

2020

Understanding Retention Issues Among African American Males in a Community College Setting

Angee Ponder
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Angee Ponder

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Walden University

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Abstract

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by

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MS, Chicago State University, 2009

MA, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1995

BS, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1992

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2020

Abstract

Efforts to improve retention and graduation rates of African American male students in higher education have largely been unsuccessful despite the design and delivery of special courses. During the 2017 academic year, after completion of a college success seminar (CSS), the retention rates for African American male students at a Midwestern community college was only 14% compared to 33% for Hispanic and 60% for Caucasian males. The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of African American male students engaged in a CSS course to discover what they perceived to be a major influence on the retention of their population in the community college. The conceptual framework for this study was Tinto's model on student integration and motivation, self-determination, transition, resilience, and satisfaction. Research questions posed how African American male students connected the experience gained in the CSS course with degree completion and if the course provided the support for program retention. A qualitative case study design using face-to-face interviews was used. Individual interviews were conducted with 20 African American male student participants enrolled in CSS during the fall of 2018. The resulting qualitative data were coded manually and entered using NVivo Software. Data analysis included developing codes, categories, themes, and interpreting the findings. Results showed that participants perceived mentorship to be a major factor related to their motivation and persistence. These findings resulted in the recommendation of a mentorship component being added to the CSS curriculum. The implementation of a mentorship component can drive social change in support of students who need mentoring at the local community college and other institutions of higher education in support of retention and successful degree completion.

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Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my family and friends who supported me throughout this journey. I thank God for the opportunity and the strength to forge on during the more difficult times of this multiyear process. I have been blessed with a strong mother, Carrie Ponder, who instilled in me and all of her twelve children the power of education that provided me the strength and knowledge that it took to endure this journey. I thank God each day that you were my mother. I know you are resting now . . . sleep in the comfort of knowing that your undying spirit lives on in all of us who were fortunate to know you.

I would also like to dedicate this to my African American heritage—the proverb says, “It takes a village.”

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Section 1: The Problem

African American male students face different academic challenges when compared to their peers. These challenges include lower achievement scores in general education and science subjects, low retention rates, and a lack of inclusion in society (Strayhorn, 2013b). Access, equality, affordability, and educational attainment are also among the challenges facing African American students in obtaining higher education (Mettler, 2014). Further compounding these difficulties, disparaging terms have characterized African American male students such as uneducable, dangerous, dysfunctional, and endangered individuals (Ferguson, 2003; Strayhorn, 2013c, 2015c). Challenges that African American male students face are not only a concern for educators and administrators, but they also raise broader societal concerns. The lack of educational attainment among African American males has a negative impact at both the community and national level (Harris & Wood, 2013; Lee & Ransom, 2011). When African American males fail academically, a possibility of a better life for themselves and those around them are diminished (Graham, 2016).

Among all community college students, African American males have the lowest retention rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2016a). African American males also have the highest rate of student attrition after their first year of college when compared to all other populations (Harper, 2009). According to data from the U.S. Department of Education (2012), enrollment and degree attainment rates for African Americans between 18 to 24 years old are far behind the college enrollment and degree attainment rates of their White and Asian counterparts. One medium in which African Americans in this age

demographic have sought postsecondary education is through community colleges (The Century Foundation, 2019). African American male students enroll in community colleges with aspirations of it being the answer to their social, financial, mental, and quality of life needs (Falcon, 2015). However, no significant change occurred in the enrollment of African American male students from 1976 to 2015 at higher education institutions. From 1976 to 2002, their enrollment percentage was 4.3% (Harper, 2006); by 2015, their enrollment improved to 9% (Allen, McLewis, Jones, & Harris, 2018). Further, more than 111,000 African Americans and Hispanic students graduate from high school, but after 8 years, only half of those students achieved a 2- or 4-year degree (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013).

Because of the evidence presented about the low retention of African American male students in community colleges, various retention programs have been implemented to counteract the increased number of student dropouts. In 2012, over 500 retention programs with effective teaching and learning tools were operating in the United States that offered academic and social support (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012). But only 84 of those programs were designed to address the retention and successful completion rates of African American males and other underrepresented students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014). Despite the increase in funding and the redevelopment of community colleges, no significant increase in the retention rates among the African American male students has occurred (Moss, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016a).

Important to this investigation was the implementation of a college success

seminar (CSS) course at the college of study (COS). CSS courses serve as a bridge for first-time students, first-generation college students, low-income students, and students from historically underrepresented backgrounds to transition to an institution of higher learning. The primary purpose of the CSS is to improve student retention. But nationally, community college retention rates for African American male students have not improved since the CSS courses were initiated (Gardenhire & Cerna, 2016; Harper 2012). As of August 31, 2015, the U.S. Department of Education stated that the graduation rate indicated 121 of the 486 African American students or 24.9% completed their coursework within the regular timeframe for program completion. Of the 121 graduates, 59 (48.8%) were male and 62 (51.2%) were female. Among this population, the retention rate was 46% and the transfer-out rate was 15% (NCES, 2015).

Evidence of the Local Problem

There is a wealth of information regarding the retention rates of African American male students in higher education institutions, but not at the community college level. African American male students have low retention rates in higher education institutions when compared to their female counterparts and other students from different races (Strayhorn, 2014, 2015b). Additionally, higher education tends to benefit students from privileged upper classes such as White males, resulting in obtaining a better job with higher pay, improving the security of that individual, accumulating wealth, and improving his opportunities, which is in contrast to minority students such as African American male students who often lack wealth and opportunities in higher education (Williams, 2017; Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011). Low enrollment of

African American males in higher education programs is the result of racism, lack of knowledge of financial aid, and inadequate academic preparedness (Lewis & Pope, 2018). In addition to their low enrollment, only 10% of the African American students have earned 4-year degrees, 12% have earned graduate degrees, and 7% have earned doctoral degrees (NCES, 2015; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2013).

Intervention programs such as CSS courses are important to address retention rates; however, there is limited information that focuses on the retention rates among the African American students who have taken the CSS course in community colleges (Strayhorn, 2013c, 2015a). Retention rates for African American male students at the college have not increased since the CSS courses were initiated in community colleges (Gardenhire & Cerna, 2016). The city college's statistical digest indicated that enrollment demographic was comprised of 73 Asians, 541 Hispanics, 137 Caucasians, 132 multiracial/non-Hispanic, and 3,281 African Americans (City Colleges of Chicago, 2018); however, the NCES (2017) found that African American males completed their degree at a rate 40% less than their Caucasian counterparts. During the 2017 school year, the retention and graduation rate for African American male students at the COS was 14% compared to 33% for Hispanic males and 60% for Caucasian males (NCES, 2017).

Although higher education entrance programs are designed to support the African American population, little is known about how African American male participants in these programs feel about how their needs are addressed. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of African American male students engaged in a CSS course to discover what they perceived to be a major influence on the retention of

their population in the community college. It was important to review their participation in the CSS, a course designed to increase retention. The goal of this course was to make students thoroughly aware of every expectation that would be required of them to be successful in college. In addition, I examined various factors that improved student satisfaction and motivation toward degree completion.

The COS is a public, 2-year community college located in one of the most impoverished urban communities in the country. In 2013 that the graduation rate at the college was 25.9% (Smith, 2017). When excluding the pastry school, the school's 4-year graduation rate has been about 14%. During 2015-2018, the local study site had reported retention rates above 50%, which was the first instance of three consecutive years above 50% since 2011. But this success did not bridge the gap among similar colleges, most of which have double-digit improvements in the last two decades (NCES, 2011). This success is still not enough to catch up with their peer group, most of whom have double-digit improvements in the last two decades (NCES 2011). The CSS course was being used to address the gaps in improving retention at the COS, and I investigated what improvements specifically would help bolster retention rates within the course.

Rationale

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), African Americans comprise 13% of the U.S. civilian, noninstitutionalized population. Studies continue to identify low-retention rates in colleges for historically marginalized students despite the changes in federal and higher education policies (Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013). Gender has the most significant impact on the gaps between students of different races and ethnicities. A

discrepancy exists between the admission rates, retention rates, and participation rates of women and men in higher education (Flores, 2016; Harper 2012). Between 1959 and 2002, the female college participation rate increased by 29% compared to their male counterpart that increased by 8% (Mortenson, 2005). Further, African American women possess higher graduation rates compared to their male counterparts (Baum, Ma, & Payea, as cited in Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010). The college completion rate among Black Americans, and especially Black women, has shown a significant increase (Reeve & Guyot, 2017).

A student's race also affects the graduation, retention, and successful completion rates of students. Data from the NCES (2011) noted the population of non-White racial and ethnic groups in the United States increased from 1.53 million in 1976 to 6.27 million in 2009, which led to a 20% increase in undergraduate enrollment among these groups of students. In addition, in 2011, over 2.5 million African American students and 2.36 million Latino students were pursuing undergraduate degrees. Latino students comprised 79.8% of the non-White racial-ethnic students and 28.1% of the total undergraduate enrollment. However, according to data from the NCES, the graduation rate of African American students was 20% less than their Caucasian and Asian counterparts, which was also evident from low graduation rates among 4- and 6-year students at 20.7% and 40.7%, respectively. Unique sociocultural factors affect African American students and identifying these factors could help to determine the specific interventions to improve minority retention and graduation rates (Eagan et al., 2015).

African American male students can benefit from the community college's

organizational support and intervention programs (Young, 2020). Understanding why retention rates among African American male students have not increased, despite participation in the CSS course, is beneficial to administrators of higher education institutions and federal programs related to higher education. Hence, the purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of African American male students engaged in a CSS course to discover what they perceived to be a major influence on the retention of their population in the community college.

Definition of Terms

Academic motivation: Described as “the enjoyment of school learning characterized by persistence, curiosity, mastery orientation, task-endogeny and several difficulties and challenges that students undergo when dealing with tasks required to be accomplished” (Gottfried, 1990, p. 525).

African American males: Black males who are U.S. citizens or people relating to any part of the African continent or its peoples, language, or culture; can be referred to an American who has the total or partial ancestry from any native populations of the Sub-Saharan African or other African countries. They are also referred to as Afro-Americans and Black Americans and are part of the citizens of the United States (Lynch, n.d.).

Dropout: A student who enters college but leaves before graduating and never returns to that or any other school (Tinto, 2003).

Learning environment: Is “the diverse physical locations, contexts, and cultures in which students learn” (Great Schools Partnership, 2014, para. 1).

Motivation: Refers to the “reasons that influence or underlie certain behavior” (Guay et al., 2010, p. 712).

Persistence: The characteristics of a student’s continuation behavior that lead to graduation in higher education (Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005).

Resilience: Can be defined as the “capacity of individuals to navigate their way to resources and maintain their well-being to provide those resources and to negotiate in culturally meaningful ways for those resources to be shared” (Ungar, 2005, p. 3).

Retention: The ability of an institution to keep a student enrolled from admission through graduation. Tinto (1993) also defined retention as students meeting clearly defined educational goals whether they are course credits, career advancement, or achievement of new skills.

Satisfaction: A short-term attitude that results from the evaluation of their experience with the education service received (Elliot, 2002).

Self-determination: A process that focuses on motivation, personality, and optimal functioning (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004).

Transition: Events that lead to changes in roles, routines, assumptions, and relationships (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2011).

Significance of the Study

Despite an increase in intervention programs to boost retention rates (Strayhorn, 2014), there appears to be no improvement in retention rates among African American male students at the COS. Records show that the CSS course has not significantly improved the retention rates among African American male students at the national level

(Bratton, 2018). Knowing why retention rates did not improve for African American male students who completed the CSS course can be beneficial to the current body of literature that covers the implementation of programs designed to improve retention rates. The research findings can help to determine (a) whether schools should continue to use CSS as the primary strategy to further develop and guide African American male students and (b) whether schools should adapt their current programs and support services ensuring that there is an aspect that focuses on the specific needs of African American male students.

Through this investigation, various retention factors that affect African male students who recently completed the CSS were identified. The results of this study led to the development of recommendations that could make a difference for the study site and its community concerning the improvement of retention rates among the African American male student population. Additionally, the project provided additional knowledge about the overall retention of African American students in higher education, which may assist in efforts toward improved, successful completion rates for all minorities and college transfer students.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of African American male students engaged in a CSS course to discover what they perceived to be a major influence on the retention of their population in the community college. The following research questions guided this doctoral study:

Research Question 1: How do African American male students at the COS describe their experience in the CSS course in relation to completing their degree program?

Research Question 2: How do African American male students describe the support they received from the CSS course that contributed to their retention in completing their degree program?

Review of the Literature

The following section provides a review of topics in the literature for exploring why African American male retention is not improving even after these students have participated in a CSS. The changing demographic profile of college students is explored, and several factors that are relevant to the educational attainment of students of color are reviewed. Tinto's (1987) student integration model and its application to student retention are also examined. In addition, this section of the study provides an in-depth understanding of the experiences and outcomes of African American male students in higher education as well as the programs implemented, factors found to increase their college persistence, academic performance, and overall retention rates.

I searched for peer-reviewed articles using multiple databases including Education Source, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, ProQuest, SAGE Journals, EBSCO, PsycInfo, Yahoo, Google, and Google Scholar. I also searched for articles and studies published by entities such as the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Education, the NCES, U.S. Department of Commerce, the Center for Community College Student Engagement, City Colleges of Chicago Digest, and CSS program. Multiple

combinations of the following keywords were used to locate appropriate and relevant research: *African American male students, CSS, community college, retention, and successful completion*. I combined various keywords and applied the process of citation chaining to locate additional relevant articles in Google Scholar.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework chosen for this study is Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993, 1996) model on student integration and motivation, self-determination, transition, resilience, and satisfaction. The prevalence of Tinto referenced articles in the literature suggested that no review of the topic would be complete without first acknowledging its influence on the understanding of college student departure. The primary goal of Tinto's studies were to evaluate the following academic performance predictors: (a) integrating factors such as educational persistence, social indicators, and motivational tools and (b) focusing on the approaches and strategies centered on student retention. His work has been widely used and accepted to understand college student departure by education administrators, practitioners, and researchers (Tinto, 1998).

