. 34; Natale & Jones, 2018). Perna and Jones (2013) define completion as completing a bachelor’s or any college credential. A current example of this dual subordination--the dual response of community colleges to external economic and political forces (Levin & Kater, 2013)--is the Texas statewide 60x30TX plan, in which public higher

education institutions are being asked to work with local and regional business entities to align curriculum with occupational skills while increasing degree or certificate attainment by 60% for 25-to 34-year-olds by 2030 (THECB, 2015, 2018). This same Texas strategic plan is asking public institutions of higher education to provide students with identified marketable skills in programs of study to enable them to articulate in *resume ready* language, the skills they obtained in college (THECB, 2018, p. 2). Although the completion agenda has been in effect for well over ten years, little progress has been made in terms of improving student outcomes (Edenfield & McBrayer, 2020).

Regardless of the low completion rates at community colleges, students continue to attend two-year institutions as they see the benefits of a college education. Further, one could argue that the push for occupational skills, along with the community college mission, are probably why so many minority students are enrolled in community colleges. Thus, higher education scholars question why higher numbers of minority students are enrolled in community colleges and not four-year institutions. Many have pondered whether enrollment in community colleges is advantageous to students in terms of access, affordability, and transferability to four-year institutions (Perna & Kurban, 2013), while others have questioned whether community college enrollment is tied to low academic performance or preparation (Adelman, 2005; Jabbar et al., 2019; Levin et al., 2010). However, academically prepared Latina/o students are more likely to enroll in community colleges than students with similar levels of preparation from other racial and ethnic groups (Levin & Kater, 2013; Nora & Crisp, 2009).

The next section of the literature review elaborates on the definitions of the learners served by community colleges, including nontraditional students, minority students, and Latina/o students.

Nontraditional students

Bean and Metzner (1985) defined nontraditional students as 25 years of age or older, commuting to school, and enrolled part-time. Bean and Metzner (1985) observed that nontraditional students have diverse characteristics, more and varied life experiences, and demonstrate greater self-determination and acceptance of responsibility. Yet, because school for this student demographic is a secondary activity, they have a higher rate of attrition given that many have competing obligations (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Wylie, 2005). Importantly, Bean and Metzner (1985) noted the “one defining characteristic of the nontraditional student was the lack of social integration into the institution” (p. 489). Bean and Metzner (1985) referenced the lack of engagement as *environmental press*, a term coined by Murray’s 1938 research, which helps to explain the role of environmental factors in college experiences for nontraditional students. Although it is an older concept, it applies to current students because nontraditional students usually report a form of “environmental press” which includes less interaction in the college environment with peers or faculty members, less interaction through extracurricular activities, and less use of campus services due to other priorities (Bean & Metzner, 1985). If environmental press constrains students, they are more likely to consider the institution as unsupportive, and as such, may end up withdrawing from the institution (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Nora, 2003).

Research by Bensimon (2005) defined nontraditional students as historically underserved groups, and Levin (2014) expanded the definition of nontraditional students “as disadvantaged students by their conditions more than by specific traits” (Levin, 2014, p. 12). He defined them as disadvantaged because they are a disenfranchised class that has not had the same access or equal opportunities as traditional students (Levin, 2014). Historically, research focused on

traditional students, viewed in essence as mainstream college students. Levin (2014) argued that this perspective does not capture the community college student population, since the majority of the students enrolled are minority and nontraditional students.

Nontraditional students are now the norm (Edgecombe, 2019). Considering the growth in enrollment across two-and-four-year-institutions, researchers have wanted to understand and explain the shift in student demographics and characteristics (Ammon et al., 2008; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Edgecombe, 2019). With the growing number of minority and nontraditional students, understanding persistence for this student population can contribute to the identification of more equitable opportunities in higher education, especially for Latina/o students who increasingly attend two-year institutions (McCallen & Johnson, 2019; Perna & Jones, 2013). Moreover, the institutional actions and services that are provided to the students can be used to close the achievement/completion gap, since college enrollments have risen among low-income, nontraditional, and minority students (Holzer, 2018). Especially in community colleges where students are more likely to attend part-time and feel less socially and academically integrated, it is important to have strong institutional practices that are student-centered and allow students to feel engaged (Gonzalez, 2009). The connection between the student and the institution can make all of the difference as to whether the student persists or withdraws from college (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Minority Students

Among nontraditional students attending higher education, a large number of them belong to an ethnic minority group (Arbona & Nora, 2007). Thus, an argument has been made that “community colleges have evolved into a de facto minority serving institutional sector” (Levin and Kater, 2013, p. 19). For most minority students, simple economics factor into the

decision to attend a community college, as opposed to a four-year institution. Research by Stanton-Salazar (2001) and more recently by Perna and Jones (2013) suggests that minority students attend community colleges at higher rates because many of them may have been ill-advised by their guidance counselors during high school. Moreover, if these same minority students are first-generation college students, their reliance on their parents' advice about college may contribute to the selection of a community college to stay closer to home and family.

Scholars in higher education have asked the question as to why minority students, including Latina/o students, are more likely to attend two-year institutions. Levin and Kater (2013) present “a model that acknowledges that a student’s choice of college might be constrained due to his or her context” (Levin & Kater, 2013, p. 23). This model, developed by Laura Perna (2006), introduces the notion of organizational habitus, and not only touches on the rational, practical, and economic college choices students make, but delves into deeper socio-cultural perspectives impacting the student (Perna & Kurban, 2013). The model explains that although there are economic and proxemic logistical reasons as to why minority students select two-year institutions, one cannot discount the socio-historical and socio-cultural factors that play into the decision-making process (Perna & Kurban, 2013). This concept demonstrates that for many students, their decision-making process is explained by contextual factors affecting college choice (Levin & Kater, 2013). “Organizational habitus is an important family/community contextual factor affecting students’ college decision making” (Levin & Kater, 2013, p. 22). For many minority students, the preferred college choice is a two-year institution. The choice is not only due to economics or proximity and family obligations, but a lack of resources and knowledge about higher education. This notion is compounded by the inequitable distribution of information and limited opportunity many nontraditional minority students receive (Arbona &

Nora, 2007; Levin & Kater, 2013; Perna & Kurban, 2013). Primary influences on students' college selection decisions stem from "familial support and encouragement as well as a motivation to 'not repeat' or 'not be like' other family members that did not attend college" (Nora & Crisp, 2009, p. 323). Thus, families play a key role in students' college choices (Jabbar et al., 2017), as well as community, and social capital (or the lack thereof).

The outcome of organizational habitus is that minority students, such as Latina/o students, overwhelmingly select community colleges as their first option. This choice has been the historical pattern across students with limited opportunities (Levin et al., 2010). The trend of enrollment without weighing options or looking for other opportunities has been described by Person and Rosenbaum (2006) as "chain enrollment." *Chain enrollment* is said to play a greater role in communities where strong ties exist. The proximity of the institution plays a role in a student's decision-making, as "geography affects opportunity," explains Olivas (2005, p. 182). Thus, students stick to what is known and familiar without questioning the benefits of attending elsewhere.

Demography as opportunity and asset-strength-based perspectives would argue that by attending to both "people and place", community colleges are the ideal venue for minority students because of who they serve and because of what they do to improve equity, access, and mobility. Further, because of their location, that is proximity to home and family, community colleges serve as critical access points for this specific growing population (Edgecombe, 2019).

In summary, minority and nontraditional students will often make educational choices based on where other community members have attended school. Subsequently, two-year institutions provide access for these same students who normally may have opted out of higher education. The reasons as to why a student selects a two-year institution are multifaceted and

nuanced. The decision includes student pre-enrollment characteristics related to academic aptitude, practical decisions related to costs, personal and work responsibilities, and socio-historical and socio-cultural factors, such as organizational habitus (Levin & Kater, 2013; Perna & Kurban, 2013).

Latina/o Students

This paper uses the term Latina/o to describe the Latina/o or Hispanic students in this study, predominantly of Mexican American heritage. Salinas et al., (2020) define the Latina/o community as “native and foreign born-residents who trace their origins to Puerto Rico and approximately 20 countries” (Salinas et al., p. 13).

Latina/o Demographics. According to the 2019 United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, the Latina/o population makes up nearly 18.4% of the population and is the largest ethnic minority group in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2020). Latina/o also make up 21% of the college-age population (Carnevale et al., 2018). Consequently, this group is not only experiencing an increase in college attendance but an increase in public elementary and secondary school enrollment with the highest increases in high-poverty public schools (Hussar, et al., 2020). Low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25% or less of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Hussar, et al., 2020). Previous research shows that among Latina/o students between the ages of 18-24, college enrollment increased from 728,000 in 1993 to 2.2 million in 2015 (Jabbar et al., 2019). A recent report by Hussar, et al., (2020) found that “Hispanic enrollment increased in each year between 2000 and 2018, increasing by 148 percent during this period” (p. 128). The report states that the immediate college enrollment rate for Hispanic/Latino students is 63%. The immediate college enrollment rate is an annual percentage of high school completers who are enrolled in college (2- or 4-year

institutions) nine months after graduating high school or receiving a GED or other high school equivalency credential (Hussar, et al., 2020).

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that between academic years 2000-01 and 2015-16, the number of associate degrees earned by Hispanic students tripled at a 242% increase (from 57,300 to 196,000) (Hussar, et al., 2020). The number of Latino students between the ages of 25-29 obtaining an associate degree increased 16 percentage points (15% to 31%) between 2000 to 2019 (Hussar, et al., 2020). However, the persistence of an achievement gap for the Hispanic/Latino population continues when compared to their Asian and White counterparts (McFarland et al., 2019; Hussar, et al., 2020). Although the gap between White and Latina/o 25- to 29-year-olds with an associate's degree or higher in 2019 narrowed by 24%, when compared to the corresponding gap of 28% in 2000, an overall achievement gap persists (Hussar, et al., 2020). Another example of the achievement gap is the overall college enrollment rate for 18-to-24-year-olds which saw an increase from 35% to 41% in 2018, but was lower for Blacks (37%) and Hispanics (36%) than for Asian (59%) and White (42%) students in that age group (Hussar, et al., 2020). The numbers remain steady when examining the percentage of 25-to-29-year-old young adults who had attained an associate degree or higher: 31% for Hispanics and 33% for Blacks compared to 75% for Asians and 54% for Whites in 2018 (McFarland et al., 2019).