Tinto's theory of student integration and motivation. Tinto's theory of college retention has been used to examine the principles of student departure from the perspective of intellectual and social isolation or displacement (Tinto, 1998). Tinto coined the phrase "student departure" to replace the label "college dropout." The origin of student departure is recognized through two forms: individual and institutional. Individual departure is described as the challenges of academic difficulty, adjustment, and commitment (Tinto, 2003). When a student is not able to meet or exceed the

institution's minimum standard of academic achievement, the consequence may involve the student being forced to leave school. Tinto's theory remains influential in higher education by defining psychosocial processes among students (Clark, Middleton, Nguyen, & Zwick, 2014; Dika & D'Amico, 2016).

Most students who depart college during their first year could not adjust to college life both academically and socially (Tinto, 2003). Tinto noted the successful transition of students from secondary to postsecondary education as the test of tenacity, which will be determined within the first 6 weeks of matriculation (Tinto, 2012). Developmental coursework is completed during the first 2 years of college; however, most attrition occurs during the first year and before the start of the second year. Students who are ill-prepared to meet the academic and social adjustments required for higher learning can become overwhelmed, which can cause students to underperform. Although some students enter college inadequately prepared to meet the academic and social transition involved, others who are better adjusted may still not be able to adapt to the situations that they face on the college campus and are at risk for departure. These students' reasons for early departure may be that they lack the essential social skills rather than academic skills (Tinto, 2012).

According to Tinto (1993), it is appropriate to administer an investigative instrument for students participating in developmental studies. This is the justification for using the CSS course as the basis for this study. Tinto's proposal (as cited in Brown, 2012) on social and academic integration are necessary influences on positive collegiate perceptions. Although social and academic integration are different concepts, they are

interrelated.

Self-determination theory. The self-determination theory developed by Deci and Vansteenkiste (2004) also provided an insight into the present study because it helps to understand how an individual's self-motivation and self-determination need to be nurtured in the social environment. Self-determination theory suggests that people strive to master both inner forces (e.g., motives and emotions) and external forces (e.g., environment) that they encounter every day. According to the theory, people are self-organizing systems that tend to grow, develop, and integrate functioning. They require social support that helps them to function optimally and develop effectively (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). Therefore, a lack of social support coupled with the presence of a chaotic and rejecting environment could affect the student's activity, performance, and development negatively. When African American male students lack social support and exist in a rejecting environment, they are likely not to perform well in school activities (Strayhorn, 2013b).

Theory of transition. A transition theory for adults was established by Schlossberg, Waters, and Chickering (1995). In this work, Schlossberg et al. defined a transition as the events or activities that result in a change in the roles, routines, assumptions, and relationships. The type, contexts, and impact of transition plays a major role in helping to understand the meaning individuals assign to a transition. Transitions denote a period where the individual moves from preoccupation to integration with the transition (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). This progress is benchmarked with the language of moving in, moving through, and moving out (Schlossberg, Lynch, &

Chickering, 1989). Progress of the transition and the individual's ability to cope with the transition depends on the following four factors: (a) personal and demographic characteristics as well as psychological resources; (b) the situation—timing and expectation—or lack thereof of the event; (c) the support—available social advocacy from friends, family, and colleagues; and (d) the strategies—coping responses that manage and control the meaning of the problem.

Transition theory is essential in the present study as it assists in understanding a changing life event such as the transition of the African American male students from high school to college. Using the transition theory in this study helped to explain the process for interpreting college experiences and using this knowledge for development and cognition of how retention is impacted upon transitioning into the college setting (Davis, Nagle, Richards, & Awokoya, 2013; Lazarowicz, 2015). Triangulated data provided the support for constant comparison of the findings to help develop my findings on the theory. Data were collected and analyzed using standard qualitative analysis techniques and findings were organized into a conceptually clustered matrix to demonstrate student experiences while navigating through the transition process.

Resilience theory. Different situations and circumstances affect the educational performance and well-being of individuals. According to resilience theory, individuals can transcend certain adverse situations or circumstances that often limit their performance. Resilient individuals are invulnerable and possess rare qualities that help them rebound from different adversities encountered in life (Hudacs, 2017). Thus resilience can be defined as the ability of the individual to maintain their well-being

(Ungar, 2005). This is done by gaining access to available resources. Resilience is also the developmental process that individuals undergo when incorporating normative self-righting tendencies (Hatch & Garcia, 2017).

Everyone has an innate capacity for resiliency and can develop resilience because they possess innate developmental wisdom (Benard, 1997). Mentors as well as teachers can tap into this wisdom by assisting students in conceptualization skills. Resilience can be developed depending on people's problem-solving skills, autonomy, social competence, and sense of purpose in life (Benard, 1997). Similarly, resilience is not a fixed attribute but rather an alterable set of processes that can be fostered and cultivated (Hatch & Garcia, 2017). The interactive processes between the individual and environment and between risk and protective factors are crucial elements in the development of resilience (Strayhorn, 2012, 2015a). Therefore, resiliency theory has been utilized to identify and define protective factors within the family, school, and community (Santos, 2016).

Theory of satisfaction. Paul and Pradhan (2019) developed a theory of satisfaction, taking the definition of student satisfaction proposed by Elliot (2002) and developing their concept of student satisfaction as a short-term attitude that results from the evaluation of their experience with the education service received. According to Paul and Pradhan, student satisfaction and image of college are directly related to student loyalty, successful completion, and retention rates. Higher educational institutions are interested in determining students' satisfaction with respect to student attraction and student retention, which can help institution administrators when making decisions

concerning the allocation of the appropriate resources.

The question of student satisfaction has been an issue frequently examined by administrators of higher education institutions to improve student retention (Paul & Pradhan, 2019). For example, the service quality instrument, service quality (SERVQUAL) survey, was developed to determine and measure the service quality in different sectors. This instrument has been adopted in academic settings and used primarily to evaluate the service quality of college and university libraries. There is much literature on academic libraries using satisfaction surveys to assess their services (Coleman et al., 1997). In addition, the SERVQUAL has the potential to measure service quality in the education sector, especially in higher learning institutions where it can determine the gap between student perceptions and expectations (Datta & Vardhan, 2017; Ham & Hayduk, 2003; Kerlin, 2008).

Student satisfaction in higher education often takes place when perceived performance meets or exceeds the student's expectations (Mark, 2013). For example, teacher involvement has been an expectation of most students, who acknowledge that effective instructor communication helps understand the material (Meija, 2019). Student expectations may also be influenced by individual needs, communication to student from administrators and staff, word-of-mouth, and other noninstitutional sanctioned sources such as the student evaluation website (Wilkins, Stephens Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012).

Higher education institutions should focus on student satisfaction because it has a direct influence on student retention (Alzamel, 2014). Satisfied students enrolled in

higher education institutions tend to be loyal and are more likely to complete their academic program (Gibson, 2010). Student retention can be predicted by student satisfaction within higher learning institutions (Aritonang & Lerbin, 2014), as student retention and satisfaction are positively related (Kara & DeShields, 2004). Thus, understanding the factors that affect student satisfaction can provide valuable insight into student retention (Stukalina, 2014). Although student engagement is a more recent focus for research, student engagement and satisfaction has now overtaken student retention in importance (Tight, 2019).

In addition to retention, there is also a significant positive relationship between student satisfaction and performance (Smayling & Miller, 2012). Furthermore, student performance is affected by the psychological, economic, environmental, and social and personal factors that vary among students (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). For example, Martirosyan, Saxon, and Wanjohi (2014) found a significant relationship in satisfaction and academic performance among 372 students enrolled in 12 public and four private universities. Moreover, external factors that impact student dissatisfaction and disruption in their education program include financial problems, family issues, or severe illness (Osman, O'Leary, & Brimble, 2010; Thompson & Prieto, 2013). Furthermore, student motivation, effort, and anxiety about their ability are internal factors that affect student satisfaction and retention (Sargent, Borthick, & Lederberg, 2011). Consequently, internal factors affecting student satisfaction include quality of the educational program, delivery model of the program, tuition cost, the reputation of the institution, and the reputation of the school (Alzamel, 2014; Meling, Kupczynski, Mundy, & Green, 2012; Raina,

Bhadouria, & Shri, 2013).

Review of the Broader Problem

The phenomenon of low retention and completion rates for African American males students are not new. Historically, the argument has been that retention and completion rates, as it relates to the African American male students and other minorities, are a result of discrimination and inequality (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). In 2007, nearly 6.2 million American youth were high school dropouts and 73% were African American males (Amurao, 2013). Of the 27% African American males who remained in high school, approximately 50% were able to graduate and transition into higher educational institutions (Sommer & Dumont, 2011). The freshman year influences the student's decision to be committed and persist toward graduation (Levitz, Noel, & Richter, 1999; Tinto, 1996). If students do not resolve transition issues in the first year, especially during the first semester, their likelihood to persist is negatively influenced (Raab & Adam, 2005). Furthermore, student retention programs such as first-year experience are generally effective at promoting behaviors that contribute to persistence and higher student retention rates (Levitz et al., 1999; Tinto, 1996).

In the U.S. higher education system, historically Black colleges and universities, tribal colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander serving institutions emerged to address the inequality confronted by low-income and underrepresented students of color (Strayhorn, 2008). These colleges and universities were founded and staffed with diverse faculty members who helped provide a setting that was more representative of the students. These

institutions created nurturing learning environments that were ideal for educating African Americans and other minorities (Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010; Palmer, Hilton, & Fountaine, 2012). Such schools offered programs that challenged students, enhanced their leadership skills, and prepared students to succeed in academia and the workforce (Strayhorn, 2008).

According to the Department of Education (2014), there are 104 historically Black colleges and universities in the United States, and 101 are fully accredited (Howard University, 2012). This is a change from 50 years ago, when “over 90% of Black students (approximately 100,000 in 1950) were educated at traditionally underrepresented schools” (Kimbrough & Harper, 2006, p. 7). Though historically Black colleges and universities represent 3% of the nation’s institutions of higher learning, they graduate almost 20% of the African Americans who earn a bachelor’s degree in the United States (United Negro College Fund, 2014). Further, 20% of the bachelor’s degrees awarded to African American students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs came from the historically Black colleges and universities in 2009 (Gasman, 2012), which has helped them enter the professional field (Frierson & Tate, 2011). According to the National Science Foundation (as cited in the U.S. Department of Education, 2016b), historically Black colleges and universities, which make up 3% of all colleges and universities, are responsible for graduating approximately 27% of the African American students with STEM degrees.

Despite the improvements of minorities’ transition to historically Black colleges and universities, institutions continue to face challenges that are related to student

recruitment, enrollment, and retention of the African American males (Palmer & Wood, 2012; Young, 2019). One of the newer approaches used by Illinois community colleges to improve retention rates has been the implementation of the CSS course, also known as Interdisciplinary Studies 101. The first-year students in the CSS must learn to integrate a new kind of behavioral and critical thinking strategy that will allow them to navigate more effectively through the college experience both in and out of the classroom (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012).

Several studies about African American males concluded that black men are more likely to experience significant academic and social challenges in college when compared to other groups (Strayhorn, 2014, 2018). Most African American male students face problems such as prior educational failure, previous experiences in the correctional system, and barriers to finding and maintaining employment (Butler, Evans, Brooks, Williams, & Bailey, 2013; Richardson & Van Brakle, 2013). As a result, student characteristics such as demographics, prior education, and individual attributes along with the institution's learning environment have a significant impact on the student's goal and commitment (Collings, Swanson, & Watkins, 2014).

Strayhorn (2012, 2018) considered Tinto's retention theory and Astin's (1993) input-environment-outcome model when providing information regarding satisfaction and retention among African American men at a community college. Those students with high retention rates and who succeed in the college environment usually receive a great deal of support from their families, peers, mentors, and community stakeholders (Strayhorn 2012, 2018).

Numerous higher education institutions implemented strategies and interventions aimed at improving the retention rates among African American students (Broda, Yun, Schneider, Yeager, Walton, & Diemer, 2018). University programs that support and provide mental health among students are effective in ensuring academic success and achievements (Leung, 2017). U.S. policymakers and educators determined to boost college completion rates for African American students must encourage development and implementation of strategies, learning communities, and provide performance-based scholarships that lead to greater student success (Brock, 2010). More must be done to evaluate strategies and interventions implemented by various universities to determine their effectiveness.

Despite efforts taken by university campus personnel to achieve racial integration for decades, there continues to be a disparity between the graduation rates of African American students and White students. Many believed that environmental factors play a critical role in the retention of African Americans (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The relationships of early-identified factors, campus involvement, financial aid, and academic performance on the persistence of African American students at a predominately White institution were examined (Furr & Elling, 2002). Accordingly, students who engaged in extracurricular activities are more likely to remain at the university (Tinto, 1993).

Persistence in colleges can also be achieved through the concepts of social integration and academic integration. It was also established that involvement in academic-related activities is more important for the academic and personal development of African American students than for White students (Tinto, 1993). Inclusiveness among

students is very important because it builds trust, breaks down prejudice, promotes understanding, and builds a healthy and robust community (Central Michigan University, (2011).

A study about college retention rates and academic performance of African American students at predominantly White institutions found that African American students face unique stressors that affect their performance and retention rates such as racial conflict; less equitable treatment by faculty, staff, and teaching assistants; and visible pressure among others as compared to their White counterparts (Grier-Reed, Ehlert, & Dade, 2011). Furthermore, Black students experience stresses related to lack of resources, mistrust of the institutions, social support, stigma, cultural conflict, and acceptance or assimilation within the college environment. As a result, African American male students find themselves in a hostile and unfair environment that does not support their academic performance (Grier-Reed et al., 2011).

Academic disparity is entirely different among Black students who attend historically black colleges and universities (Grier-Reed et al., 2011). The researchers concluded that college outcomes among Black students are significantly influenced by immediate social contexts because their interpersonal relationships are crucial mediating factors for college adjustment (Grier-Reed et al., 2011). African American students participating in the African American student network reported a sense of safety, intellectual stimulation, empowerment, connectedness, resilience, and the semblance of a home base on campus. Participation in the African American student network was positively correlated to the retention and graduation rates among African American

students (Wood, Hilton, & Lewis, 2013; Wood & Palmer, 2012).

Although leadership development and social and educational mobility are beneficial for all demographic groups, many universities and colleges of higher learning are struggling to enroll, retain, and graduate African American males from 2- and 4-year colleges and universities (Harper, 2013; Osiemo, 2012; & Reed, 2018). The lack of guidance and leadership during the formative years of African American males leads to their inability to successfully navigate critical life's challenges as they mature (Department of Commerce, 2013; Dyce, 2013; Garibaldi, 2014; Washington, 2013). Most African American males fail to persist and thus fail to survive critical challenges of life. Some critical life challenges are identified as surviving child and domestic abuse; gaining meaningful employment; attaining marriage and family life, civic and community engagement; and avoiding criminal behavior (Goings, 2015; Harper, 2014; Jarjoura, 2013; Jones, 2014; Rose, 2013; Witters & Liu, 2015).

Changes in federal policies and public attitudes have led to opening the higher education sector to minority students, women, and nontraditional students (Brock (2010). These changes moved the focus away from the traditional 4-year college degree toward the more nonselective community colleges. Those colleges that provided the most significant access to nontraditional and underprepared students must put in more effort to promote student success (Brock, 2010). Subsequent research concurred with Brock's findings; it is essential for reforms to be directed toward student support services, financial aid, and remedial education to increase the retention rates (Bok, 2017).

To boost college completion rates, Brock (2010) argued that policymakers and

educators must encourage the development and implementation of strategies that include learning communities and incentives for performance-based scholarships. More needs to be done to introduce interventions that lead to positive results and implement intervention strategies that improve student retention. Policymakers and practitioners should ensure greater emphasis being placed on evaluating reforms (Bok, 2017; Brock, 2010). These strategies would help universities and college administrators, faculty, and staff adopt and adapt to the most effective program strategies.

Administrators of higher education institutions are challenged to develop policies that will recognize and respect students, irrespective of their color, race, and social background (Swain, 2006). The researcher stated,

These terms exemplify a policy position that, one, such recognition is accessible to the student; two, that it is achievable within the cognitive sphere; and three, that the object of respect or appreciation remains a defined, understandable external entity or concept. (p. 4)

The Obama administration aimed to ensure that all the institutions are evaluated across the country (Allen, Davis, Garraway, & Burt, 2018). The leadership proposed the \$1 billion dollar version of the Race to the Top competitive grant program that encouraged all state administrators to maintain their spending on higher education and ensure students graduate on time (Klein, 2014). Also, this administration proposed a college scorecard that would be provided to students and their parents with comparative information about how institutions relate regarding graduation rates, student loan repayment rates, and graduates' future-earning potential.

The Plan for Academic Success, a student retention program, was designed to elevate the academic standing and retention of students who were faced with academic dismissal from a large, public liberal arts college (Rios, 2019). Results from a study indicated that the retention rate of those in the program were almost the same as the college's overall full-time freshmen retention rate. Results showed that giving motivated students a second chance by creating a plan for success and setting improvement goals could be an effective method of raising academic performance and retention (Rios, 2019).

A 3-year longitudinal study was conducted on the impact of an intervention program on college student persistence and cumulative grade point averages (GPA) at a state university (Pan, Guo, Alikonis, & Bai, 2008). The study involved 20 student success intervention programs with a sample of 1,305 full-time students. Programs in the state university included first-year experience courses, social integration, advising, general orientation, and academic assistance. The authors reported a variance of 22.54% in retention and 17.93% in cumulative GPA, which were most likely to be attributed to the various student success programs. They determined that academic-help programs significantly increased the retention rates for the first year; whereas, the general orientation significantly increased the cumulative GPA of all participants. Also, advising programs increased student retention rates among full-time students and social integration programs significantly helped retention and cumulative GPA. They concluded that early intervention programs and academic support programs are critical and essential in increasing retention (Pan et al., 2008).

Higher education institutions that use the mentoring process actually help their

students achieve their goals and become successful (Jacobi, 1991). Peer reviewed articles on student services expressed how mentoring intervention programs are used in higher education to increase the educational success (i.e., retention and graduation rates) of African American males (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). The authors shared how mentoring is one of the best interventions available to increase retention and graduation rates among African American males in higher education. Therefore, for higher education institutions to ensure that their African American male students are successful, they must adopt the mentoring process in their intervention programs (LaVant et al., 1997).

Intervention or mentoring programs offer both information and documentation on how formal and informal student-faculty interactions can be critical. Mentoring programs encourage the development of students' academic self-concept: enhancing their motivation and achievements by introducing specific types of interactions as predictors of academic self-concept, academic motivation, and academic achievement (Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010). Mentorship programs improve the competence and character of the mentees (Chronus, 2015; Grimes, 2014). Programs that support student activities are usually designed to enhance the (a) academic achievement of the students, (b) goals, (c) family background, and (d) students' desire to increase their retention rates (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Veenstra, 2009).

Historically, retention programs serve as a preventive measure for minority students who aspire to use their education as a means of improving their social and wage mobility (Deardoff & Kupenda, 2011). Researchers noted that many members of the lower social status often view the attainment of higher education as a way to improve

their social standing (Graham, 2011; Rose, 2011). Therefore, it is essential that colleges and universities improve the retention and graduation rates of African American male students who often come from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of African American male students engaged in a CSS course to discover what they perceived to be a major influence on the retention of their population in the community college. Personal perceptions and thoughts were gathered from CSS students in relation to retention at the selected institution. The primary focus of this qualitative case study was to gather a different perspective of how the CSS course impacted the retention of African American male students. The findings generated from this study will offer informed approaches for community college administrators and other partners to develop effective intervention programs that improve retention rates for African American male students. To achieve this goal, intervention programs must be designed to meet the expectations of the African American male students. The findings of the study might inspire future research on the retention of African American male students in higher education.

Initially, an inventory of preexisting intervention programs had to be identified. After being identified, that inventory was compared to the findings of this study. This inventory was then compared with the COS and CSS as to course content and participant responses. One possible project that could result from the findings of this study would be the integration of the mentoring section into the CSS course curriculum as an additional strategy for increasing retention rates. Another possible project is a detailed brochure that

reprises all stakeholders of the issue and provides them with the suggested recommendations for change. The brochure is meant as a marketing tool to help stakeholders understand an issue, address a problem, and make a decision to participate. More specifically, increased retention rates will be identified through the process in the following areas: environment of education, employment, and family and community development—the areas that provide social change especially for African American males.

Summary

African American male students are often characterized as uneducable because of mediocre achievement scores, low retention, and graduation rates as compared to their female counterparts (Brown, 2018). Scholars have repeatedly mentioned underrepresentation of African American male college students (Harris & Wood, 2013), lack of personal motivation and poor integration (Tinto, 2003), failure to transition into college life (Schlossberg et al., 2006), weak resilience (Ungar, 2005) and the lack of self-determination as risk factors that affect African American male student persistence. Recent research identified the same risk factors associated with the retention of African American male undergraduate students when compared to their counterparts (Harper, Smith, & Davis, 2018). However, there remains a lack of understanding about the low retention rates of African American male community college students enrolled in a CSS course.

Section 2: The Methodology

The following section provides a detailed description of the research design and methods used in this study. The rationale for the appropriateness of the qualitative design—the case study method that was adopted in this study—is also presented. The approach used to collect and analyze the data, the selection criteria of the participants, and the materials and instruments that were developed are also described.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

A research methodology is a systematic approach that a researcher uses to address research questions. Research methodology guides the researcher toward achieving his or her research objectives (Aaker et al., 2011; Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Additionally, the research process is a systematic and objective approach that a researcher uses to identify, collect, analyze, interpret, and distribute data findings (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012). This study was designed to understand student retention among African American male students at a community college.

Case Study

A qualitative case study is appropriate when investigating how or if a phenomenon exists and provides information about whether the existing phenomenon is perceived as needed by participants (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019; Yin, 2013). Case studies are most applicable when the purpose of the research is to explain a present condition and a full account of a social phenomenon (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019; Yin, 2013). Used as a research design, case studies allow researchers to investigate real situations and to discern how to interpret the experience (Unicomb, Colyvas, Harrison, & Hewat, 2015). Case

studies are empirical, inductive inquiries used to investigate a current phenomenon in a real-world context (Yin, 2013). By using the case study method, investigators can retain the complete and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as individual life cycles, small-group behavior, changes in the community, school performance, and the development of institutions (Unicomb et al., 2015). By using this method, I took an in-depth look at current retention rates (City Colleges of Chicago, 2018) in the African American male student population engaged in a CSS program at one community college. Moreover, case studies are appropriate when the boundaries between the context and phenomenon are difficult to distinguish, as evident in a community college setting. Case studies can also involve multiple sources of evidence (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, & Walker, 2018), and multiple factors influence the social, academic, and institutional integration of students. Based on the data collection method and the in-depth nature of the questions being asked, a case study was deemed most appropriate.

Determining the case or unit of analysis is an essential aspect of a case study; it is a phenomenon in a specific context with specific boundaries (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For this study, the phenomenon included the academic, social, and institutional integration factors that influenced the retention of African American male students. Therefore, the unit of analysis was a select group of African American male students at the community college study site. An instrumental case study approach was used for this research, which is generally appropriate for studies involving a smaller number of participants (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Furthermore, a case or phenomenon study design provides specific insight and understanding regarding an issue or situation (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017).

The participants in this study were interviewed to gain insight into students' reasoning behind retention within the college's CSS program.

Method justification and explanation. Qualitative case studies are appropriate to investigate research questions that require nuanced and “on the ground” information (Yin, 2013). I used a case study approach to examine the perceptions and attitudes of students regarding factors that they thought contributed to their persistence and completion of the CSS program. In addition, I examined students' intrinsic motivation, not only in their ability to complete CSS but to also complete an associate degree at the study site. The broader research question that was addressed involved the examination of the personal attitudes and beliefs among students regarding the low retention rates among African American males in CSS programs. The specific research question addressed what factors influence these students' persistence to graduate at the community college level. Qualitative research was thus appropriate because it is used to seek the *why* and the *how* to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviors, value systems, concerns, motivations, and lifestyles (Joubish, Khurram, Ahmed, Fatima, & Haider, 2011), which is done through studying the phenomenon in its natural setting (Hammarberg, Kirkman & De Lacey, 2016, p. 100).

Qualitative researchers rely on interpretive perceptions throughout planning, data gathering, analysis, and transcription of their studies; they look toward the participant's experiences to verify predictions or claims about the phenomenon. Therefore, a standardized, open-ended interview served as the data collection instrument in this study. This approach is intended to ensure that the same open-ended questions are asked to all

interviewees (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). This approach facilitates interviews so the data can be more easily analyzed and compared as the commonality of responses lend support to the meanings of central themes. The qualitative research method allowed for flexibility in design and the use of open-ended questions.

In contrast to the qualitative method, a quantitative method was not appropriate. A quantitative research method is not appropriate for studies involving a small number of participants (Unicomb et al., 2015). The characteristics of quantitative methods also consist of (a) “data gathering from instruments that contain measurable variables; (b) data that contain tables, graphs, and figures; and (c) formula- derived conclusions” (Unicomb et al., 2015, p. 199). Further, quantitative studies are generally deductive, and the researcher has a clearly defined plan that must be followed (Unicomb et al., 2015). In general, quantitative research is focused on establishing relationships between variables (Ary et al., 2018). But in this project study, the aim was not to establish a relationship between two variables, assign individuals randomly to control and intervention groups, or establish a cause–effect relationship. Quantitative studies are deductive experiences that are considered controlling for variables (Ary et al., 2018); therefore, a quantitative method study was not appropriate for this investigation.

Other qualitative research methods were considered for this research; however, they were determined to be inappropriate for this study. I considered an ethnographic approach for this study, which involves studying people in their natural environment using participant observations and face-to-face interviews (Murchison, 2010), focusing on a specific culture and becoming immersed. But I was not focusing on culture;

therefore, an ethnographic approach was not appropriate. Another method considered was a phenomenological method. This approach requires the researcher to study the structures of consciousness as they are experienced from the first-person point of view (Lewis & Staehler, 2010). Phenomenological studies are focused on human experiences and describe the collective essence of that experience. However, the goal of this study was not to focus on the collective, emotional experience of participants, so a phenomenological method was inappropriate for this investigation. Grounded theory is another type of qualitative study designed to develop a theory or model (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory is a research strategy that enables the researcher to seek out social patterns and structures through the process of constant comparison (Charmaz, 2014). But in the present study, I was not seeking to build a conceptual model or develop a theory.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for this study. A purposive sampling approach is inclusive of who is interviewed, and the number of participants involved depends on their knowledge, the purpose of the research, and what information will be useful or credible (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014, p. 474). The predetermined criteria for the selection of participants were African American male students who had previously or were currently enrolled in the CSS course at the COS. I explored why African American male retention at the local community college had not improved after participation in a CSS course. I conducted interviews with African American male students at the community college site. The COS services a predominately African American population: 89% African American, 5% Caucasian, 2% Hispanic, 1% Asian,

and 1% other (City Colleges of Chicago, 2018). Of the 89% African American students, 37% (50) were male, and only 30 met the qualifications for the selection criteria. The resulting sample size was 20 African American male students. I contacted the 20 self-selected participants by phone and e-mail to arrange the interview.