Part-time Latina/o enrollment. Over half of Latina/o students attend college part-time (Nora & Crisp, 2009). Ma and Baum (2016) report that for many Latina/o students the allure of reducing their attendance from full-time to part-time to work longer hours and help family members is not only appealing but a reality. Subsequently, completion rates eight years after entry are higher among full-time students (30% for first-time students and 38% for non-first-time students) than among part-time students (16% for first-time students and 21% for non-first-time

students) when not accounting for race (McFarland et al., 2019). Other research confirms that students enrolled full-time are more likely to complete than students enrolled part-time regardless of race (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Itzkowitz, 2019). Research also shows that Latina/o students are not only more likely to pursue college part-time, but they take longer to enroll in college and take more time to graduate (Arbona & Nora 2007; Nora & Crisp, 2009).

According to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2017), more than 62% of students attend public community colleges part-time. However, students attending part-time are less likely to complete a degree (Itzkowitz, 2019). The research shows that enrolling part-time lengthens the duration needed to earn a degree. During this time, family and work obligations may interfere with the student's intention to complete (Handel, 2009). For Latina/o students, family and work responsibilities are more pronounced (Arbona & Nora, 2007).

Latina/o and systemic racism. Heightened awareness and spurred action about the vast inequities of college admission, selection, and completion have taken center stage in recent years. Unconscionable disparities in the quality of education for minority students have been reported in the research literature (Carnevale et al., 2018; Gándara & Contreras, 2020). These same scholars have argued that higher education continues to play a significant role in the re/production of social inequalities (Bensimon, 2005; Bensimon et al., 2019; Carnevale et al., 2018; Crozier et al., 2019; Labaree, 2015; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Historically, Latina/o students have had low quality education and they have been left behind (Gándara & Contreras, 2020; Perna & Jones, 2013). This has not been their choice, instead, there is a system that prevents them from accomplishing their goals due to inequitable access to quality education (Carnevale et al., 2018; Gándara & Contreras, 2020). There is also tension between assimilation and belonging in higher education, as many Latina/o students encounter feelings of isolation (McCallen &

Johnson, 2019; Nora, 2003). For those Latina/o students attending university, for example, they report inequities in their college environment related to alienation, hostility, and feeling unwelcomed (Clayton et al., 2019; Bensimon et al., 2019; Karp & Bork, 2012). As such, many minority students end up selecting schools that demonstrate a sense of acceptance and similarity (Crozier et al., 2019). A reason why then so many Latina/o students enroll in Hispanic Serving Institutions may come from the gap between ethnic identity and the dominant culture of the institution, as many Latina/o students may feel more accepted in an institution that resembles their culture (Clayton et al., 2019).

Gaps in opportunity and educational outcomes are great for Latina/o students (Carnevale & Fasules, 2017). Research by the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University finds that Latina/o rank behind Whites and Blacks in college enrollment, attainment, and overall earnings (Carnevale & Fasules, 2017). The research by Carnevale and Fasules (2017) finds that one of the primary reasons as to why economic progress has been difficult for the Latina/o community is a shift in acquiring good paying jobs. In previous generations, individuals did not need more than a high school diploma to land a position that could afford families with equitable living wages and a pathway to the middle class. Today, the reality is much different as many good paying jobs require post-secondary education (Carnevale et al., 2016). Unfortunately, the Latina/o population has not been able to catch up because “70% of the Latino population came after 1980” (Carnevale & Fasules, 2017, p. 3) and they did not have the same head start their White counterparts had to become educated and increase their earning potential (Carnevale & Fasules, 2017).

There is also the issue of race and class (Carnevale & Fasules, 2017). One cannot deny that there are issues of systemic racism that have plagued the Latina/o population (Carnevale et

al., 2018; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The Latina/o community has had to work within an education system that diverts them into underfunded and under-resourced public schooling where they are less likely to succeed (Carnevale & Fasules, 2017; Gándara & Contreras, 2020). At the postsecondary level, institutional actors (faculty, staff, etc.) may offer little support to these Latina/o students because many higher education institutions place responsibility on the students they serve as opposed to the institution (Bensimon, 2005; Karp & Bork 2012). Deficit views impact the way Latina/o students are treated within the education system and fail to recognize cultural and familial strengths (Carales & López, 2020). Consequently, deficit views towards the Latina/o community has contributed to their struggle in attaining social and economic mobility. Not because of lesser educational attainment and socioeconomic barriers/limitations, but as result of a system that excludes them from equitable opportunities, access to knowledge, and the ability to negotiate within institutional spheres (e.g., systems, processes, bureaucracies) through *strategic education* (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Subsequently, it is the lack of strategic education that is, resources that empower minority students, that are absent in providing them with a network to traverse upward social and economic mobility vis à vis education (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The grounding literature describes and defines institutional agents as empowerment agents that enable minority students to develop their social support networks (1997).

Latina/o students in Community College. Community colleges in the United States have experienced a surge in Latina/o student enrollment (Krogstad, 2016, Carales & López, 2020). Further, Latina/o students continue to be overrepresented in community colleges (Carales & López, 2020, p. 103). Research from Ma & Baum (2016) indicate a disproportionate number of Latina/o attend two-year colleges at a percentage higher than their White and Black counterpart. Ma & Baum (2016) further confirm a historical trend towards community college

enrollment for Latina/o students. However, completion rates for Latina/o students fall short and so do transfer rates to four-year institutions. Olivarez (2020) notes that “fewer than 15% of Latina/os who start at the community college” complete a bachelor’s degree in 6-years or 8-years (Olivarez, 2020, p. 21). Data shows that although 49% of Latina/o students in the U.S. are enrolled in community colleges, only one in eight Latina/o students completed a degree at a four-year institution (Shapiro et al., 2017; Jabbar et al., 2019). Notably, the pathway to a bachelor’s degree via the community college route plays a significant role for Latina/o students, but research indicates that the transfer process for low-income and Latina/o students is different in terms of when and how they transfer (Nora & Crisp, 2009). Latina/o students are less likely to experience a seamless transfer in comparison to middle-class White and Asian students (Bailey et al., 2005; Jenkins et al., 2006; Levin & Kater, 2013; Nora & Crisp, 2009). The research by Nora and Crisp (2009) highlights the absence of effective articulation agreements between 2- and 4-year colleges and dismal academic guidance and counseling. In addition, many students believe that completing an Associates of Arts or Sciences will satisfy all of the transfer requirements for a four-year institution, however many students encounter the opposite: lack of transferable credits or coursework that does not apply towards their program of study at the four-year institution. Still, Latina/o students see their community college attendance as the beginning step to a bachelor’s degree (Nora, 2003).

When examining the reasons as to why Latina/o students enroll in community college, one has to explore the cultural nuances and complexities pertaining to this student demographic, specifically the role of family and cost (Olivarez, 2020). For Latina/o students, selecting a school close to home is an appealing option because they will remain close to family and friends. The proximity of their school selection allows them to pursue their academic and personal goals

while remaining close to family. Thus, research examining Latina/o college choice encourages the investigation of family influence and the role of family within the institution to build on their knowledge and successfully engage these students within the classroom (Olivarez, 2020).

Since Latina/o students are more likely to start their postsecondary education at a community college and are more concentrated in Hispanic Serving Institutions, additional research is needed on the Latina/o student population with an emphasis on the institutional actions that serve them. Institutional policy and practice, that make community colleges more responsive to the needs of their student population, can address some of the gaps in student success outcomes (Edgecombe, 2019). For first time students attending community colleges, challenges exist within the higher education pipeline, such as access to information, navigating the college environment, understanding the academic expectations, and lack of family support (Clayton et al., 2019). As research “continues to describe them as being at a disadvantage to their White peers” (Clayton et al., 2019, p. 137), there is a need to address persistence and completion for Latina/o students with more equity-minded solutions (Edgecombe, 2019; Nora, 2003; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Ross et al., 2010; Strayhorn, 2008).

Now, the chapter will turn to a discussion of institutional actions as they relate to student outcomes, particularly for Latina/o community college students.

Institutional Actions

The work by Tinto (1975, 1993) explained student departure in terms of precollege characteristics, but “does not examine how implementing institutional practices will help students persist and succeed” (Brown & Robinson-McDonald, 2014, p. 161; Tinto, 2016). Understanding the institutional actions of a college focused on increasing persistence and completion carries implications for institutional policy and practice to include equity efforts,

beyond student outcomes (Bensimon, 2005; Braxton et al., 2004; Edgecombe, 2019). Prior research has acknowledged the role of the institution and its direct impact on student success outcomes and further analysis is necessary to improve student persistence and completion (Bailey et al., 2005). Although the research on institutional actions began with an analysis of institutional factors including college expenditures, student selectivity (i.e., SAT scores, family socio-economic status), location (e.g., urban versus rural), and campus size, more understanding is needed on what institutions can do to help students stay and succeed (Bailey et al., 2006; Tinto, 2016). Early institutional research examined *institutional actions* or *institutional effectiveness* as directly correlated with student persistence outcomes (Tinto, 2016). Some research found a connection between institutional actions and student achievement, beginning with the institution's mission, goals, and resources (Braxton et al., 2004; Tinto, 2016). The strategies, programs, and practices an institution implements to assist students extend to the faculty and staff managing these programs and their practices, if they are to be effective (Bailey et al., 2005; Bensimon, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Tinto, 2016). Research is more limited for two-year institutions or multiple institutions serving populations in different settings such as rural, urban, and suburban. However, the higher education research that exists has found that attrition research "must take into consideration the larger context of the individual institution" (Braxton et al., 2004, p. 54) and examine the type of community college actions, characteristics, and policies that promote successful student outcomes to further assist low-income, nontraditional, and minority students already faced with many barriers (Bailey et al., 2015, p. viii; Bensimon, 2005; Braxton et al., 2004). Further, Carales & López (2020) argue that institutions should examine the lived realities of their students and use these experiences to serve and advocate for Latina/o students (Carales & López, 2020). Additionally, and of particular

interest to community college scholars is a review of the institutional characteristics within community college settings that improve persistence particularly for low-income and nontraditional minority students (Bailey et al., 2005; Bailey et al., 2015).