Procedure for gaining access to participants. After receiving approval from the institutional review board (approval no. 09-13-17-0227149), I developed and distributed a flyer soliciting participants who were interested in the study. I spoke to 12 classes, five of which were CSS sections in the 2018 spring/fall term. Subsequently, I obtained a list of the 50 eligible African American male students enrolled in or who recently completed the CSS course from the COS administration. I followed up with a detailed letter of invitation to the identified 50 eligible CSS African American male student participants. Thirty students responded, and a copy of the consent form that included an overview of the study's purpose and objective was e-mailed to the respondents. This allowed the prospective participants to understand the purpose of the study and educate themselves regarding what participating in the study involved. In addition, a calendar identifying interview dates and times was attached.

Of the 30 students, only 20 expressed interest in participating by agreeing to a date and time for the scheduled interview. At the appointed time, the participant and I met, and I reviewed the participant's rights and the purpose of the study. I explained to each participant that they had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, the confidentiality process was discussed. Participants were assured that there was no personal delineating information presented in the study. The member checking

process, which provides several opportunities for the participant to review the transcript notes of the interview (e.g., audio, transcribed, and printed), was also explained to each participant. The purpose of the consent form was to affirm the acknowledgment of participants' understanding and their agreement to proceed with the interview. Because each participant was over the age of 18, parental consent was not required. Profiles of the participants are described in Appendix B. Each participant received a copy of the signed consent form for his records.

Rationale for population and participant selection. The study was focused on African American male students in COS who had undertaken the CSS course. The African American male population was targeted because the study problem is affecting this group. Their retention rates remain stagnant after undergoing the CSS course. Choosing to conduct in-depth interviews was based on purposeful sampling, which is used to maximize the depth and richness of the data to address the research questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This technique was the most appropriate method for this study because it enabled me to approach potential participants directly and to explain the aim of the study and primary research questions. The resulting sample size of 20 was sufficient to provide data for an in-depth inquiry into the problem and possible solutions.

Role of the Researcher

I was familiar with the study site, which meant that I held a degree of bias. Thus, Bloomberg and Volpe's (2016) recommendations for qualitative study were integrated: (a) adopt an insider's perspective, (b) seek to understand the experiences of the participants, (c) be open to change, (d) continue to be reflective regarding perspective, (e)

acknowledge personal values as the researcher, and (f) be active and involved. I considered and incorporated Bloomberg and Volpe's criteria into my efforts and was able to set aside any potential bias by interviewing African American male students whose perspectives of maleness did not personally affect me as a female.

Methods of establishing researcher-participant relationship. A critical step in the research process occurred prior to data collection--the researcher-participant relationship. It is imperative that the researcher define his or her role during the study (Prasad, 2017). As an adjunct instructor, it was important that the separation between the study and prior student engagement that might have normally taken place at the study site was delineated. During the research process, the participants needed to see me in the role of a researcher and not as an instructor. To ensure the variance in my role, I provided a thorough explanation before each interview. According to Yin (2013), an ethical relationship between the researcher and the participant in any study results in a successful data collection process. To maintain an ethical approach, data collected during the face-to-face interviews were treated with confidentiality. The informed consent document included a brief section regarding my role as the researcher. At the time of the interviews, I reviewed this section to ensure that the participant understood its content before undertaking the data collection process. My goal for reviewing and providing participants with a signed copy of the informed consent was to build trust and rapport. I executed the consent process in such a manner that ensured participants would feel comfortable communicating their thoughts and feelings (Prasad, 2017).

Participant Ethical Considerations

Because the present study involved the participation of human subjects, I followed the established ethical principles that are related to human rights in research such as respect, justice, and beneficence (Mertens & Wilson, 2018). In accordance with the institutional review board and the use of human subjects, steps were taken to ensure the confidentiality, privacy, and rights of the participants. Before any data were obtained, approval was sought for the research from two different and independent institutional review boards. Once the proposal was approved by university review board, it was then submitted for approval by the COS's review board. Data collection did not begin until permission was received by both committees.

Upon identifying the participants, each was given a detailed explanation of the study as well as a copy of the consent form. There were no visible risks or ethical dilemmas present for participants in the study. The participants were not required to answer any questions that might lead to unethical replies. To ensure confidentiality of participants' identities, each was assigned a pseudonym. As required by the institutional review board, I stored collected data in a fireproof locked safe. The data were only accessed by me. Additionally, the soft copy data collected from the field were stored in a password-encrypted laptop. The data will be secured in locked storage for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of that time, the information will be shredded and placed in the trash incinerator. The audiotapes will be destroyed utilizing the same manner of disposal.

The anonymity of the research participants was also protected, and the study did not affect the participants' physical, emotional, social, legal, or professional standing

because data collection was conducted in a manner that the participants deemed comfortable and at their convenience. The study also did not affect the professional lives of the participants because the research questions did not focus on nor affect their academic achievements. I also mitigated the risks that participants faced by not asking personal questions that might affect them negatively, and I gave them the option to decline answering any question and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Data were then aggregated in such a manner as to reduce any potential risks of breaching the participants' privacy.

Upon completion of the interview process, the audio transcript was sent to each participant for review. Each participant was given the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview before the coding process. Participants checked for internal validity and verified the contents of the transcript. This process is known as member checking (Merriam, 2019). There were no discrepant cases.

Ethical Procedure

I documented agreements to gain access to participants (institutional review boards, administration, COS). The participants' signature indicated acknowledgment of terms detailed in the informed consent form. No coercion in recruiting participants occurred. There was no emotional outburst requiring mental health referrals. Data were confidential but not anonymous. I knew the participants' identities and contact information and the participants had my contact information as well. No third-party individual had access to the raw data. Study results as presented in the dissertation are assessable to the public.

Data Collection

The interviews took place in an environment familiar to the participants. Oltmann (2016) noted that familiarity with the environment assisted the student's ability to provide honest and adequate information related to the study. Interviews were audio-recorded to ensure that the information was captured accurately. The interviews took place during the evening hours in the administrators' faculty lounge. The arrangement of the room was comfortable with sofas positioned me directly across from the participant with a large coffee table between us. The tape recorder was positioned on the coffee table. The comfortable environment enabled the participants to feel free and relaxed and to provide honest responses (Oltmann, 2016).

Collecting and processing data. The data for collection were sourced from historical theorists; interviews with COS African American male students; and existing census data sets that included COS retention rates, graduation and completion rates, and CSS curriculum. I used multiple data sources to assure the analyzed data were accurate and credible. Verbatim interview responses and transcriptions from the interview questions were used to address the study problem. The qualitative research method allowed me to explore meaning, interpretation, and individual experiences. After receiving administration approval and participant selection, I performed the following tasks:

1. Collection of historical data (Words synthesis through NVivo*) to reveal theoretical framework which was retention and student development for African American males. These were the categories that served as point-of-reference to all

subsequent data collected.

2. Developed interview questions (see Appendix C) from the problem statement, literature review, categories (nodes) and research question.

3. Administered interviews. Field notes were taken during each of the 20 interviews. These notes were used to validate my assumption. These notes consisted of keywords and phrases founded in categories and word phases associated with my research questions. This was done to confirm my directions as found in verbatim audiotapes.

4. Listened to all interview tapes several times before transcription.

5. Transcribed audio interviews and field through NVivo (QSR International) a qualitative analysis software program that supports audio recording.

6. Member checking was conducted after transcriptions of the interviews were completed. Individual students were involved in the member checking process. Each participant met with me face-to-face and engaged in a debriefing discussion about the transcribed interview. This allowed additional information to be provided when relevant. Eighteen students accepted the transcribed information without edits; two students requested minor changes in terms of wording that did not affect the substance of their responses.

7. Sourcing, compiling, and organizing secondary data were constructed into analytical codes using NVivo.

The primary data source was 20 transcribed interviews. The open-ended interview questions were designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do African American male students at the COS describe their experiences in the CSS course about completing their degree program? Interview Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, and 12 (see Appendix C) were designed to illicit responses for research Question 1.

2. How do African American male students describe the support they received from the CSS course that contributed to their retention in completing their degree program? Interview Questions 8, 9, 10, and 12 (see Appendix C) were designed to illicit responses for research Question 2.

Interview sessions lasted approximately 35 to 45 minutes depending on the participant. Twenty individual face-to-face interviews were conducted over 3 weeks. The interview process is a person-to-person encounter “in which one person elicits information from another” (Merriam, 2009, p. 88) and this process “is the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals” (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). Interviewing allows the researcher an opportunity to gain an understanding of a phenomenon by adding a human element to the study. Further, “Less structured formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways. This format allows the researcher to respond to the emerging worldview of the respondent and new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90).

Secondary data served as another medium to examine enrollment, graduation, and retention rates of the African American male students, and existing policies in the community college that support interventions for improving retention rates among the African American students. I aggregated the data in such a manner to ensure there were no identifying indicators of the student participant’s responses. Sources of secondary data

included (a) census statistics from the Bureau of Statistics; (b) retention completion records, enrollment rates, and dropout rates from the site's director; (c) CSS course curriculum at COS; and (d) existing educational supports from the COS online catalog. Secondary data were compiled from existing data sources and documents. NVivo software was used to make the data more meaningful by accessing to saturation. This process involved systematic identification and analysis of the relevance of published and unpublished data that answered the research questions. These data served as comparative guideposts to check with interview result responses as the justification of secondary source reputability. Historical and legal documents used as sources of secondary data are reputable and legitimate to this proposed study.

Data Analysis

Data for this study were obtained through the purposive sampling and interviewing of 20 African American male students who had previously or were currently enrolled in the CSS course at the COS. Analysis requires a targeted population or set of procedures to collect and analyze evidence and present findings that resolve questions and addresses particulars rather than generalization. Analyzing primary data (interviews) consisted of the following actions and processes: transcribing audio interviews and in-session notes. The audio interviews and in-session notes were transcribed immediately after each interview session. I listened to each interview several times prior to transcribing. Member checking was conducted after the transcription of each interview was completed.

The data were analyzed through the process of triangulation, which involves using

three alternative sources of data to confirm findings: interviews, research-based theories, and historical data. The triangulation process was used to ensure the accuracy of data collected in this study. Based on the study objectives and the research questions, a structured, in-depth, face-to-face interview was conducted with the 20 African American male students at the COS. The data analysis involved consolidating, reducing, and interpreting the data collected and linking it to the literature review, research questions, and problem statement (Merriam, 2009). To increase the trustworthiness and decrease threats to the credibility of the study's findings, I used the process of member checking. Existing data, interview transcriptions, and member checking were the sources utilized to capture three dimensions of the same phenomenon. Once the participants confirmed the accuracy of the transcribed information, the coding process began.

Coding. In coding and analyzing the data collected, my main tool was NVivo Microsoft OneNote, a qualitative analysis program. Attributes of this software are supporting audio format, organizing unstructured data, identifying trends and cross-examining information in a multitude of ways using its search engine and query functions. The process of coding is the identification of segments or units of information that is responsive to the research questions in that they are relevant and easily interpreted as responding to the questions (Merriam, 2009). Coding is a fundamental task in most qualitative projects; it involves gathering all the material about a particular theme or case into a node for further exploration.

I used descriptive and pattern coding. I coded the data in three cycles. In the first cycle, I used NVivo and a priori coding. NVivo codes are derived directly from the voice

of the participants (e.g., audio recorded interviews). Examples were “I chose . . . my instructor was helpful . . . and I am better able to understand.” A priori coding is a generation of a list of words or phrases that harmonize to the study’s conceptual framework (Saldaña, 2016). Samples of priori codes that were supported by the research are resiliency, satisfaction, and educational support. The second cycle, axial coding, helped me combine codes into categories. Axial coding serves to determine which codes in the research are dominant and which are less important (Saldaña, 2016). Examples of categories derived through axial coding were community success, educational support, and mentoring. The third cycle of coding was selective coding. Selective coding allowed me to discern the primary themes of the research (Saldaña, 2016). All categories and concepts were systematically integrated around the core category that suggests a theoretical explanation for the phenomenon. Examples of selective codes were guided support, role models, mentoring, and retention.

Nodes are central to understanding and working with NVivo; nodes allow related materials to be gathered in one place so that one can look for emerging patterns and ideas. You can create and organize notes for themes or cases such as people or organizations. The sequence of the coding process and its results are the following:

1. Manual coding was implemented to identify words reflecting historical theoretical data.
2. Data are reinterpreting until saturation is reached in the categories (e.g., satisfaction, transition, student integration and motivation, self-determination, resilience, belonging, mastering, and self-advocacy).

3. Audio transcripts and field notes from interview questions are inputted to gather frequency of responses and words individually and collectively to extract nodes.

4. The existing data set is inputted to compare with responses and serve as informational reference points to analysis.

A chart describing the sequence and relationship between problem, research questions, interview questions, codes, and themes is illustrated in Figure 1. Creating the flow chart assisted as an audit instrument showing consistency and clarity from problem to finding emerging themes.

NVivo is a qualitative data analysis research software that was used to organize and analyze unstructured information. NVivo software provides an analysis tool for unstructured qualitative research that assisted in collecting, organizing, and analyzing qualitative data from interviews. NVivo acts as a data management toolkit. NVivo provided me with the capability to analyze qualitative data by organizing and coding the data. The following functions were performed using NVivo: (a) querying for frequent words and creation of word clouds, (b) creating code nodes through frequency and descriptive function, (c) coding themes into transcript as nodes, (d) subdividing major nodes into sub-nodes, and (e) creating a node matrix to show how often participant statements were coded. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim through NVivo. The 4-step NVivo software process supported me with coding and analyzing all audio transcripts.

Step 1. Explore sources (i.e., literature and transcript). Once interviews were completed, they were transcribed verbatim. Prior to the use of NVivo, all data sources

including transcripts were read for initial impressions and then read a second time to identify keywords and phrases that would be used with NVivo to detect trends. My initial impressions were that African American male students enter college at a disadvantage, needing a more pro-social learning environment at the college level if they are to become successful and productive individuals within their communities.

NVivo outlines two approaches to coding: broad-brush coding using queries and manual coding in sources. Broad brush coding automatically codes sources based on the words or phrases they contain. This can be done using word frequency searches or text search queries. According to NVivo's website help feature, this can be a helpful starting point when reviewing data (QSR International, 2014). Manual coding involves working within a source, a transcript for example, to select content and then code it.

Step 2. Explored broad themes. I first utilized the broad-brush approach, running multiple keywords and word frequency searches. For example, I ran keyword searches for retention, motivation, and student mentoring.

Step 3. Reviewed a theme node. According to NVivo's website, "a node is a collection of references about a specific theme, case, or relationship" (QSR International, 2014, para. 2). Nodes are important to working with NVivo because they allow the researcher to deposit similar data in one place so you can look for emerging patterns and ideas. According to NVivo, "You can create and organize theme nodes and case nodes" (QSR International, 2014, para. 1).

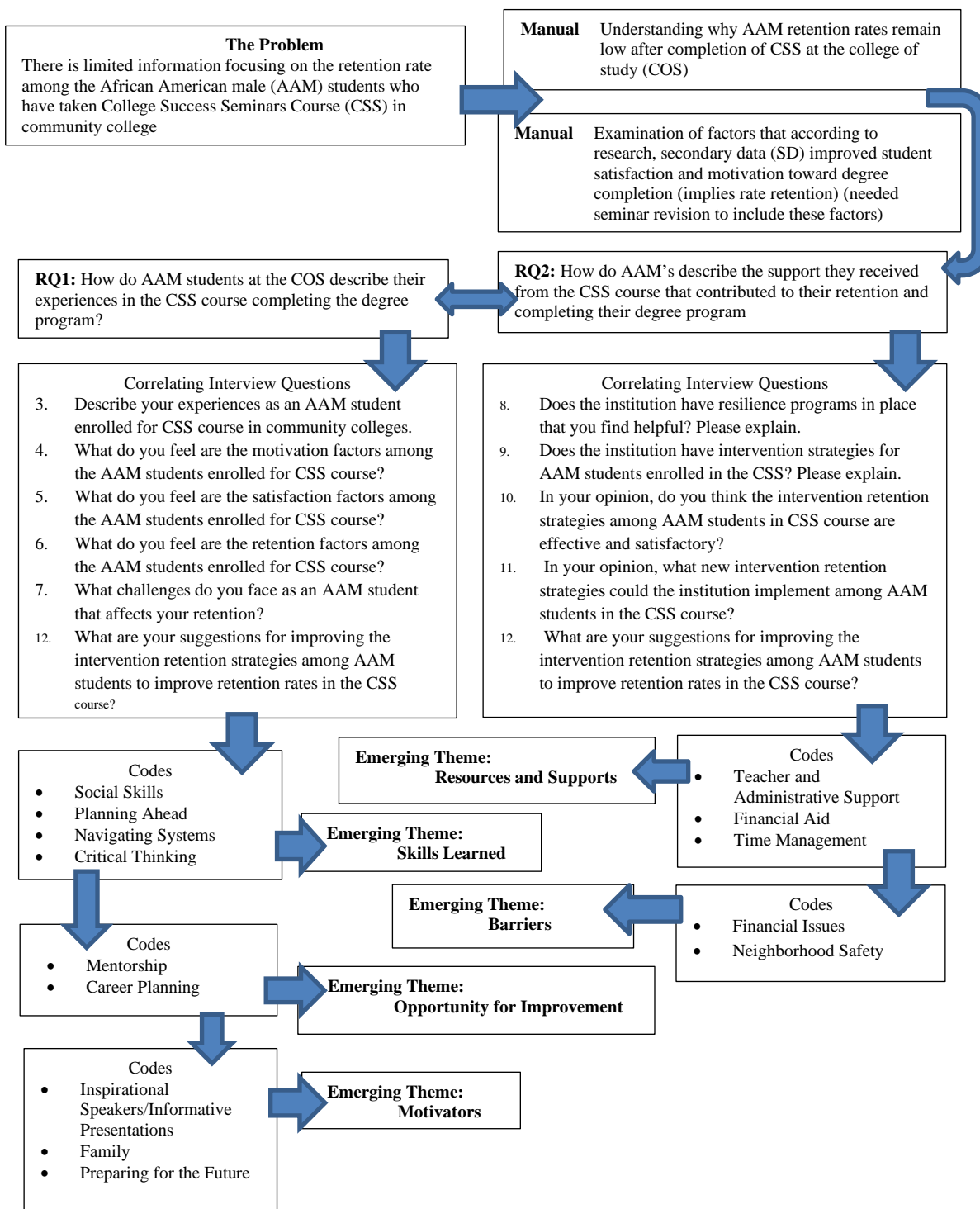


Figure 1. The sequence and relationship between the problem, research questions, interview questions, codes, and themes.

Step 4. Code. Next, a process called coding was used. This process is done manually. According to NVivo's website, "when you open a node, you can explore the references gathered there. As you make new discoveries, coding the content at other nodes--this is all a part of 'coding'" (QSR International, 2014, para. 9). For example, within the theme node, Room for Improvement, I coded on to a finer theme of mentorship.

The coding and interpretation process were iterative and began with nodes developed from the literature review. Some of these nodes were also related to the interviews. Next, the nodes were organized into themes. Themes were identified from nodes based on several different factors including frequency, intent of statement, and connection through triangulation. Items elevated to the level of theme based on the number of times a keyword or phrase appeared in the literature and transcripts. As nodes were analyzed, five main categories emerged from the data to support the research question: (a) skills learned, (b) motivators, (c) opportunities for improvement, (d) resources and support, and (e) barriers (see Table 1).

Secondary analysis. Content analysis makes use of already existing sources of data (Johnston, 2017). An essay or secondary analysis typically refers to the re-analysis of quantitative data rather than the text. Much of this informal data is stored in electronic databases and can be accessed and analyzed in computer archives (Johnston, 2017). Examples of secondary data are (a) census bureau data, (b) retention rates, (c) dropout rates, (d) completion rates, (e) enrollment rates, (f) number and content of educational support: CSS, mentoring, food, and transportation aid, and (g) mental health services.

Table 1

Coding Categories and Themes as Major Nodes and Subnodes

Major nodes	Subnodes
Skills learned	Social skills Planning ahead Navigating systems Critical thinking
Motivators	Inspirational speakers/informative presentations Family Preparing for the future
Opportunities for improvement	Mentorship Career planning
Resources and support	Teacher and administrative support Financial aid Time management
Barriers	Neighborhood safety Financial issues

Secondary analysis often involves combining information from multiple databases to examine research questions. Studies that are re-analyzed enhance the replicability of results. Relevant existing sources of data (e.g., statistics) and review of literature documents (e.g., key phrases) became the essential data set for secondary data analysis. Information from these documents along with the themes identified was imputed into NVivo to crossed-examine and substantiate retention and dropout rates, the level of motivation, and how mentoring supports retention.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, there are several strategies used to assure accurateness and trust in processes and findings. The strategies relevant to this study regarding African American males in a community college setting were as follows:

- Accounting for personal biases which may have influenced findings;
- Acknowledging biases in sampling and ongoing critical reflection of methods to ensure sufficient depth and relevance of data collection and analysis;
- Meticulous record-keeping, demonstrating a clear decision trail and ensuring interpretations of data are consistent and transparent;
- Including rich and thick verbatim descriptions of participants' accounts to support findings;
- Demonstrating clarity in terms of thought processes during data analysis and subsequent interpretations;
- Engaging with other researchers to reduce research bias;
- Respondent validation: includes inviting participants to comment on the interview transcript and whether the final themes and concepts created adequately reflect the phenomena being investigated; and
- Data triangulation, whereby different methods and perspectives help produce a more comprehensive set of findings (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Adhering to these strategies demonstrated rigor in truth-value, consistency, neutrality, and applicability. The process of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability established qualitative validity and reliability of this research.

Credibility. The credibility criteria involved establishing that the results of the qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. The purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participant's view. The participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results (Trochim & McLinden, 2017). The credibility of the study was strengthened by ensuring relevant data and the process of data collection were related to the research problem and focused on the research questions. Credibility was achieved using face-to-face interviews with open-ended questions that allowed the participants the ability to provide honest and valid information related to the research questions. Member checking was used to ensure the information provided by the respondents was accurately presented. To ensure the credibility of the study, I took field notes during the interview process. The interview process produced very positive results based on the ease with which participants answered, and that reflected a strong sense that relevant information related to the study was collected. The participants were provided with the transcripts ensuring credibility in the information collected.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. From a qualitative perspective, transferability is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalizing. The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough job of describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research. The person who wishes to transfer the results to a different context is then responsible for making the judgment of the sensibility of the transfer (Trochim &

McLinden, 2017). The study findings about the African American male students and the factors associated with their retention rates after undertaking the CSS course are transferable (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2013). The study used a purposive sampling process to ensure transferability concept was achieved. Emphasizing the importance of the full descriptive data to transferability and understanding the usefulness of the purposive sampling process allow the researcher to strengthen the element of transferability (Anney, 2014). A purposive sampling method was adhered to by focusing on African American male students since they were knowledgeable about the issues of concern and provided the needed information to inform the research questions.

Dependability. The traditional quantitative view of reliability and dependability is based on the assumption of replicability or repeatability by other researchers (Houghton et al., 2013). Essentially, dependability is concerned with whether the same results would be obtained if the same thing was observed twice. However, one cannot measure the same thing twice; by definition, if we are measuring twice, we are measuring two different things. To estimate reliability, quantitative researchers construct various hypothetical notions (e.g., true score theory) to try to get around this fact. The idea of dependability, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The research is intended to describe the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the research approached the study (Trochim & McLinden, 2017). The dependability of the research data relies on the stability of the findings backed by the data and retrieved from the study participants (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Here, the processes of achieving

dependability involved confirmation of data collected and subsequent data analysis performed; a code-recode strategy that involved a comparison of data on multiple occasions and member checking was utilized.

Confirmability. Qualitative research tends to assume that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. Several strategies for enhancing confirmability are used. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. Another researcher can take the role of “devil’s advocate” with respect to the results and this process can be documented. The researcher can actively search for and describe *negative instances* that contradict prior observations. In addition, after conducting the study, one can conduct a *data audit*, which examines the data collection and analysis procedures and makes judgments about the potential for bias or distortion. Meanwhile, though alternative criteria may not be necessary, I propose that more work is done on broadening the traditional criteria so that there is a legitimacy applied across the entire spectrum of research approaches.

Further, alternative criteria certainly can be confusing for students and newcomers to this discussion, these alternatives do serve to remind us that qualitative research cannot easily be considered and is only an extension of the qualitative paradigm into the realm of non-numeric data (Trochim & McLinden, 2017). Confirmability was achieved by ensuring the experiences, biases, interests, and motivations did not affect the findings or results of the study. The focus was to ensure the results of the data collected were from the understanding and experiences of participants which provided neutrality and the

accuracy of findings. Confirmability focuses on ensuring the results of the data are from the understanding and experiences of the participants (Anney, 2014). In addition, confirmability is the neutrality or the degree to which findings are consistent and could be repeated (Connelly, 2016). Member-checking process and linking of the findings to the literature review were utilized to enhance confirmability and improve credibility. Merriam (1995) further elaborated that it is not just about acquiring data from the study participants but also the tentative interpretations of these data by the people from whom it was gathered and querying the plausibility of the interpretations. Confirmability was achieved by ensuring that the experiences did not affect the findings or results of the study.

Strengths

Qualitative case study research is “a means of investigating complex social units with multiple variables,” (Heather, Watkins, & Stucky, 2015, p. 19). Qualitative case study research has proven effective for studying educational innovations, evaluating programs, and informing policy. The strength of this type of research was acknowledged:

Policy analysis better captures situations and settings which are more amenable to policy and program intervention that are accumulated individual attributes . . . and are better able to assess social change than more positivistic designs, and change is often what policy is addressing. (Collins & Noblit, 1978, p. 26)

Limitations

The generalizability of the study was a limitation. Specifically, internal generalizability was of concern. Using triangulation, the goal was to minimize these

concerns. Additionally, the in-depth understanding gained through qualitative research takes precedence over the ability to generalize findings outside the case study (Qu & Dumay, 2011). My choice to use semi-structured open-ended interviews was made in the hope of creating a comfortable opportunity for the interviewee to speak freely; however, this interviewing method might lack reliability and cause an internal validity concern. It was my goal to minimize descriptive validity concerns with tape recordings, verbatim transcriptions, and use of the NVivo software. Results are limited by the researcher's integrity and bias; however, it is the hope that through triangulation (i.e., interviews, retention, dropout and enrollment rates, plus documents and records) the researcher bias can be limited.

Data collected in this study were self-reported interview data. An inherent limitation of self-reported data is that it is not independently verifiable. Participants might not have been truthful in their interviews or might have represented events or information as they saw it. Participant's opinions are their own and reflect their own biases. I attempted to put all participants at ease, thus limiting the need for deception or participants' desire to put a "positive spin" on their experiences. However, the perspective of the individual is inherently represented in interview data, which is both a strength of the data as well as a limitation.

To increase the trustworthiness and decrease threats to the credibility of the study's findings, I relied the process of triangulation. Existing data, interview transcriptions, and member checking were the sources utilized to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon. In addition, I used the triangulation process to

ensure the accuracy of the findings.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of African American male students engaged in a CSS course to discover what they perceived to be a major influence on the retention of their population in the community college. The following research questions guided this doctoral study:

RQ1. How do African American male students at the COS describe their experience in the CSS course in relation to completing their degree program?

RQ2. How do African American male students describe the support they received from the CSS course that contributed to their retention in completing their degree program?