For example, demography as opportunity examines four principles which institutional leaders can consider when enacting institutional actions to advance student success: 1) know your student, 2) understand their obstacles to success, 3) adopt and adapt responsive policy and practice, and lastly 4) scale and institutionalize continuous improvement (Edgecombe, 2019). By embracing and infusing these principles within the institutional culture, deficit-minded orientations are suspended and replaced with asset-and-strength-based practices and strategies, thus, countering the systemic racism that prevents Latina/o students from accomplishing their goals (Carnevale et al., 2018; Gándara & Contreras, 2020; Edcomombe, 2019).

This paper will use *institutional actions*, *institutional factors*, and *institutional characteristics* interchangeably, as these terms have a common thread relating to what the community college, as an institution, is doing to promote student success. More specifically, the terms relate to the organizational policies and structures that are in place to promote student success in the areas of persistence and completion (Bailey, 2006; Jenkins et al., 2006). Other research has defined the terms *institutional conditions* and *institutional characteristics* similarly (Kuh et al., 2005; Kuh et al., 2006; Tinto, 2005, 2010, 2016). When coupled with student engagement, Kuh et al. (2005) defined *institutional conditions* as the programs, practices, policies, and cultural properties of an institution. The research in this paper is concerned with what institutions can do to improve student success. Further, it integrates academic and social integration which in Tinto's more recent research, stresses "the impact of external events on students' lives, but also the importance of involvement in the classroom to student retention"

(Tinto, 2016, p. 4). For many, the classroom is where involvement occurs with other students and with faculty (Tinto, 2016).

Beyond theory, and at a very practical level, examining the institutional actions that work can help students stay and succeed in college. Institutional actions have significant implications for student persistence (Edenfield & McBrayer, 2020). Effective colleges have academic and social policies and programs for their students to help them stay on track and succeed. The following discussion will review programs and other institutional actions pertaining to college support for struggling students, faculty-student interactions, and provision of academic plans, given that these will be investigated in the proposed research.

College support programs. In an effort to remedy college access, student support service programs were created to help students bridge and understand academic life and college culture, including the expectations that come with college attendance (Castillo, 2020; Karp & Bork, 2012; Vaughan, 2020). For example, TRIO Student Support Services (TRIO SSS) provide community college students with career guidance, mentoring, tutoring, and personal and academic counseling (Sabay & Wiles, 2020). The program's criteria are to enroll first generation and income eligible students, including those with disabilities, with a focus on transfer to a four-year institution and completion (Sabay & Wiles, 2020). To accomplish this, students are given a survey to assess certain indicators. The responses with low scores usually fall in the realm of "family relationships or lack of educational goals" and extra support systems are put in place to address these areas, which is helpful for students needing extra resources or support in these areas (Sabay & Wiles, 2020). Additionally, the students forge mentoring relationships, which "facilitate students' personal and social adjustment to college by providing emotional support and access to resources" (Herrera et al., 2017, p. 68). Within the TRIO program, students work

with advisors to create an Academic Success Plan where short-and-long-terms goals are developed. This is followed by weekly check-ins with the advisor and/or faculty member. The contact that occurs between the student, advisor, and faculty member is meant to create an academic partnership beyond course selection. The TRIO SSS program also involves student mentors who work together with students to help them navigate the academic and social integration of college. By building confidence, providing support, and being culturally aware, these student mentors serve as role models while forging a stronger college pipeline (Sabay & Wiles, 2020).

This program arrived at a time when persistence and graduation rates were nationally low across minority students with disadvantaged backgrounds (Vaughan et al., 2020). The development and adoption of programs like TRIO SSS help to reduce college dropout rates (Castillo, 2017). These programs can also help the institutional culture of the college and prompt alignment with the program's outcomes through "their mission, vision, strategic plans, and diversity initiatives" (Vaughan et al., 2020, p. 118).

Other programs that focus on the transition from high school to college can improve retention and completion for Latina/o students (Clayton et al., 2019; Kuh, 2008). Clayton et al. (2019) found it is critical to identify resources that are beneficial to first year Latina/o students. Establishing supportive academic and campus resources, from support programs to strong faculty and staff mentorships, mitigate students' negative perceptions of the college environment to encourage persistence (Clayton et al., 2019, p. 138). Student participation in academic activities and organizations, as well as relationships with classmates, results in higher retention rates (Clayton et al., 2019). Although Clayton et al.'s (2019) research is based on the university setting, community colleges can establish comparable programs that assist students in

transitioning to two-year institutions. Program approaches should include cultural components deemed important by Latina/o students such as “academic honors and mentoring, involvement with academic resources, and use of academic advising and counseling” (Clayton et al., 2019, p. 138). For Latina/o students, maintaining active participation in their persistence to complete is substantial if they are to attain their academic goals.

Faculty interactions. Research from the Community College Research Center at Columbia University has shown that having intentional student-faculty contact helps with completion (Jenkins et al., 2006). It is this student-faculty contact that can increase student motivation and institutional commitment. Further, student-faculty contact in the classroom tends to improve educational outcomes (Tinto, 2016). Thus, for students, receiving prompt feedback on coursework, being contacted when struggling, and being provided with an academic plan can increase the likelihood of persistence and completion. It is this intentional feedback that encourages improvement and persistence that is central to student learning (Jenkins et al., 2006). In addition to academic support, a dedicated faculty who is easily accessible to students, and who can provide academic guidance helps the student navigate through their academic goals.

Additional research by the Community College Research Center found a “mismatch between faculty expectations and student knowledge about those expectations” creates disadvantages for students and reduces success rates (Karp & Bork, 2012, p. 2). This mismatch is more prominent among first generation college students (Karp & Bork, 2012). Consequently, faculty play a vital role in student success, especially when students find themselves unfamiliar with the expectations that come with attending community college and succeeding (Herrera et al., 2017; Jenkins et al., 2006).

Research from the Community College Research Center at Columbia University has shown that having intentional student-faculty contact helps with completion (Jenkins et al., 2006). It is this student-faculty contact that can increase student motivation and institutional commitment. Further, student-faculty contact in the classroom tends to improve educational outcomes (Tinto, 2016). Thus, for students, receiving prompt feedback on coursework, being contacted when struggling, and being provided with an academic plan can increase the likelihood of persistence and completion. It is this intentional feedback that encourages improvement and persistence that is central to student learning (Jenkins et al., 2006). In addition to academic support, a dedicated faculty who is easily accessible to students, and who can provide academic guidance helps the student navigate through their academic goals.

Beyond the individual, there are external factors related to the academic and social experiences within the institution that impact student persistence, such as: formal or informal interactions with faculty; encouragement and support from faculty and staff; and, mentoring from faculty, peers, and counselors/advisors (Arbona, 2003; Arbona & Nora, 2007).

Interactions between faculty and Latina/o college students show positive outcomes which are displayed in the student's grade point average, increased retention rates into the second year of school, improved academic plans, and a sense of belonging (Herrera et al., 2017). However, the same research finds minimal faculty-student interaction between Latina/o students and community college faculty (Herrera et al., 2017). Hence, they argue two-year colleges can create supportive climates to uniquely serve Latina/o students given they are more likely to start their academic journey in a community college (Herrera et al., 2017).

Latina/o students benefit from faculty support as they can assist students navigate the college system and support them with their academic goals and objectives, whether it is

transferring to a four-year institution or completing a career and technical or terminal program (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009). For these reasons, faculty can act as institutional agents for Latina/o students as they have the “capacity and commitment” to directly transmit information, institutional resources, and opportunities to marginalized populations (Bensimon et al., 2019; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Notably, faculty are poised to offer *institutional support*, a term used to explain social support, to help youth become effective participants in institutional eco-systems, like schools, due to their direct interaction with students in the classroom (Bensimon et al., 2019; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Faculty are in the frontlines of the student interface, and they can foster student-faculty engagement in the classroom. Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2003) affirm the critical importance of non-family adult agents and their positive impact on school achievement, upward mobility, and social development for marginalized youth who most often are subjected to subpar conditions related to poor schooling and inadequate access to information about school structures. More salient is the role of faculty in providing support for lower-economic status Latina/o youth given the “history of stereotyping and debasing the cultural, linguistic, and phenotypic features” of this group (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003, p. 233). The research shows that establishing positive relationships with institutional agents, like faculty, can improve resiliency, such as coping strategies that can mitigate “the effects of racial segregation, economic marginality, and institutionalized racism” that Latina/o youth encounter across their life span and in higher education (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003, p. 233).

Research examining science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs have considered the role of faculty members and attrition for Latina/o students in STEM. These efforts are good examples of what works in engaging Latina/o students to improve attrition rates. Involved faculty members in STEM programs demonstrate a positive effect on

Latina/o student engagement (Bensimon, et al., 2019). By examining the role of faculty as institutional agents in STEM programs, efforts can be adapted for Latina/o students in community college settings to improve faculty support. Latina/o faculty are seen as teachers and mentors capable of supporting students given their knowledge of institutional oppression (Bensimon et al., 2019). These Latina/o faculty members are able to aide students in challenging bias and stereotypes about what a typical scientist looks like (usually White and male), and bridge students with an aspiring profession in STEM. The effects are shown to be positive, as Latina/o students were absolved of the “identity invisibility” that plagues them in higher education (Bensimon et al., 2019). Moreover, the same Latina/o faculty were responsive to Latina/o students as they expanded their role of faculty to that of mentor, advocate, advisor, and networking coach. These role enhancements provided high levels of deliberate student-faculty contact, which in turn, increases “student satisfaction, educational attainment and learning and development across a variety of dimensions” (Kuh et al., 2007, p.5).