I accounted for discrepancies in the data by looking for themes throughout the participant interviews. Individual opinions were examined as they related to other participants and the common themes are discussed in the sections that follow. This increased the accuracy of the data by representing larger themes rather than single opinions that might be divergent from the general population. Verbatim responses were given to the research questions by some of the participants. To ensure anonymity, participants are identified as Participant 1, 2, . . . 20 (P1, P2, etc.).

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked African American male students at the COS to describe their experience from the CSS course in relation to completing their degree program. Nodes relating to Question 1 include the following: skills learned, motivators,

and room for improvement.

Skills learned. Participants reported that they learned skills in the CSS course related to social interactions, planning, navigating systems, and critical thinking. Each participant reported a wide variety of unique experiences; these skills were repeated by many participants in a variety of ways indicating that these sets of skills were important components of the CSS course.

Social skills. Participants indicated that developing social skills was an important part of the CSS course. These skills, although not obviously academic in nature, helped participants relate better to their classmates and communicate with people in a way that elicited the desired response. P11 described his experience developing social skills in the CSS course in the following way.

Me personally, I don't spend a lot of time in the school, like exploring the clubs and stuff. I'm sure there's something okay. But I don't, I don't really indulge socially. But in the class, we learn about social skills, it's a big emphasis too. Like we'll do a storyteller. What do you have to share? Like a different student will go up and we'll talk about, you know, just tell a story. Anything does not matter. And you know, we'll, we'll take from that. What do you? What can you learn from this? Like one young lady, she talked about the racist experience she faced. She's not African American and she talked about a racist experience she had on campus and you know, so how do you feel about that?

Like P11, P20 said that learning social skills was a big part of the CSS course. For this participant, these skills helped him think about the way he interacted with people and

how his behavior influenced the reaction he received from others. According to P20,

I've found out how to communicate with people because you can't communicate with people that same way you do with others. So, it's almost like, as I understand when you greet people, they're not going to always greet you back. And I understand that. But I just feel like if you're trying to at least give an effort to do it, then I feel like at least seven out of 10 times, like they are at least going to speak back. You know, they're not always going to speak back.

Planning ahead. Participants indicated the CSS course discussed topics beyond what they expected in a typical college course. One of these topics was how to plan ahead in your coursework and in your professional and personal lives. This was an important topic for participants as it helped them think critically about what they would accomplish and what it would take to meet their goals. P11 discussed how the CSS course helped him think about things related to budgeting and family planning. According to P11,

In my class, it's more personal. Like we talk a lot about things we are going through personally. It's not just like academia. So, we were talking about like we were talking about budgeting and a couple of people say, oh, so we want to have children. Should I go broke to get them what they want? Things like that in a budget, in an organization.

Like P11, P19 found that the CSS course helped to develop his planning skills. For this participant, these skills took the form of goal planning and visualization. P19 said,

Some of what gave me satisfaction out of that, of course, was the completion of it.

Learning how to write down goals and you know, something that the course did teach me was to write down my goals. And if you write down your goals and you can visualize them and you can help it, it can help you, you know, progress towards it.

Navigating systems. Many of the participants in this study were freshmen, and as such, they indicated that they had a lot to learn about the college environment. For these participants, the CSS course offered them an introduction to college by helping them navigate a system that was unfamiliar. P8 indicated this:

Yeah, that course have taught, have taught me somehow to work some of the systems within the school, what places to go to for what problems for what problems I may have in school or, and what prompt I may have in life that may affect my school life. So, the course really like reinforced, reinforced my reasons for being in school and reinforced my ability to, to succeed in.

P18 indicated that they had a lot of questions about college when they began the CSS course. For this participant, the course was a way for them to better understand a system that was unfamiliar.

Once I completed it, it kind of put a lot of things in perspective. When you go in your freshman year, you have a lot of questions. And ironically, that class helped answer a lot of those questions and so, I put things into perspective. It makes it not as, you know, anxious to go. Okay. So, can you just be relaxed, which was great.

Critical thinking. Participants indicated one of the biggest benefits of the CSS course was that it helped them develop critical thinking skills. These skills allowed participants to engage in the course and in their studies in new ways. According to P14, these skills helped them participate in their coursework and think about their future and how they would achieve these goals. P14 said,

A lot of motivations. First of all, this is, it's motivated me to participate because of the literature that he's teaching, you know, as far as seminars, as far as being aware of, of, of, you know, your surroundings of what you're doing and critical thinking. And, you know it's just taking details on, you know, just about every aspect you know, of your life is what you're doing. And that's, that's going to get you further and further, you know on your path to success.

For P19, their critical thinking came in the form of self-reflection. According to this participant, the CSS course challenged them to reflect meaningfully on themselves and question the barriers they faced in achieving their goals. P19 said, "I guess the course it brought light on self-reflection. I was able to look at that side of myself and you know, put aside things that were holding me back, you know, kind of like prioritize."

Motivators. Throughout the course of the semi-structured interviews, participants discussed things that motivated them to succeed in the course and in the rest of their studies. Although each participant expressed their own individual motivations, themes that were shared among many participants were also expressed. These themes included inspirational speakers and informative presentations, family, and preparing for the future.

Inspirational speakers and informative presentations. Several participants indicated they were motivated to continue the CSS course and the rest of their studies by the informational and informative presentations they experienced in the course. These presentations talked about resources available to students such as the Wellness Center. They also talked about topics related to students such as exam stress and organizational techniques. P16 discussed what he and the others took away from presentations from other departments,

Someone from a different department comes in to talk to us, like people from the wellness center. And that's if you have testing anxiety or anything, they give you a diagnostic and it's just good to know that the professor was bringing in different people to basically keep us going for like whatever issue that we were going through. Gave us tips on how to solve that issue.

P10 succinctly echoed a similar opinion that was expressed by other participants. P10 said, “[The teacher is] bringing in presenters to help you stay on the right path of completion.”

Family. Many participants were motivated by family concerns to continue their studies. This motivation took the form of wanting to provide for their children, live up to their parents' expectations, or model success for their younger siblings. P16 discussed how he wanted to show his younger brothers that they have options in life and can choose to make a different decision than their older brothers. According to P16,

I have two older brothers that's been in and out of jail and my mom has two younger brothers that have rotated throughout the criminal justice system. I have

two younger brothers who're 12 and 13 and I've seen like my uncles, they struggling, they still struggling to get a job cause they'd been in jail and I was just trying to show my little brothers like it's, it's a better route than that. So, like I'm the first person in my family to go to college and actually do a semester in college or whatever. My dad didn't go to college, my mom didn't go to college, so I'm the first one. I'm just trying to show, show my little brothers that it is a better way than being in the streets gang banging. No, Chicago is full of just drugs, gang banging, guns, shooting, killing and fighting. I'm just trying to show my other brother there's a better route than that.

Although P11 did not have children, he discussed how his vision for his family hinged on him completing his degree. P13 realized that having a degree did not mean that one is smarter than anyone else, but the degree would open doors that were closed to someone without higher education. P11 indicated,

And these people are not smarter than me. And what, so what's what separates them from me is the fact that they have a piece of paper that says that they're smarter than me. So, you know, so I'm just so I thought all these elaborate homes, like I want an elaborate home. So seeing motivated me and then I started thinking about my future having a family and I don't, I don't want my family to necessarily, I want to say struggle, struggle like I did, but you know, I don't want them to have the same challenges that I had and if me going to school for a couple of years, I can leave that for my son or daughter. Then I feel like why not, you know? But that, that keeps me going and keeps me motivated.

Preparing for the future. Many participants spoke about preparing for the future or bettering themselves through education and achievement. This idea, of being all they could be and reaching their full potential, motivated many participants to keep completing their courses. This idea of betterment through education was important to many participants, even if they did not yet have a clear idea of how they wanted to use their education or what the next step was. P12 expressed this by saying,

I don't know what I want to do after I'm done getting my associate degree because I just don't know. I just know I'm going to have my associate degree. I just want to do something to better myself and be in a better position than I am today.

This statement expressed trust that getting an education would open doors for this participant, even if they were unsure where those doors would lead. P19 expressed similar thoughts as P12, indicating that his intention was to complete the degree with the hope that an education would present more opportunities. P19 said,

Like budgeting, planning for the future, you know, looking ahead. It wasn't really anything that motivated me. What motivated me was my own success. You know, just trying to better myself just have a, just have a, a better look on life, you know.

Opportunity for improvement. Throughout the interviews, participants made suggestions about how the CSS course could be improved to increase retention and satisfaction. Participants generally expressed contentment with the course. However, there were a few common themes discussed as they related to opportunities to improve the course. Those themes included increased mentorship and career planning.

Mentorship. Mentorship was one of the most prominent themes discussed throughout the interviews. Most participants did not have specific suggestions relating to how the CSS or school curriculum could be improved to increase retention; however, many participants expressed a desire for more mentorship. Some participants such as P11, directly expressed this idea, but others were less sure of exactly what the course lacked but expressed a desire for guidance and connection with a trusted person. P11 described the importance of mentorship noting,

Mentoring relationships help students to feel cared for. They make sure you know. People think teachers . . . but some teachers seem only interested in money not students' well-being, which results in a lack of motivation for students. I think a mentor would care and make the student feel important.

P19 also expressed the need for mentorship. According to this participant, a mentor could help students communicate their needs to the school and could encourage participants to continue their studies. P19 said,

So, you have more African American male role models, mentors and not ones that just give speeches. Ones that actually reach out to the students, ones that's gonna like, you know, check on you if they're coming to class. What's the problem, son? Someone that could be a liaison between the student and this organization, the college. So, if something like that is in place I had I had older, an older friend of my older cousin of mine who was a, something like that, but he wasn't, he was more of a mentor. But if you can find some way to connect that aspect to the college and to the student, I think it'd be more effective because a lot of African

American males don't grow up with fathers. A lot of things we don't know how to do.

Career planning. Career planning was a theme that emerged during the interviews that related to the planning for the future theme. Many participants indicated they hoped completing their degree would set them up for success in the future, but some students also indicated they did not know how to translate their degree into a career. This is a crucial step for any student, and many participants wondered if they could be better prepared to take the next step after college. P12 indicated that he would suggest increasing the career counseling opportunities available to students when he said,

Certainly, like getting connected with the students such as like, okay, like sit down and talk with them. Like, okay, so after you're done with your 2 years, what do you want to do after your 2 years is over with and you have your associates? You know, because like myself, I don't know what I want to do after I'm done getting my associate degree because I just don't know. I just know I'm going to have my associate degree.

P14 went a step further than P12 by indicating the school should offer classes directly related to a career, rather than just providing career counseling services. Classes related to a trade or a career could bridge the gap for students wondering how their education related to their future work and success. P14 expressed this by saying,

Nurses, doctors, I feel that they could have a paramedic course here, you know? Okay. You know, because it's going to always be injuries. It's gonna always be someone who, who's like I said before, was in a fracas with the law. So, okay.

That's my philosophy as far as academics, in college, as far as participating in class.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, how do African American male students describe the support they received from the CSS course that contributed to their retention in completing their degree program? Two major themes emerged in relation to this research question. NVivo presented nodes that include resources and support and barriers. Each of these major nodes includes several subnodes that make up the larger theme. Those nodes and subnodes are discussed in the following sections.

Resources and support. Participants often discussed the resources and support they utilized to help them complete the CSS course and the rest of their classes. These supports included nodes such as teacher and administrative support, financial aid, and time management. These nodes were discussed in many of the interviews; and whereas participants had their own approaches to these themes, they were often discussed with varying ideas.

Teacher and administrative support. Participants almost universally discussed their appreciation for the teachers they had in the CSS course. Participants indicated these teachers helped them in a variety of ways including ways unrelated to academics-- personally. These responses indicate the success of the CSS course might rest on the enthusiasm and dedication of its teachers rather than the curriculum or resources it directed to students. For many participants, including P1, their CSS teacher helped them simply by showing them that their teacher cared about them. According to P1,

So he [the teacher] talked about how to manage your time, how to imagine your energy. He talked about when you study you need to eat healthy. And so it's just a lot of stuff. He showed that he really cared about us. And so like he wants us to pass our class and was like, one person in your class, you don't want to feel, he said he wants everybody to be successful.

A similar sentiment as the one shared by P1 was expressed by many participants. P10, however, provided some additional detail. This participant indicated their teacher supported the class by being sure she taught at a pace that everyone could follow. This was something P1 said they had not experienced before and that it improved their experience in the class. According to P1,

Well, the, the way my teacher explains the lesson, I feel that she is very descriptive in her teachings. Most teachings in my last classes before here, I really haven't had that most descriptive teaching. Most teachers will be, 'here's the format, I'm a teach you. This is going to be up here at a certain amount of time. And if you don't get it, well you just didn't get it. It's more at the last teachers I have dealt with. It's different here. You come and get it here we meet at a middle ground. There's wasn't no middle ground even when I was in high school, it's never been a middle ground. It's the information right here. You wasn't fast enough, you wasn't quick enough. Boy, [here] it is paced at not as fast, not slow, but at a pace that people could keep up.

Financial Aid. Many participants indicated that financial aid was a big part of their ability to enroll and keep taking classes or that they had heard the financial aid

office was useful for many students. According to P1,

There's the financial aid office to help you find grants and set up your financial aid if you haven't and help you work out like payment plans. If you have to do that. They always told the advisors could help with many things and help direct you to the proper services if you need.

P4 expressed a similar sentiment to P1. When asked about the resources they utilized to enroll in and complete their courses, P4 said, "There's the financial aid office to help you find grants and set up your financial aid if you haven't and help you work out like payment plans."

Time management. Time management was something participants indicated they learned about in the CSS course and it was a major contributor to their success in that course and others. When asked about the strategies they used to complete their coursework, P12 said,

Basically, time management. Because like with time management, I have things to do outside of school, like go to work or, and like when I'm going to work, like I have to go to work right after I get out of class. I don't want to be having no time to do homework. And so I had to basically like set up a planner or whatever. So like okay, I go to work this day and day, I can do my homework this day and study for a test. And it was like very hard for me because I did not know that in my first semester. So then my second semester I'm like, okay, college success. So she was telling me like time management, I needed to learn how to be organized, plan like ahead of time.

A sentiment similar to this was expressed by many participants. More than any other single thing, participants indicated their ability to succeed was supported by good time management practices. For many participants, it seemed like this was a concept they may not have touched upon in other coursework. P18 indicated this was something they found out when they started college coursework. According to P18,

Being organized because that's what it teaches you. You have to be organized. You have to put things in perspective. Again, when you first come in, you're thinking, okay, school, I'm gonna do what I do whenever I do it. And it doesn't work that way, especially in that class.

Barriers. Participants were generally optimistic about their ability to succeed in their coursework and reach their goals. However, there were a few common barriers participants discussed as issues they faced enrolling in and completing their coursework. Those barriers include financial issues and neighborhood safety and financial issues.

Neighborhood safety. A few participants indicated there were times they were concerned about coming to class due to the safety of the neighborhoods they had to travel through. P13 indicated that his car had been broken into while they were in class and that there were certain times of the day that the students felt less safe. According to P13,

You know, people will see stuff in the morning or they just, saw something last night like my car, and now my car is broken into. And it makes you not want to go to class sometimes.

P8 expressed that students sometime struggled to get to class because they were concerned about moving through the neighborhood. According to this participant,

I did have a hard time, a hard time getting here with drug dealers along my route. As an example, the other night I was offered cocaine as I traveled pass one of the corners from a guy in a car. So, these things that scared me and threatened my ability to live my life and make, make it more it makes me more afraid to get here. I can't stay late like I would like to, it's not safe. Yeah, it does affect my school life for how long I study and how I study and things like that. It's hard to prioritize.

Financial issues. Despite many participants indicating the financial aid office was a good resource, some participants did struggle with the finances associated with taking classes. P10 was not necessarily speaking about himself, but he did say financial issues were a problem for some students. According to P10,

Maybe some people also try to get in school and they having a hard time getting in. They want to get into school, but they having a hard time because finances ain't going well, is hard. Maybe they don't live in a certain area of the school. They want to go to the school, but they have waivers, but not in this district. So they have to pay, and they don't have money. They, they on a fixed income. They, just had a bad life.

P16 and P17 both succinctly indicated that finances were a hardship for them. P16 said barriers to retention, "would just be the financial aspect," but P17 said, "To me, not having any money causes tensions money-wise and makes education more difficult."

Study Findings

Mentorship was found to be the most meaningful factor in assisting students in persistence and graduation. This finding suggests that embedding a mentorship component in the CSS course will support student achievement, students' ability to meet personal career goals, and an increase retention rates for first-year students. Enhancing the mentoring component of the CSS course will promote positive social change by supporting African American male students and it will allow them to form stronger connections to the community college.

The nodes and subnodes supported themes that were described: guidance and support in the CSS course, role models and mentoring by teachers, satisfaction with the CSS course, engagement, social and teamwork to achieve academic excellence, expectations of the society, and additional support. The following themes that emerged from the research questions responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Emerging Themes Derived from Research Question Responses

Research question	Emerging theme	Number of students who discussed theme
1. How do African American male students at the COS describe their experiences in the CSS course about completing their degree program?	Theme 4: Engagement, Social and Teamwork to achieve academic excellence	10
	Theme 5: Expectations of society	16
	Theme 6: Available Resources and effectiveness of programs	20
	Theme 7: Additional support needed	17
2. How do African American male students describe the support they received from the CSS course that contributed to their retention in completing their degree program?	Theme 1: Guided and supported in CSS course	10
	Theme 2: Role model and mentoring by instructors	18
	Theme 3: Satisfaction with the CSS course	15

Note. COS = college of study and CSS = college success seminar.

Theme 1: Guidance and Support Within College Success Course

One of the emerging themes from the interviews was the support and guidance students received from instructors while taking the CSS course. Each of the 20 students commented on how the course and instructors guided them to be successful in their

careers. The CSS course enabled students to see things differently, develop the ability to plan their activities properly, and be more productive while taking the course and preparing for their career. Participants referred in particular to experiences that contributed to their time management ability.

Participant 19 made a connection between what he learned about procrastination and time management and stated: “Learning new things, especially learning new things about time management and stuff was helpful. I saw that I was a procrastinator.” Some participants indicated that before taking the course they did not understand how to use a planner or budget their time effectively. P12 expressed how the CSS course helped him.

I have things to do outside of school like go to work. When I’m going to work, it is right after I get out of class. Man, then after work, I don’t see no time to do homework. And so I had to basically like set up planner or whatever. So like okay, I go to work this day and that day. I can do my homework this day and study for a test on that day. Doing it at first—using that planner--was like very hard for me cause I didn’t know how. My first semester, wow!. So then my second semester, I’m like, okay, college success! So she [teacher] was telling me like time management, I needed to learn how to be organized, plan like ahead of time. It worked once I got use to writing it down.

P13 learned that taking the time to write things down was a key feature of being organized:

Cause it’s hard for me to. . . I don’t want to say care, but it was hard for me to keep up with things. I don’t take a lot of things seriously, but organization kind of

makes you take it seriously. So, if I write it down, then I took the time to write it down. So when I see it in the planner, it's like, okay, you know, you, you started, you respected the effort a little more. You know what I'm saying? So yeah, the organization definitely helps a lot.

Being productive and maintaining a timetable for different tasks was important for students as stated by P5: "The CSS course has helped to align things in a more productive order, carrying out various tasks and ranking them from high importance and making connections."

P6 and P7 had the same sentiments about the CSS course contributing to their time management skills. P6 stated, "The course has enabled me to come up with the schedule of things that I must do in order to achieve them easily." P7 said, "It has been a great experience to take part in the course since it has helped me to align many things in my life."

P2 had left college previously and decided to come back to complete his studies, and it was suggested that he would benefit from a CSS course. His previous college experience did not help bolster his motivation toward the achievement of obtaining a degree. Since enrolling at the COS and engaging in the CSS course, his outlook now looks forward to the opportunities completing college will offer toward career advancement. He made this statement: "I was in a different college a few years ago, and I decided to join this college. The CSS course helped me since my instructors guided and supported me fully in education and provided me with key tips on how to be successful."

P3 decided to return and complete his studies at the COS and undertake the CSS

course. They indicated the course was important to them because it was a confirmation of what they were supposed to do in life. He stated, “Instructors were friendlier, supportive and guided us on how to achieve our goals in life. Whatever I learned from the course is like the confirmation of what I am supposed to do in life, and I am very happy with the course.”

The CSS course curriculum guided P4 to push toward his goal and proceed with the selected career choice. He stated that, “Undertaking the course has helped me to work hard, develop my goals and work towards achieving them. The main goal is to join the university and complete my education and achieve my career.”

P17, a second-year, second-semester student enjoyed the support from teachers. He stated the following:

I have enjoyed the course because the instructor was well-informed and encouraged us to take the course and that made everything to go smoothly.

Initially, I had difficulties in meeting the demands of my instructors, especially in completing assignments, but through the guidance and support from the instructors, I can now submit my assignments on time.

P20 also spoke of the sense of community he experienced in the college readiness course:

College readiness was to me like what to expect and also what was in the course. Like, I said, he [instructor] made it like a family type environment. So I got, I got like a little friendships and you know, people that I can, if I see on the street, I can say hey, or how you doing or just have a nice conversation with them. So that

feeling, like, it really helped me just in college period. Like be ready for anything and be prepared. Be organized and everything.

Theme 2: Role Models and Mentoring by Instructors

Instructors played a critical role in motivating and mentoring students on time management, planning, different learning styles, and how to deal with various academic issues, and their influence was evident. Instructors made sure that students were equipped with key tools to help them complete their educational goals. The role assumed by instructors has been a motivating factor to P1. He said,

Great support from the teachers has helped me become who I am and strive to be successful. My instructor gave me the key tips and motivational speech on how to deal with the issues related to racism and has helped me on how to deal with it. Helping students also understand the importance of education and completing school is key in motivating them and keeping them going. Instructors have helped me in my career, and I have seen the importance of education through their guidance.

According to P2, communication with mentors, role models, and mentoring support from the instructors motivated he and his classmates to continue their education. The encouragement instructors provided made them believe that they could obtain an associate degree. P2 said,

One instructor was very supportive, understood me, and his pace of communication helped me to understand what is expected at the college level and how to achieve in life. He encouraged us that despite the limited resources out

there, he worked hard and made it and encouraged us to follow the same steps and be successful not only in the CSS course but also in life.

An instructor from another country was an important role model who motivated P3 and encouraged him to continue pursuing his career. P3 stated, "I've been motivated by one instructor who, despite coming from another country, obtained another degree. That has helped me to think and tackle issues different in reference to staying in college and the possibility of even high educational pursuits."

P5 also recognized the importance of time management and was able to complete the assignments on time. He said, "The instructor, who I see as a mentor, has helped me to see and understand how time management plays a very important aspect towards life success. I learned how to focus and structure time management." P16 went further and shared the following:

The instructor explained every aspect clearly as compared to where I was before I joined this college. I was able to find the middle ground in the style of teaching that the instructors use. All educational institutions should have some type of program that promotes presenters and mentors who once lived the street's life and were able to turn their life around in a more productive and successful manner . . . this will help younger people wanting a better life understand the value of education and vocation.

P12 asserted that the use of a successful African American male who had "made it in life" would play a significant role as a possible mentor in inspiring the students. He stated, "By providing male mentors, it will help the African American male students to

understand and better relate to not only the course material but what doors having an education and or marketable skills will open.”

For P20, the mentoring and support went beyond academic and job readiness skills and extended to health:

It was the teacher, honestly, the teacher that I had. So cause he was like, he was just a really good guy. He was. He wanted you to like have fun. He wanted you to get involved, but he wanted you to do all the work and stuff too. ‘Cause he, he showed me the resume that people wanted. Took time to even help me start my resume. He showed me that also like for the health and wellness thing, cause I’ve never really talked to the people or anybody like that. Can’t be sick working a job or going to school. So that was more like, okay, yeah he actually wants us to, you know, do better and stay in school, be healthy and you know, just push us.

P1 described the experience of feeling that the teachers were on the students’ side, not only giving advice but also helping them find individual strategies to problem solve.

He shared the following:

Anything moving forward on to like, should I continue doing this or what should I should maybe stop doing. He always said keep on the same path school-wise. Like, if I’m not focusing in class, ask myself what’s the reason why? So they educate me more so I can understand. . . better strategies to keep moving, keep staying focused.

Theme 3: Satisfaction With the CSS Course

Satisfaction among participants was mainly influenced by instructors’ teaching

style, interaction with peers, course structure, information retention, the necessity of completing the course, well-structured and focused goals, doing well on assignments, and being able to set goals. P1 thought that “sharing information with colleagues and the structured course had met my expectations.” P2 said, “By sharing with colleagues, I have learned a lot of things while interacting with other students.”

P3 concluded that, “Completing the course successfully and putting into practice what was taught in the course is important to me, and I am satisfied with the instructors learning style.” P4 also stated that “instructors have made me to be focused.” P6 and P5 had the same sentiments about the course: P5 indicated that the course has helped him be more responsible and P6 believed that “putting a lot of things in perspective and making things good to go helped increase his satisfaction with the course.”

P17 stated the instructor helped the students to locate and use tutoring services, which enabled them to complete the course without any challenges. P17 was motivated by the instructor’s teaching style and that contributed to his satisfaction with the course. P16 highlighted satisfaction factors in this course that included the ability to retain information given by instructors, use of keywords, doing very well on assignments, and being able to figure out future goals. P12 stated that satisfaction factors in the course included the necessity to complete the course and the ability to develop well-structured goals that help to visualize and focus on priorities in life.

P13 found satisfaction in the course because students were given opportunities to discuss personal issues unrelated to academic study, and to listen to classmates’ descriptions of their own experiences:

But in, in the class we learn a social skills is a big emphasis too. Like, we will do like a storyteller. What do you have to share? Then a different student will go up and we'll talk about, you know, just tell a story. Anything doesn't matter. And you know, we'll, we'll take from that. What do you, what can you learn from this? Like one young lady, she talked about a racist experience. She's not Black and she talked about a racist experience she had on campus and you know, so how do you feel about that?

P14 associated his satisfaction with the class because the answers to his questions reduced his anxiety about college. He shared his insight.

I was thinking about to my original assessment once I completed it. It kinda put a lot of things in in place, more clear. When you go in your freshman year, you have a lot of questions. And it was funny how that class helped answer a lot of those questions and sort, I put things into perspective. It makes it not as, you know, anxious to go.

Theme 4: Engagement, Social Interactions, and Teamwork to Achieve Academic Excellence

Student participants agreed the course enabled them to be engaged in academic issues through social networking and teamwork. P1 said, "Instructors support us and even give us time to study in groups and engage in discussions before taking the test in order to relieve stress." P2 had the similar sentiments and stated that, "The instructor engages us and encourages us to continue to use social network in school so that we can help each other to achieve our goals and be successful." P3 agreed by stating, "Discussing issues

with my colleagues and embracing teamwork has helped me to understand issues facing us academically and thus I now have the ability to be successful in the course.”

According to P5, being involved in class and teamwork are aspects that have helped him to remain in school. It was “like someone was depending on me so I had to show up.”

P12 stated that being able to have self-reflection and the necessity of completing the course to achieve their dreams are some of the factors helping retention.

Participants also described the ways that making presentations and doing group projects contributed to their class engagement, social interaction, and teamwork skills.