Academic plans. An institutional response occurring across two-and-four-year institutions is the adoption of college counselors and advisors, faculty, to provide students with clearly defined, coherent *program pathways* to assist these same students with their academic and transfer goals (Bailey et al., 2015). The reform movement on the program pathways or guided pathways model is fairly new and its impact on student success not widely known. Yet, its impetus comes as a solution and push from both higher education scholars and policymakers to provide students with clear degree plans to assist with persistence and completion. These program pathways provide “courses in the context of highly structured, educationally coherent program maps that align with students’ goals for careers and further education (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 1). Recently the model has been scaled to various college campuses across the nation,

including locally. The impetus for this nation-wide effort is to focus on performance and improve successful outcomes for enrolled students so that they are able to persist and complete. Most significant is that one of the additional goals of this approach is to help students minimize the cost of college attendance because the course work laid out in the program pathway is more structured and deliberate (Bailey et al., 2015; Perna & Jones, 2013). The course options within the degree plan are courses students need to complete their degree plan and further, they are a limited listing of courses to reduce choice and confusion and create seamless transferability to four-year university (Bailey et al., 2015).

The impetus for program pathways was driven by the Student Right-to-Know (SRK) and Campus Security Act (S.580) to improve student outcomes (Bailey et al., 2015). Congress passed the Student Right-to-Know (SRK) and Campus Security Act in 1990 as a result of policymakers' desire to increase student outcomes and tie funding to accountability. The SRK altered the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) "to require all institutions of higher education participating in any program under HEA title IV (Student Assistance) to disclose the completion or graduation rate of certificate- or degree-seeking" "for fall semester cohorts of first-time, full-time students in degree programs" (Bailey et al., 2005, p. 2; S.580, 1990). These federal policies resulted in public institution requirements to report graduation rates. Further, President Obama introduced legislation to improve performance by incentivizing institutions of higher education with more financial aid to schools who reported higher completion rates (Jenkins, 2011).

However, institutions need to take a step further and not wait for federal funding mandates to act. Instead, they could look inward and follow suit on SRK when it comes to issues of accountability and reporting. Community colleges could examine the programs they offer and identify low-enrollment and low completion rates across their program and course offerings.

Curriculum alignment tied to successful student outcomes is key if institutions are to play an integral role in student achievement and persistence. These are affordable institutional actions that can be integrated into the institution's strategic planning to assist students with their higher education goals. Reporting this information and making it readily available for students may play into their decision making when selecting a program. Improvements and institutional reforms must recognize the factors that can help Latina/o students get to the finish line by not only providing sound academic advising and faculty mentorship, but also reviewing their program and course inventory and asking if the programs offer a livable wage and valuable in-demand skills needed to thrive in the 21st century economy upon completion of the program. Research shows that students "view college as a means to a job with sufficient wages to support a family" (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 25). Students are trying to balance their school life with the many demands of their lives. Perna and Jones (2013) cite research by Levine and Cureton (1998) that found disenfranchised, underprivileged students (majority of them minority) "want to know what tangible outcomes a college education will buy them" (Bragg, 2013, p. 37).

Another institutional action that community colleges can take for nontraditional, part-time enrolled students is analyzing their enrollment data and scheduling courses around the days and times that work for students. Programs of study could be structured to accommodate the personal lives and work schedules of students. One initiative attempting to do this is Competency Based Education (CBE), a fast-track course alternative that deviates from the typical 16-week semester (Jones & Griffiths, 2017). This type of learning pathway allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills prior to entering a class. Based on the student's performance on a diagnostic assessment, an adaptive learning path is created to give students credit for what they do know and a learning path for the competencies that they still need to master (Jones &

Griffiths, 2017). Embedding these CBE courses in certificates and two-year degree programs can improve retention, lower cost to completion, and provide students with a pathway to completion.

The transfer process is yet another opportunity for institutional action that can support students enrolled in two-year institutions, as the intent to transfer to a four-year institution is often mired with complexity (Young et al., 2012). Coordination across both the two-year and four-year institutions can improve transfer rates. By connecting students to paths and people, students are better able to traverse the transfer system between each institution (Sabay & Wiles, 2020). When both the two-year and four-year institution align programming with admission cycles and realistic transfer plans, students are better able to “avoid time gaps” which can prolong completion or prevent persistence altogether (Sabay & Wiles, 2020, p. 115). The role of institutional agents can also assist with transfer goals. Faculty, staff, counselors, and other figures of authority are crucial facilitators of educational opportunities for racial minority students seeking to transfer to a four-year university (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001).

Through the development of programs and opportunities tailored to help disenfranchised and underrepresented students, institutions can demonstrate their value of the diversity of lived experiences of Latina/o students whilst providing them with resources. Asset-based thinking considers and values the strengths of Latina/o students, instead of holding deficit perspectives towards them (Carales & López, 2020). Carales and Lopez (2020) further underscore the understanding of the unique characteristics Latinx communities possess so that community college practitioners view them as cultural assets. Demography as opportunity can be utilized to reshape opportunity for those less privileged. It encourages institutions, such as community colleges, to adopt more equity minded perspectives and drive good policy and practice. Thus,

institutional actions that invest in the “examination of students’ experiences across measures ranging from academic performance to sense of belonging to labor market outcomes” can help remove harmful policies and practices encountered by students and shift dominant deficit thinking (Carales & Lopez, 2020; Edgecombe, 2019, p. 10).

Conclusion

Student persistence and completion at community colleges are low. The numbers are significantly lower among low-income students, minority students, and first-generation college students. Taxpayers, policymakers, and higher education researchers demand accountability and better completion rates from community college institutions. Understanding the institutional actions that promote persistence and completion can be used to make large scale improvements, especially at institutions serving nontraditional, minority and low-income students. Further, by adopting the institutional actions that work, institutions can also improve student learning and the overall student experience to help students towards their completion goals. This coupled with efforts to integrate demography as opportunity and asset-strength based principles can leverage successful outcomes that reflect the student body. The aim of this study is to contribute to community college research on the institutional actions that can promote positive student outcomes for nontraditional, Latina/o, and low-income students—who already face many barriers.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to better understand the relationship between student success outcomes and institutional actions. As described in the previous chapter, research finds that higher levels of student engagement are associated with better student outcomes (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Kuh et al., 2005). Moreover, Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) noted that the college environment is a more important factor in persistence than the characteristics with which the student enters college. The Student Pathways/Guided Pathways model suggests that providing students with a clear academic plan improves persistence (Bailey et al., 2015). Also, student-faculty interaction plays a large role in student persistence (Braxton et al., 2004), suggesting the classroom is where involvement occurs between students and faculty, thus impacting student persistence (Arbona, 2003; Arbona & Nora, 2007; Tinto, 2016). As the research reviewed suggests, it is worthwhile to examine the relationship between institutional actions and the achievement and retention of Latina/o students. This study focuses on one community college in the southwest region of Texas serving a large Latina/o student population. This section will describe the research questions guiding the analysis, design, and methodology used in this study.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this research study is to examine institutional actions that may affect the success of community college students, particularly low-income, Latina/o, and first-time-in-college students. Previous research has focused mainly on student characteristics to measure student persistence and completion for traditional, residential college students enrolled in four-year universities. However, research has not fully explained Latina/o nontraditional student persistence. Individual characteristics cannot completely explain attrition in community colleges.

Research from Bailey et al. (2005) found that “different community colleges essentially enrolling similar types of students have different graduation rates” (p. i). The study examines the institutional actions independent of the characteristics of the individual students to determine if what an institution does, positively impacts student outcomes.

Research Question

This study is guided by the overarching question: What institutional actions are related to achievement and persistence for Latina/o community college students? The research examines three institutional actions believed to predict positive student outcomes. The institutional actions include: (1) faculty feedback (provided to the student during the semester), (2) provision of an academic plan (provided by a counselor or advisor), and (3) contact by the college if the student is struggling. The three measurable student outcomes include the student’s responses on: (1) self-declared grade point average, (2) likelihood of withdrawal from school, and (3) intention to re-enroll.

Research Design

The quantitative research design utilizes the institutional data obtained from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The research design was adopted as surveys “have been widely used in education for many years” (Creswell, 2012, p. 376). Although surveys are unable to determine or explain cause and effect, the goal of the research study is to gain an understanding of institutional practices or actions that may improve persistence and completion. Hence, the responses could potentially provide useful information regarding the institutional actions El Paso Community College has carried out to improve student outcomes in persistence and completion, and to identify areas of improvement. Further, the

research will contribute to community college research on the relationships between institutional actions and student outcomes.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical procedures were followed to conduct this study, including contacting the EPCC Director of Institutional Research to determine the need for institutional review board (IRB) approval. The director determined that a school district IRB review would not be necessary considering the use of secondary data as the data source and the absence of any human interactions for this study. However, an IRB was submitted to EPCC, and approved after review. A university IRB approval was obtained for this dissertation research study.

Although an institutional pseudonym is not being used, confidentiality and anonymity is maintained for the study by reporting aggregate data for the Latina/o sample examined. The identity of individual students was not a relevant factor in this study.

Population and Sample

El Paso Community College is a large and designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) located on the United States and Mexico border, serving 28,846 students (Fall Book, 2017). Data from 2017 was used to provide an example of the student body during the time the survey was administered. The U.S. Department of Education defines an HSI as an institution with an “enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Hispanic Serving Institutions were created in the early 90s as Hispanics were becoming the largest ethnic minority population in the United States. As a response to the population growth, the federal government designated them as HSIs. Today they enroll two-thirds (67%) of all Hispanic undergraduates in US postsecondary education (Nuñez, 2021).

The sample for this study was Latina/o community college students enrolled full-time or part-time who participated in the 2017 Spring semester CCSSE. The students participating in the survey were selected from the college district's five campuses across the county. During the time the CCSSE survey was administered, the student body of the El Paso Community College district was 85% Hispanic, 57% female and 43% male, 70% enrolled part-time, and 46% reported as first-generation students (Fact Book, 2017).

Instrumentation

This study uses institutional survey data collected as part of a Pathways Toolkit: Intersecting Engagement Data with Pathways (CCSSE 2017-present) for the Spring 2017 semester (see Appendix A). The CCSSE assesses student engagement across the institution. CCSSE is a product and service developed in 2001 by the Center for Community College Student Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. It is a well-established tool that helps institutions focus on effective educational practices. Further, for those colleges administering the survey, the tool identifies areas for improvement in the programs and services provided to students. The CCSSE webpage states that "CCSSE asks about institutional practices and student behaviors that are highly correlated with student learning and retention" (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2020). The CCSSE's reliability has been studied and the instrument has been found to be reliable (Marti, 2008). Kuh (2001) determined that national assessment experts designed the instrument, and the validity of the survey is strong.

The price for participation in the CCSSE survey is based on enrollment size and is approximately \$17,000 for institutions of 22,000 or more students. The target number of

respondents is about 1,500 students. All accredited associate degree-granting colleges are eligible to participate in the survey.

El Paso Community College has administered the CCSSE survey for well over ten years. Each time the survey has been administered different questions have been asked. As noted in the 2017-present CCSSE survey, “The Pathways Model is composed of essential institutional practices that help students along their journey to success” (CCSSE, 2020). The Guided Pathways project is part of the American Association of Community Colleges reform and was adopted by EPCC to improve student persistence and completion. Benchmarks assessed by the CCSSE not only measure student engagement that can predict persistence, but also various dimensions related to the Pathways Model. The three key benchmarks include: (1) helping students get on a path, (2) helping students stay on their path, and (3) ensuring students are learning. Thus, these benchmarks were used to examine the three independent variables: (1) faculty feedback (provided to the student during the semester), (2) provision of an academic plan (provided by a counselor or advisor), and (3) contact by the college if the student is struggling.

The CCSSE survey is a 47-item questionnaire measuring student demographic information and benchmarks on student engagement. Each time the CCSSE is administered, it is introduced to students in the spring semester during a credit bearing course. The survey administrator (usually a staff member) administers the survey and informs the student that the information from the survey is confidential and used to help improve the college’s services. The survey administrator is responsible for the administration, collection, and return of surveys. This person acts as the link between the college's campus coordinator and the instructors whose classes are being surveyed. It is the survey administrator's responsibility to arrange class time to administer the surveys in the identified classes. The administrator conducting the survey follows

procedures and a script is read to each class. The script contains important information about how the information will be collected and used. The survey takes about 40-50 minutes to complete and involves multiple choice and Likert-type questions. There are no open-ended questions and there is no question that allows for comments. Respondents can skip questions and the majority of the survey allows for only one response per question. The Office of Research, Accreditation and Planning in the Institutional Research Department at EPCC is responsible for managing, administering, and collecting the survey results. The Center for Community College Student Engagement receives and analyzes the data, as does EPCC.

All variables included in the data analyses are derived from the students' responses to the CCSSE instrument. As the Director of Curriculum and Instructional Development at EPCC, the data was easily attainable for me. However, obtaining answers regarding how exactly the CCSSE is used at EPCC is still a challenge and the researcher is seeking clarification on a number of processes related to CCSSE.

Data Collection

The El Paso Community College District provided the CCSSE dataset to campuses, deans, faculty, staff, the Board of Trustees, and the President for the purpose of providing feedback on student engagement for the school year 2016-2017. The dataset contains anonymous student responses to 47 questions administered by paper and pencil during the 2017 Spring semester. The students were sampled at the classroom level in randomly selected academic and career/technical courses. Roughly 1,446 first-year students responded to the survey out of 1,500 first-time-in-college students. Sixty-one percent of the students were enrolled on a part-time status and about 60% were 19-24 years of age. The students were not required to provide their student identification number on the survey, and an analysis will examine how many students

optionally provided their number. Given that the surveys were anonymous and did not require student identification numbers, the ability to link survey responses to institutional data such as persistence and completion is limited.

Variables

The CCSSE dataset was transferred from Microsoft Excel to SPSS 27.0 for statistical analysis. Specific items on the CCSSE were identified as demographic, independent, and dependent variables. Demographic variables included race/ethnicity, gender, age group, dependents (children), full- or part-time status, highest academic credential, number of credits earned, number of terms enrolled, and self-reported high school grade point average. Only participants who identified as “Hispanic/Latino” on the CCSSE and only participants who had not yet attained an associate degree or higher were included in analyses.

Three independent variables (predictors) correspond to the institutional actions the community college was participating in to assist students with student success and completion, as measured by students’ responses to several items on the CCSSE. The first independent variable, faculty feedback, was assessed through participants’ responses to how often during the current academic year they “received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors” on their performance, based on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*) (see Appendix A, item 4n). The second independent variable, provision of an academic plan, was assessed through participants’ Yes/No responses to whether “an advisor helped me develop an academic plan” before the end of the first academic term at the college. An additional response option, “I’m still in my first academic term; I have not yet developed an academic plan” was coded as a missing response, as it appears to be the equivalent of a “not applicable” response choice (see Appendix A, item 20). For the third independent variable, participants responded Yes/No as to whether “someone at this

college contacts me if I am struggling with my studies to help me get the assistance I need” (see Appendix A, item 21). Participants’ Yes/No responses were recoded as 1 (*Yes*) or 0 (*No*).

The dependent variables were three student success outcomes also assessed through CCSSE items. The first dependent variable, college grade point average, was assessed through self-report (see Appendix A, item 29). Letter grades of A, B, C, and D were recoded on a scale from 1 (*D*) to 4 (*A*). The second dependent variable, likelihood of withdrawal from college, was derived from an item that asked participants to rate the likelihood that several different factors would cause them to withdraw: working full-time; caring for dependents; academically unprepared; and, lack of finances (see Appendix A, item 23). Participants rated each factor on a scale from 1 (*not likely*) to 4 (*very likely*). The likelihood ratings were averaged to compute a single variable measuring withdrawal. The third dependent variable, intention to re-enroll, consisted of participants’ responses to a multiple-choice question about when they plan to take college classes again (see Appendix A, item 28). The only answer option that indicated re-enrollment was coded as “1” and other answer options were coded as “0”.

These demographic, independent, and dependent variables were prepared for descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses to address the research question.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to outline the research methodology for answering the research question. A discussion of the sample population, instrumentation, data collection, and procedures outlines how the study was designed and conducted. The findings from this research are intended to help community colleges explain the relationships between institutional actions and student outcomes. Survey participants contributed to this study by sharing their experiences

unique to El Paso Community College. The goal of Chapter 4 will be to provide the results of this study using the methodology described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine institutional actions that may relate to student achievement and persistence for Latina/o community college students. Using data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), the study examines three essential institutional practices that suggest a correlation with student success: (1) faculty feedback (provided to the student during the semester), (2) provision of an academic plan (provided by a counselor or advisor), and (3) contact by a college representative (counselor/advisor, and/or faculty or staff member) when the student is struggling. To understand the relationship between these institutional actions and Latina/o student success, a data set consisting of 1,020 Latina/o community college student responses on the 2016-2017 CCSSE survey was analyzed using a quantitative research methodology. This chapter is organized into several sections. The first section describes the study sample demographics. In the second section, descriptive and frequency data for the study's variables are discussed. Then, correlation and regression analyses are reported. Findings from the analyses are presented and followed by a discussion in Chapter 5.

Participant Demographics

The participants in this study were Latina/o community college students enrolled part-time or full-time at El Paso Community College (EPCC) during the 2016-2017 academic school year. These students were enrolled in either academic or career-and-technical programs for the 2016-2017 academic year. As the purpose of the study was to solely examine Latina/o students enrolled at EPCC, only respondents who identified as Latina/o were included in the study ($N = 1,020$). Adjustments for missing values were not implemented due to the large sample size. Sample size across variables fluctuates to a limited extent due to some respondents not answering all questions. The sample includes 586 (58%) female respondents and 425 (42%) male

respondents. There were 36% ($n = 364$) who marked their age group between 18-19 years, 33% ($n = 334$) were 20-21 years, and 13% ($n = 135$) were 22-24 years, and 18% were older than 24. There were 81% ($n = 829$) who indicated having no children and 19% ($n = 190$) with children. About 66% of the sample was enrolled part-time and 33% were enrolled full-time. Nearly the entire sample (93%, $n = 953$) reported having a high school diploma while 6% ($n = 58$) reported having a GED. As for the number of credits earned, 37% ($n = 379$) had accumulated 1-14 credits, followed by 22% ($n = 220$) with 15-29 credits, 15% ($n = 148$) with 30-44 credits, and 13% ($n = 130$) with 45-60. Nine percent reported having earned zero credits ($n = 92$) while 4% ($n = 36$) had earned more than 60 credits. Table 4.1 indicates the frequencies for the number of terms enrolled.

Table 4.1. *Frequency Counts for Terms Enrolled*

Terms enrolled	<i>n</i>	(%)
1	203	19.9
2	319	31.3
3 or 4	326	32.0
5 or 6	110	10.8
More than 6	60	5.9

Note: $N = 1,018$

Dependent Variables

There were three dependent variables (criteria) in this study representing the student outcomes assessed through self-report on the CCSSE: (1) self-declared college grade point average, (2) likelihood of withdrawal from school, and (3) intention to re-enroll. Table 4.2 shows the mean scores for the two continuous dependent variables. College GPA ranged from 1 to 4.

Mean scores for the likelihood of withdrawing from college ranged from 1 to 4. Table 4.3 below shows the frequencies for the dichotomous variable, intention to re-enroll.

Table 4.2. *Descriptive Statistics for Two Dependent Variables*

Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
College Grade Point Average	969	3.03	.71
Likelihood of Withdrawal	989	2.13	.80

Note: *N* = 1,020

Table 4.3. *Frequencies for Dependent Variable: Intention to Re-enroll*

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Intends to re-enroll	779	76.4%
No intention to re-enroll	231	22.6%
Total	1,010	99.0%

Independent Variables

There were three independent variables (predictors) in this study representing institutional actions as reported by students on the CCSSE: (1) faculty feedback, (2) provision of an academic plan, and (3) contact by the college if the student is struggling. Participants' scores for receiving prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on their performance ranged from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*) with a mean of 2.65 (*SD* = .891), which means that community college instructors' provision of prompt feedback to Latina/o college students was slightly above average. Percentages of Latina/o students who reported receiving an academic plan from a community college advisor was 59% (*n* = 604) while 25% (*n* = 256) reported not receiving one. Only 17% (*n* = 173) of Latina/o students reported being contacted by college personnel if struggling and 62% (*n* = 633) were not contacted if struggling.

Correlation Analyses

A non-parametric test, Spearman’s rank order correlation, was used to examine the associations among the predictor variables (academic plan, prompt feedback, and contact if struggling) and the criterion variables (intention to re-enroll, self-declared college GPA, and likelihood of withdrawal), given that the combination of continuous and dichotomous variables would not be appropriate for a standard Pearson correlation. Additionally, a subset of demographic variables was identified for potential influence on outcome variables. These covariates included: number of credits earned, number of academic terms enrolled, enrollment status (part-time, coded as “0,” and full-time, coded as “1”), gender (female, coded as “0,” and male, coded as “1,”) and self-reported high school grade point average. The covariates were included in a correlation matrix to observe their relationships with dependent variables (see Table 4.4).

Among the independent variables, correlation analyses showed a positive correlation between prompt feedback and an academic plan, $r_s = .14, p < .001$, and between prompt feedback and contact if struggling, $r_s .08, p = .02$. A significant relationship emerged between contact if struggling and academic plan, $r_s = .19, p < .001$. In other words, the three independent variables were significantly related to each other.

Table 4.4. *Spearman Correlation of Independent and Dependent Variables and Covariates*

Variables	College GPA	Likelihood of Withdrawal	Intention to Re-enroll
Prompt Feedback	.006 (.86)	-.04 (.27)	.12** (.000)
Academic Plan	.02 (.58)	-.09* (.01)	.04 (.27)
Contact if Struggling	.01 (.71)	-.01 (.88)	.007 (.85)

Covariates

Credits Earned	.10** (.001)	.06 (.07)	0.03 (.42)
Academic Terms Enrolled	.02 (.59)	.05 (.11)	-.03 (.39)
Enrollment Status	-.12** (.000)	.04 (.26)	-.04 (.20)
Gender	.03 (.41)	-.006 (.85)	.05 (.11)
High School GPA	.28** (.000)	.03 (.42)	.05 (.10)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Among the dependent variables, self-reported college GPA was positively related to intention to re-enroll, $r_s = .09$, $p = .008$ and negatively related to likelihood of withdrawal, $r_s = -.07$, $p = .03$. Intention to re-enroll was negatively related to likelihood of withdrawal, $r_s = -.06$, $p = .047$. Thus, the three dependent variables were significantly related to each other.

For correlations among the independent and dependent variables, academic plan was negatively correlated with likelihood of withdrawal. Prompt feedback was positively related to intention to re-enroll.

An examination of the covariates showed a negative relationship between credits earned and academic plan $r_s = -.07$, $p = .04$, and a positive relationship between credits earned and self-declared college GPA, $r_s = .10$, $p = .001$. Number of academic terms enrolled and contact if struggling showed a negative relationship, $r_s = -.07$, $p = .04$, and there was a negative relationship between enrollment status and prompt feedback $r_s = -.10$, $p = .002$. There was a significant relationship between high school GPA and self-declared college GPA, $r_s = .28$, $p < .001$. Based on the significance of the correlations between covariates and dependent variables,

the covariates selected for inclusion in subsequent regression analyses included credits earned, enrollment status, and high school GPA.

Statistical Assumptions

Prior to regression analyses, data was examined for outliers, normality, and linearity. Visual inspection of Q-Q plots and boxplots was conducted to observe normality and linearity. Kurtosis and skewness statistics were reviewed to check normality assumptions. For continuous variables, values of skewness and kurtosis ranged from -.04 to .57. Tests indicated satisfactory normality and linearity to proceed with analyses.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to address the research question by determining the extent to which college GPA, as an academic outcome, would be predicted by institutional actions (prompt feedback, academic plan, and college contact), while controlling for demographic variables (covariates: high school GPA, credits earned, and enrollment status). Hierarchical multiple regression involves the use of separate blocks of variables to designate distinct types of influence on the outcomes. Block one consisted of high school GPA, and block two consisted of college credits earned and enrollment status. Block three added the predictor variables.

Model 1 of the analysis showed that high school GPA significantly predicted college GPA (see Table 4.5). Model 2 demonstrates that in addition to high school GPA, credits earned was positively related college GPA, while enrollment status was negatively related to college GPA, such that part-time status was associated with higher GPA. Model 3 introduced the institutional action variables (feedback, academic plan, and contact if struggling), but none of

them significantly contributed to the variance in college GPA. Thus, the final model showed that only the covariates significantly predicted college GPA.

Table 4.5. Hierarchical Multiple Regression for College GPA

Variable	B	SE	Beta	t	<i>p</i>	R ²	R ² Change	F	<i>p</i>
Model 1	2.31	.13		18.45	.000	.05	.05	31.76	.000
High School GPA	.22	.04	.22	5.64	.000				
Model 2	2.28	.13		17.12	.000	.08	.03	10.21	.000
High School GPA	.22	.04	.22	5.70	.000				
Credits Earned	.05	.02	.09	2.34	.020				
Enrollment	-.22	.06	-.15	-3.99	.000				
Model 3	2.31	.16		14.50	.000	.81	.000	.11	.95
High School GPA	.22	.04	.22	5.70	.000				
Credits Earned	.05	.02	.09	2.34	.02				
Enrollment	-.22	.05	-.15	-3.9	.000				
Prompt Feedback	-.02	.03	-.02	-.52	.61				
Academic Plan	.01	.06	.007	.17	.87				
Contact if Struggling	.02	.07	.009	.23	.82				

Note: *N* = 1,020

A second hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which likelihood of withdrawal would be predicted by the same set of institutional actions and

covariates. Across all three models of the analysis, none of the predictors or covariates were significantly related to likelihood of withdrawal (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. *Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Likelihood of Withdrawal*

Variable	B	SE	Beta	t	<i>p</i>	R ²	R ² Change	F	<i>p</i>
Model 1	2.04	.15		13.22	.000	.001	.001	.85	.36
High School GPA	.05	.05	.04	.92	.36				
Model 2	1.99	.17		11.99	.000	.003	.001	.59	.62
High School GPA	.05	.05	.04	.94	.35				
Credits Earned	.01	.03	.02	.49	.63				
Enrollment	.06	.07	.03	.83	.41				
Model 3	1.98	.20		9.99	.000	.008	.005	.82	.55
High School GPA	.04	.05	.04	.86	.39				
Credits Earned	.01	.03	.02	.40	.69				
Enrollment	.06	.07	.03	.81	.42				
Prompt Feedback	.04	.04	.04	1.00	.32				
Academic Plan	-.11	.07	-.07	-1.57	.12				
Contact if Struggling	.02	.08	.01	.30	.77				

Note: *N* = 1,020

Binominal Logistic Regression Analysis

A third hierarchical regression was conducted to test the extent to which institutional actions predict the intention to re-enroll, controlling for the same set of demographic variables. However, because intention to re-enroll is a dichotomous variable, it was necessary to conduct a binomial logistic regression (Field, 2018; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Similar to the previous analyses, variables were entered in three blocks. The initial blocks showed no significant predictive effects of high school GPA, enrollment status, or number of credits earned. The third block again showed no significant effects for the covariates, nor for the predictors academic plan or contact if struggling; although, there was a significant effect of prompt feedback (see Table 4.7). In other words, participants who received prompt feedback from instructors more often were more likely to report an intention to re-enroll.

Table 4.7. *Logistic Regression Analysis for Intention to Re-enroll, Block 3*

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1 ^a	HS GPA	.25	.15	2.75	1	.10	1.28	.96	1.71
	Enrollment Status	.07	.21	.11	1	.74	1.07	.71	1.61
	Credits Earned	.01	.08	.03	1	.86	1.01	.87	1.18
	Prompt Feedback	.27	.11	5.45	1	.02	1.30	1.04	1.63
	Academic Plan	-.03	.22	.02	1	.89	.97	.63	1.49
	Contact if Struggling	.03	.25	.02	1	.89	1.03	.63	1.69
	Constant	-.21	.61	.12	1	.73	.81		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Prompt Feedback, AcadPlan_01, Contact_01.

Note: N = 1,020

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this study focusing on the Latina/o student respondents to the 2017 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), the influence of institutional actions on student success was examined. There was only limited evidence of this relationship in terms of the finding that prompt feedback was positively related to the intention to re-enroll in college. There were also additional findings that can help community college leaders better understand factors that may contribute to student persistence across Latina/o students. This section presents the conclusions for significant findings, followed by recommendations for policy and practice, and future research.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the institutional actions: (1) faculty feedback (provided to the student during the semester), (2) provision of an academic plan (provided by a counselor or advisor), and (3) contact by a college representative (counselor/advisor, and/or faculty or staff member) when a student is struggling, which may demonstrate a relationship with student success outcomes, specifically: (1) self-declared college grade point average, (2) likelihood of withdrawal from school, and (3) intention to re-enroll at one community college primarily serving low-income, first-time-in-college students. Additional variables were examined to determine if any of these characteristics influenced the analysis and its results, such as enrollment status, gender, high school GPA, credits earned, and academic terms enrolled. This study also focused on the theme of the CCSSE 2016-2017 which intersects student engagement data with the guided pathways model. For this study, two out of three key areas of the pathways model were examined: 1) helping students **get** on a path, and 2) helping students **stay** on their path, which are represented by the criteria chosen for the analysis.

Discussion on Findings

This study found that the three institutional actions examined (prompt feedback, academic plan, and contact if struggling) did not significantly predict college GPA. However, high school GPA was a significant predictor of college GPA, demonstrating that Latina/o students with higher entering GPAs experienced higher achievement outcomes in community college. This assumption coincides with former research on Latina/o students highlighting the importance of academic preparedness (Nora & Crisp, 2009).

Total credits earned predicted college GPA, suggesting that as students earn more college credits, college GPA seems to be positively affected. A significant negative correlation was identified between enrollment status and college GPA, indicating that part-time enrollment was more favorable towards college GPA than full-time enrollment. Thus, non-traditional enrollment in higher education is confirming a trend in part-time enrollment patterns and may be the new normal in college enrollment and student success outcomes. Additionally, students understanding their life's obligations may be seeking balance in their academic journey through part-time enrollment as they manage external responsibilities such as employment and caregiving while maintaining good academic standing. The college GPA findings from this study confirm that Latina/o college achievement is multifaceted (Nora, 2003), showing that precollege preparation and personal attributes and skills have an impact on student college success.

This study found that the three institutional actions did not predict students' likelihood of withdrawal, the second student outcome examined. The covariates (high school GPA, credits earned, and enrollment status) did not significantly predict this outcome, either. The model tested, which included both the covariates and the institutional actions, appeared not to sufficiently explain Latina/o students' likelihood of withdrawal.

This study found that one institutional action (prompt feedback from faculty) significantly predicted the intention of community college Latina/o students to re-enroll. No other institutional action (contact if struggling or academic plan) significantly predicted intent to re-enroll for community college Latina/o students. High school GPA, the number of academic terms enrolled, and full-time/part-time status were not associated with the student's intent to persist. Perhaps the Latina/o student sample enrolled in community college did not need to be contacted if they were struggling because they were not struggling. The majority of Latina/o students reported receiving an academic plan. Frequencies statistics demonstrated that a large proportion of students were given an academic plan and that a larger proportion were not contacted if struggling. Therefore, it is possible that those two institutional actions as measured by the CCSSE did not contribute to explaining students' intentions regarding persistence. Students reported a high propensity to continue or complete their academic pathway, while reporting a high part-time enrollment status.

Limitations and Strengths of The Study

The sample for this study consisted of Latina/o community college students enrolled part-time or full-time in academic and career and technical coursework whose institution participated in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) in the spring of 2017. The sample of the study was limited to the respondents of the survey. Responses to the questions may have been misunderstood, and there may have been an unwillingness to provide honest responses in areas related to high school or college GPA, likelihood to withdraw, and intention to persist/complete. Students may have also been unfamiliar with higher education terms, such as "academic plan", "sequence of courses", "academic term," and their direct relationships to the student's personal academic goals. For instance, those students in a

vocational track, who usually enroll in short term workforce certificates, may have been uncertain about the difference between “completing a college certificate and/or transferring to a 4-year college or university” (CCSSE survey, 2017, p. 4). In my experience as the Curriculum Director at El Paso Community College, students are sometimes unaware that Associate of Applied Sciences degrees and vocational certificates usually do not transfer or that many of the courses do not apply to a four-year institution. Often, students are unfamiliar with the differences between certificates and degrees, or whether they are academic or career and technical. Further, responses may have been mired by the students’ former academic experiences, or a gap between high school and college, and their overall college expectations such as the receipt of prompt faculty feedback, the definition of prompt feedback, or the development of an academic plan with an advisor.

An additional limitation of the study was the wording of the questions. For example, question 20 reads, “Before the end of my first academic term at this college, an advisor helped me develop an academic plan (a personalized plan with a defined sequence of courses for completing a college certificate or degree and/or for transferring to a 4-year college or university)”. Question 20 may have yielded more precise answers if it would have been tailored to the student’s education track (vocational or academic), clearly worded, and with less higher education verbiage. Question 21, “Someone at this college contacts me if I am struggling with my studies to help me get the assistance I need,” excludes students that do not find themselves struggling, or limits struggling to only studies, and excludes other factors that may inhibit their learning.

Question 28 examines intention, as it asked students, “When do you plan to take classes at this college again?” The students were given four response options to the question, 1) I will

accomplish my goal(s) during this academic term and will not be returning, 2) I have no current plan to return, 3) Within the next 12 months, and lastly, 4) Uncertain. The responses to this question don't express much other than vague intent. The responses to this question would have been more reliable had completion (graduation/transfer) data been collected of the students who participated in this survey.

Another potential limitation of the study was limiting the sample to only Latina/o students. The original student sample size went from 1,546 to 1020, a 34% difference. Perhaps examining the entire sample size, regardless of race or ethnicity, may have yielded different results. Moreover, examining the entire sample size may have revealed whether any specific factors such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, enrollment status differences made a difference in the analysis. This additional information may have provided a more robust study within and beyond Latina/o students since so many students are falling into the non-traditional student category and many of these same students begin at community colleges.

To help identify future persistence and completion efforts for the Latina/o student population, further investigation on institutional actions is needed, specifically which ones prove to be effective across this student population. Since research limitations exist on institutional actions, such as campus climate, academic plans, and faculty mentorship (Bailey, et al, 2005; Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Jenkins, et al., 2006), understanding what specific institutional actions prove to work for the Latina/o student population has its advantages, as more and more college students are Latina/o (Castellanos & Jones, 2003). Examining what other Latina/o serving institutions are doing to improve retention and completion in a two-year community college, with similar student demographics, can expand the research literature and the college

policies, procedures, practices, and overall, college operations to anticipate this growing and omnipresent student body (Carales & López, 2020; Krogstad, 2016).

Recommendations for Practice and for Future Research

The analysis looked at relationships and did not examine other variables that may be the cause of a correlation within the study (Field, 2018). While cause and effect cannot be determined from the correlational analysis, the hierarchical regression, and the logistic regression, recommendations can be made for future practitioners looking to expand and improve institutional actions that promote student success. The research found high school GPA was a strong predictor of college GPA. Higher education institutions can better utilize this information to establish policies and practices that take into consideration the students' academic information. From establishing remedial courses, to the development of co-requisite course pairings (remedial courses paired with college level courses), the information can strengthen learning in community college settings for those students identified as not college ready. Although this study found that the institutional actions did not seem to effect student outcomes, students receiving prompt feedback, an academic plan from a counselor/advisor, or contact from college staff may enhance students' ability to succeed as it inspires self-esteem and confidence (Carales & Lopez, 2020; Romo et al., 2020). These examples serve as positive reinforcement interactions between college staff (i.e., counselors, faculty) and students, and support asset-and-strength based theories, such as Rendón's (1994) validation theory about better serving Latina/o community college students. Community colleges serving Latina/o students can adopt asset-and-strength based theories, like validation theory practices across the institution to enhance the Latina/o student college experience and help foster student determination (Romo et al., 2020).

Additionally, improving the delivery and information of academic plans may help students stay on track. Clearly identifying the degree information, such as the course work and completion time, may help students with their academic goals, regardless of enrollment status (Bailey et al., 2015). These degree plans, paired with feedback from faculty may also prove fruitful, as the research shows that the role of faculty contributes to the student's positive college experience and helps with retention efforts (Bensimon et al., 2019; Stanton-Salazar, 1997), as well as the number of faculty of color seen across campus (Nora & Crisp, 2009). Thus, institutional action engaging faculty across community colleges serving precisely Latina/o students should include the adoption of policies where faculty consistently and continuously provide feedback (Rendón, 1994). This feedback can be on the student's academic plans, and faculty and counselors could check-in on the student's program progress. Moreover, faculty need to give feedback on coursework within days to students on assignments. These institutional practices can be implemented across the various learning management systems (i.e., Blackboard, Canvas, etc.) used across institutions, to include the use of the calendars for posting deadlines, assignments, and tests; use of timely interactions with students through email, instant messaging, discussion forums, and video conferencing features; and use of assessment and grading tools to measure and communicate student progress (Brown et al., 2015). These deliberate communication efforts can inform students on their progress and help them feel more engaged and integrated in their learning as research shows that "moving from a high-school environment to competitive, higher-order thinking courses heightens pressures among students" (Castillo, 2020, p. 50).

Moreover, there are characteristics of the institution that impact student success outcomes (Bensimon et al., 2019). Identifying what these institutional actions are can strengthen student

outcomes. As the institutional improvements can include the characteristics and organizational structure of the community college such as practices in policy design, program implementation, and management (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Bailey, 2006; Bailey et al., 2015; Bensimon, 2005; Edenfield & McBrayer, 2020; Lei, 2016; Nora & Crisp, 2009). These practices can integrate demography as opportunity principles by deliberately attempting to know their students and their needs and then adopting responsive policies and practices that reflect the student culture (Edgecombe, 2019). Although, this research study did not focus on the organizational structures within the particular institution being examined, it is paramount that institutions are deliberate about serving Latina/o students. The institutional structures, policies, and practices, whether academic or non-academic (e.g., class offerings and schedules, office hours, advising experiences, faculty roles) should be examined, rethought, and rebuilt to create a service delivery ecosystem. These non-academic efforts can also include the integration of asset-based thinking which can give Latina/o students the ability to think positively about their academic experience and goals (Carales & López, 2020). It also encourages institutions, such as community colleges, to adopt more equity minded perspectives and drive good policy and practice to enact positive outcomes for these same Latina/o students (Bensimon, 2005).

By increasing the student's competency beliefs in seeking higher education, Latina/o students may improve their "academic performance and persistence" (Romo et al., 2020, p. 122). Moreover, research from Nora and Crisp (2009) encourage the integration across all student services, from instruction and tutoring services, to admissions, registration, and financial aid. These systems need to adequately connect students to services to improve persistence and completion and eliminate the barriers Latina/o students encounter in attempting to navigate college systems. Further, the infrastructure that holds the information that is presented to

students (i.e., website, intranet, registration, payment systems, enrollment management systems and learning management systems) must be coherent—as institutions must think explicitly as to what the goals are for their students.

Conclusion

Results of the study showed that high school GPA is tied to college GPA, and prompt feedback is associated with the intention to re-enroll. The research would benefit from connecting the CCSSE data to college completion and transfer data for this sample. However, what can be ascertained from the research, and confirms previous research, is that college preparedness impacts college achievement (Nora, 2003; Nora & Crisp, 2009). Further, the data may also indicate that for those students in community college, with higher high school and college GPAs, a stronger self-perception and optimistic disposition (reflected by high intent to re-enroll and high part-time enrollments) may contribute to reaching academic goals (Romo et al., 2020).

For Latina/o students attending community colleges, the research shows that challenges exist within the higher education pipeline, such as access to information, navigating the college environment, and understanding academic expectations (Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Clayton et al., 2019; Nora & Crisp, 2009). Thus, institutional factors matter, however more research is warranted to determine what institutional factors impact student success outcomes, and why. Community colleges serving Latina/o students can examine harmful policies and practices that inhibit student success and begin making changes for improvement (Edgecombe, 2019). Conversely, there is a need to address persistence and completion for Latina/o students with more equity-minded institutional solutions. At the institutional level, these efforts can reduce barriers through solid policies and practices, and by improving the delivery of student services

and information, via concerted and coherent communication (Edgecombe, 2019; Nora, 2003; Ross et al., 2010; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Strayhorn, 2008).

Further, as faculty play an active role in positive student outcomes, the research shows that faculty play an integral role in student success outcomes. By understanding their students' academic goals vis a vis the academic plan, faculty can help orient the students towards success. However, this places a burden on faculty, as they need to learn transfer, course and degree requirements, enrollment and registration information, and formal and informal rules on the admissions/completion process. Obtaining institutional support, where the institution develops a system of active learning and information/knowledge sharing can remove the “structural obstacles (e.g., lack of curriculum alignment)” for students starting their education at community colleges (Bensimon et al., 2019, p. 1715). Additionally, faculty should be trained on asset-and-strength-based theories and identify ways to reduce deficit-thinking perspectives. By challenging their negative perceptions, assumptions, generalizations, and beliefs, faculty can elevate their awareness of cultural differences and see students as assets. Subsequently, further research serving Latina/o community college students is needed to identify the institutional actions that can help them achieve academic success.

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6. During the current academic year, how much reading and writing have you done <u>at this college</u> ? (Please respond to each item)	None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More than 20
a. Number of assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or packets of course readings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Number of written papers or reports of any length	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Mark the response that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the current academic year have challenged you to do your best work at this college.

Extremely challenging ⑦ ⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① Extremely easy

8. Which of the following have you done, or are you currently doing <u>at this college</u> ? (Please respond to each item)	Yes	No
a. Internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. An English course taught specifically for students whose first language is not English (ESL, ESOL)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Developmental/remedial reading course (also referred to as Basic Skills, College Prep, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Developmental/remedial writing course (also referred to as Basic Skills, College Prep, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Developmental/remedial math course (also referred to as Basic Skills, College Prep, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Honors course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. How much does <u>this college</u> emphasize the following? (Please respond to each item)	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
a. Encouraging you to spend significant amounts of time studying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Providing the support you need to help you succeed at this college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Providing the support you need to thrive socially	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Providing the financial support you need to afford your education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following? (Please respond to each item)	None	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-30	More than 30
a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Working for pay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Participating in college-sponsored activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, intramural sports, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Commuting to and from classes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. How much has your experience <u>at this college</u> contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? (Please respond to each item)	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
a. Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Writing clearly and effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Speaking clearly and effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Thinking critically and analytically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Solving numerical problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Working effectively with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Learning effectively on your own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Developing clearer career goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Gaining information about career opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. This section has three parts. Please answer all three parts, indicating (1) how often you have used the following services during the current academic year, (2) how satisfied you are with the services, and (3) how important the services are to you at this college. (Please respond to each item)

	(1) Frequency of Use				(2) Satisfaction				(3) Importance		
	5 or more times	2-4 times	1 time	Never	Very	Some-what	Not at all	N.A.	Very	Some-what	Not at all
a. Academic advising/planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Career counseling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Job placement assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Peer or other tutoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Skill labs (writing, math, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Child care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Financial aid advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Computer lab	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Student organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Transfer advising/planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Library resources and services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Services for students with disabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Services for active military and veterans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. During the current academic term at this college, I completed registration before the first class session(s).

- Yes; I was registered for all of my courses before the first class session(s)
- Mostly; I was registered for most of my courses before the first class session(s)
- Partly; I was registered for some of my courses before the first class session(s)
- No; I was not registered for any of my courses before the first class session(s)

14. The one response that best describes my experience with orientation when I first came to this college is:

- I took part in an online orientation prior to the beginning of classes
- I attended an on-campus orientation prior to the beginning of classes
- I enrolled in an orientation course as part of my course schedule during my first academic term
- I was not aware of a college orientation
- I was unable to participate in orientation due to scheduling or other issues

15. During my first academic year at this college, I participated in a first-year experience program.

- Yes
- No

16. During my first academic term at this college, I participated in an organized learning community (a formal program in which groups of students take two or more classes together).

- Yes
- No

17. During my first academic term at this college, I participated in a student success course (a course that teaches the skills needed to succeed in college).

- Yes
- No

18. I was told that I should enroll in a developmental/remedial course (also referred to as Basic Skills, College Prep, etc.) in my first academic term at this college, and I...

- Did enroll in more than one of these courses
- Did enroll in one of these courses
- Did not enroll in any of these courses
- Not applicable

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- 34. How many **total** academic terms have you been enrolled **at this college**?
 - This is my first academic term
 - This is my second academic term
 - This is my third or fourth academic term
 - This is my fifth or sixth academic term
 - I have been enrolled more than six academic terms
- 35. Would you recommend **this college** to a friend or family member?
 - Yes
 - No
- 36. How would you evaluate your overall educational experience **at this college**?
 - Excellent
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
- 37. Do you have children who live with you and depend on you for their care?
 - Yes
 - No
- 38. Mark your age group.
 - Under 18
 - 18–19
 - 20–21
 - 22–24
 - 25–29
 - 30–39
 - 40–49
 - 50–64
 - 65+
- 39. Your gender identity:
 - Man
 - Woman
 - Other
 - I prefer not to respond

SAMPLE

	Yes	No
40. Are you married?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. Is English your native (first) language?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. Are you a current or former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
43. Are you an international student or non-resident alien?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44. Are you a student-athlete on a team sponsored by this college's athletics department?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
45. What is your racial or ethnic identification? <i>(Mark all that apply)</i>		
<input type="radio"/> American Indian or Alaska Native		
<input type="radio"/> Asian		
<input type="radio"/> Black or African American		
<input type="radio"/> Hispanic or Latino		
<input type="radio"/> Native Hawaiian		
<input type="radio"/> Pacific Islander (non-Native Hawaiian)		
<input type="radio"/> White		
<input type="radio"/> Other		
<input type="radio"/> I prefer not to respond		

46. What is the highest academic credential you have earned? (Mark only one)

- None
- GED
- High school diploma
- Vocational/technical certificate
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's/doctoral/professional degree

47. Who in your family has attended at least some college? (Mark all that apply)

- Mother
- Father
- Brother/Sister
- Child
- Spouse/Partner
- Legal Guardian
- No one

Additional Items
(Please respond to these items if requested)

1. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	11. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
2. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	12. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
3. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	13. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
4. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	14. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
5. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	15. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
6. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	16. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
7. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	17. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
8. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	18. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
9. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	19. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
10. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E	20. <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E

Using the list provided, please fill in the bubbles that correspond to the code indicating your program, major, or pathway of study. In the top row, indicate the first number in the program code. In the bottom row, indicate the second number in the program code.

<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 7	<input type="radio"/> 8	<input type="radio"/> 9
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 7	<input type="radio"/> 8	<input type="radio"/> 9



Vita

Yvette V. Huerta (Garcia) was born in El Paso, Texas. She graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso with a degree in Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a minor in Communication Studies. She then graduated with a Master's in Interdisciplinary Studies in Transborder Governance and Public Administration from San Diego State University and la Universidad Autonoma de Baja California in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. Yvette entered higher education first a researcher, then as adjunct faculty, and now as a practitioner. She worked at several research laboratories at UTEP, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and SDSU. She was a Project Coordinator at the California Distance Learning Health Network under the auspices of San Diego State University Research Foundation and Institute Manager for the Institute for Behavioral and Community Health at San Diego State University, Graduate School of Public Health and San Diego State University Research Foundation. Yvette worked in multiple projects funded by the California Department of Public Health, California Community Foundation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Institutes of Health. Prior to working in higher education, Yvette was a Community Organizer for the San Diego Organizing Project in where she worked with marginalized and disenfranchised communities in San Diego inner-city neighborhoods. Through her work, she started the Inner-City Action Network I-CAN in where she bridged community resources and stakeholders and advocated for equity in affordable housing, public safety, access to education, and more. She became adjunct faculty member at National University in 2011. In 2016, Yvette obtained a position at El Paso Community College as the Director of Curriculum and Instructional Development.

Yvette began her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Administration in 2017. Yvette plans to continue her work in improving student success outcomes in institutions of higher learning through research and practice. It is through her work, that she will continue to break systemic barriers that prevent non-traditional and minority students from completing their academic goals and obtaining upward mobility.