P5 stated that he “got to do a lot of presentations mostly. That’s basically what our midterms were ... and our final exam.” P6 described how group work engaged students:

Like we try to do some group projects and some about important causes like other clubs. We asked each other, like, how you like doing quizzes? By yourself? And sometimes people say they just don’t want to do it and like, if you do like a group project or something and you get to interact with other people, it’s still like having fun with it. It’s still a test but then they make class better for other people. Like they started wanting to come work cause like you want to [be in] class working with people and stuff.

P7 appreciated the opportunities for students to do presentations on subjects that mattered to them, while informing classmates about significant issues they may not previously have understood:

I really like how we can do presentations and stuff like that. Because you get a chance to teach young people about stuff, maybe they never even knew. So one

project was, you know, you get to teach about a person, you know, like a Black person, you know, that you always wanted people to know about, and I was able to do that. So it was pretty cool experience.

Theme 5: Expectations of Society

Half of the student participants faced external challenges that made it hard to complete the course. Twelve out of 20 participants indicated a lack of support from the broader community, which judges them for engaging in prosocial behaviors and compounds the difficulties. P1 expressed concurrence when he stated bluntly, “Being an African American male student, the expectations of the society are totally different from students from other races. The society expects us to be on the streets involved in different kinds of drugs.” P3 noted that as an African American male student, it is difficult to get family support when going through college. He said,

I have a family and society expects me to take care of them by going out in the streets and selling drugs in order to provide for them. I was out of college for 2 years because of a lack of funds . . . our society is money-minded and so going to college for a year or two without having money is a challenge. I took a step away from my girl because she did not value me going to school.

P12 described the pervasive behavioral patterns he observed among the men in his community as examples of a lifestyle he was personally determined to avoid:

So I’ll look outside, and I see like people that like, like that stand on a street or whatever and I’ll be like, no, I [don’t] want to become one of those, you know, I want, I don’t want to act so that I have to keep on looking for handouts. I want to

go out here and get it on my own, like grind, grind and strive. That's why I'm here!

P13 wanted to refute society's low expectations for himself in order to place his future children in a more advantageous position:

I started thinking about my future, you know, having a family and I don't, I don't want my family to be forced to, I want to say struggle, struggle like I did. But you know, I don't, I don't want them to have the same challenges that I had. So if me going to school for a couple of years, can you leave that life for my son or daughter, then I feel like why not, you know? It's worth it.

Theme 6: Available Resources and Effectiveness of Programs

Student participants were able to identify the various resilience programs that are in place at the COS. Participants noted the programs available at the COS include a career center, wellness centers, and tutoring and resource centers that are readily available to help students promote better education and achieve their goals. P12 expressed the following: that:

Undertaking the CSS course has enabled me with the ability to understand the different resources that the COS has to offer. Through the CSS, instructors not only informed the students of the various resilience programs available, but some program directors came out to the class and presented more specific information and details regarding available resources.

P13 said, "I have utilized the career center through guidance and support from my instructor. Right now, I am better able to understand my career path and I'm working

towards achieving it.” P16 said, “The course enabled me to understand various resources in the COS that are here as additional support towards the achievement of our goals.” P5 confirmed that, “Resilience programs offer a structured approach for schools to develop students’ skills, resources, and materials that will help us to achieve the best outcome possible.”

P10 discussed his use of academic advising services:

Academic advising? I used it a little bit and they made sure I’m doing what I’m supposed to do. They make sure that I know everything, you know, what I need to know to also make sure I have a healthy, successful experience as a student here.

P5 spoke on the accessibility of tutoring services: “Well, I got a lot of help. When it’s a certain assignment that I need help with, I’m able to ask for help and they’ll help me right then and there. It’s for everybody, you know.”

Students’ awareness of the available services was attributable to instructor influence, as P8 indicated:

The wellness, the wellness center and stuff like that and all the resources that’s available. He, [instructor] he makes sure he thoroughly go through everything that we can use at our disposal here. So he’s doing a great job at explaining it for us. I haven’t utilized many of them myself. Only the you pass situation, where I have to, but you know, if I need it I know it’s there now.

Participants expressed satisfaction in being aware of resources, and most found the resources effective. P17 suggested, however, that advisors might take a more proactive approach:

I would say the advisors ought to know so don't wait for us to ask! They don't do a great job, but for my experience that advisors have an open door policy where if you need to talk to them, you can come in. But I think it would help more if they actually reached out and pulled you in. They can tell you, all right, you're on the right track. This is what you have to look for to even take it a little further. If you continue going this route, you can be this, you can potentially make X, Y, and Z and you can do a lot better for yourself as opposed to coming in. All right, these the next classes you need to take. And they'll ask, do you have any questions? You know, for an average student who don't know, they'll seize up and say no. And that's it. First they kind of pull them in and say, you know, pick their brain a little bit. I think it would make it go a lot further.

All the participants ($N = 20$) unanimously agreed that the CSS intervention programs are effective since they enabled them to understand who they are as individuals. P1 supported this when he said, "We did self-assessment on mental health and it has helped me to understand who I am. This helped me to have self-reflection and thus have the ability to move forward with the knowledge of my ability." P3 said, "In order for something to work, you must use the programs in place so that you can take advantage of them in order to help you." P4 offered this thought: "The college environment and course tutors are friendly and support us in achieving our goal as African American male students."

Theme 7: Additional Supports Needed

Participants recommended the design of additional interventions that could help

instructors understand the needs of students, help them to advance their career development, and deal with personal issues effectively. These interventions should align with all other career planning services, especially academic counseling. Linking instructors to such platforms would help advance career development and bring career paths into focus. The role of instructors is to support other interventions and help students learn how to balance school, work, personal life, and relationships. Interventions that are sustainable generally use a holistic approach and will help people to understand that career planning and development is significant for goal achievement and future success. P1 made the point that they would benefit from support in charting their next steps. He noted, "After completing an associate degree, I don't know what I want to do or what's next and thus it is important for the interventions to help us understand what's next after completing a degree, what's my career plan." For P2, career development interventions, which are holistic and sustainable, would be essential and said,

Creating platforms that might help to move students to another level and encourage students who are doing well to continue and stay on task is needed.

Reinforcement of the interventions and helping students who graduate to advance in their career is very important and sustainable. In addition, providing more of a holistic approach will help the African American male students become increasingly successful.

Students indicated a need for additional interventions and programs that will provide additional support to help students balance education, relationships, and street life: such interventions will take care of students' personal needs and affairs, but how to

integrate each of these is the challenge. P3 said, "It is important for the college to come up with new strategies that will help students understand what they need in life and being oriented to what is expected in the college . . . street or gang intervention is also very important." P5 added to the statements of his classmates: "Instructors should also provide additional support in terms of taking care of the students' needs and affairs in order to improve their productivity." P13 expressed an urgency for interventions: "As a student, sometimes, I face personal challenges and I find it difficult to express or talk to anyone. I think instructors can help us in a better way when we talk to them." P1 also described a more proactive approach on the part of instructors as potentially beneficial to students:

Biggest thing I can say is I just think what you can do to help more for African American men is speaking up, speaking out more. Like sometimes I, for me and myself, I take it as an, I don't think teachers or staff or anybody in a facility doesn't open up more to students about like if they see somebody down or anything and they just, you know, check up on you...Like I just think that more students, students, staff or anybody in facilities should be able to talk to more students as in just making sure everything is okay.

Another suggestion from multiple participants indicated a need for COS administrators to come up with a healthier food plan that is cost effective. The economic disparities faced by African American students resulted in some going hungry: an issue many college administrators did not appear to acknowledge. P10 stated the following:

I believe something needs to be done about the way the food card system goes especially if you run out of district units. Sometimes students don't just ask . . .

they only eat once a day. Whenever they come around here that is the only meal that they have nothing else. So they could also feel that they be nervous and they unable to concentrate in class sometimes once you hungry, it's hard for you to concentrate on anything you have to do.

P19 connected having a better food plan to the program's ability to retain more students. "I believe that a better food plan will help the COS retain more students. Making meals more affordable will for sure encourage students to remain in school."

The COS administrators should also come up with a healthier food plan that is cost effective. Merriam and Grenier (2019) stated that having healthier and affordable meals accessible to students, enhances their ability to concentrate, which helps them to continue with their educational program. P15 believed students could benefit from greater access to counselors and mental health services, "Hire some people; hire some trained counselors. Counselors. Yeah, like that's basically the main thing. Counselors, therapists, whatever you call it, like it'll help out."

Participants also spoke about the disadvantages African American males encountered in finding appropriate mentors. P7 thought that having mentors would improve academic achievement for African American males. He shared the following:

I wish they have more mentors. And what I meant? What I mean by that is, you know, like you see a lot of fraternities, you know, mentors, but they, but it's like you have to like be at a big university. I wish they had some type of strategy to like help the [students], especially the African American males just coming out of high school; if only they had that chance. If they come into a city college about

that discipline and about their brotherhood and manhood before they make it to the university, I think we'll make it a lot easier because it's like we learn later in the game. We don't learn as early as a lot of other races. They get a chance to get that advantage. So, I feel like we had a disadvantage, the fact that we don't have those mentors.

P15 suggested developing partnerships between the program and businesses and organizations in the community as a way to foster mentoring relationships between successful African American males and college-age males.

So you have more African American male role models, mentors, and not ones that just give speeches. Ones that actually reach out to the students ones that's gonna like, you know, check on you if they're coming to class. 'What's the problem, son?' Something that could be like a liaison between the teacher, between, excuse me, between the student and the little, this organization, the college. So, if something like that is in place . . . I had older, an older friend of my older cousin of mine who was a, something like that, but he wasn't, he was more of a mentor. But if you can find some way to connect that aspect to the college and to the student, I think it'd be more effective because a lot African American males don't grow up with fathers. A lot of things we don't know how to do.

Participants indicated the key components of the CSS course such as exploring one's purpose for attending college, budgeting and planning, and time management were very informative aspects of the course. Such components helped to provide a platform that allowed the African American male students to promote self-improvement and

ownership of their successes, which they believed to be some of motivating factors that helped them to pursue their career goals.

Discussion and Interpretations

Though all interview participants were African American males, they represented various age groups and different levels of studies. Together, they affirmed that a mentorship component presents a vital aspect missing from the CSS course. Data collected answered the two research questions and determined the factors affecting the retention of these students even after undertaking a CSS course. Drawing on those data from the interviews, it was evident that most student participants are satisfied with the CSS course and they indicated the program was effective. According to COS, statistics indicates that the course has been deemed effective as over a one-year time span; between Fall 2015 and Fall 2016, the first-year students retention rates improved by 8% (City Colleges of Chicago, 2018). Through self-assessment, participants have learned time management skills, writing and reading skills, and they obtained key tips on how to be more successful in college. Undertaking the CSS course enabled students to see things differently and more positively. Completing assignments on time was nearly impossible for many students; however, it is evident that participation in the CSS course enabled 80% of the students to deal with completing work on time (City Colleges of Chicago, 2018). Most student participants were satisfied with the CSS course since they met their expectations by completing the course and learning different aspects that will help them to achieve their academic goals. As noted, student satisfaction in higher education takes place when the perceived performance meets or exceeds the students' expectations (Gray,

2017). Findings from this study confirm the literature.

Many student participants credited the CSS course for encouraging them to be more focused and successful in realizing their goals can be achieved. With every achievement including completing the CSS course, students can think about their careers and what they want to achieve in life. These factors were named by participants as important retention factors. The findings of this study are similar to the findings of Tinto (2003) and Rowan, Bigum, and Larkin (2016), which indicated that a student who is not able to meet or exceed the institution's minimum standard of academic achievement could face the ultimate consequence of leaving school without successful completion.

Participants indicated that instructors guided and supported them through their education; instructors encouraged social learning in the classroom and enabled students to complete their courses with additional support. This finding is supported by Grier-Reed, Ehlert, and Dade (2011) who indicated college retention rates and academic performance of African American students could be improved through social support in the academic institution. Furthermore, Black men are more likely to face challenges in terms of social and academic aspects when compared to other groups of students (Strayhorn, 2017). This was echoed in the findings from Falcon (2015) and Wilson (2018); African American male students enroll and remain in community college because of the social support and guidance they receive from the school faculty and administrators.

The CSS course enabled students to understand and learn about the availability of various resources in the COS such as a career center, wellness centers, and resource

centers that are available to help them to achieve their goals. Instructors also communicated and guided students on how, where, and when to find resources that would help them to achieve their goals. The COS findings are similar to those from Wilkins et al. (2012) who found student expectations are influenced by individual needs, communication from the institution or administrators and staff, word-of-mouth communication between students and other members of the institution, and other non-institutionally sanctioned sources such as the student evaluation website and resource centers.

Mentors who serve as role models and motivational speakers along with the guidance and support of instructors' ensure that students continue and complete their education (Booker & Brevard, 2017). The ability of students to engage in teamwork and social networks in the college is also a key factor that motivates and helps them to stay in college and achieve their career dreams (Williams & Williams, 2011). The use of successful African American males as mentors will provide another perspective for those who ventured into school; students can see, relate, and talk to someone with their desired lifestyle and translate that success onto themselves and choose a similar path in life (Douglas, 2017; Prager, 2011). Participants indicated mentors were those who lead by example. Mentors who are visible and proactive provide support in the educational process and the community and could help to dispel and defeat societal expectations and obstacles.

The CSS course should include interventions that incorporate mentors, especially those from similar economic and social backgrounds as the students, who can help

students lift themselves up and strive for their goals in life. Such mentors could provide students an opportunity to see and understand someone relatable. This type of personal interaction allows the students to recognize that they too can achieve more in life. Mentorship is a critical factor in motivating students and is deemed one of the best interventions available to increase retention and graduation rates among African American males in higher education (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). Also, higher education institutions that use the mentoring process help their students achieve their goals and become successful (Jacobi, 1991).

The availability of intervention programs such as the CSS course is one of the factors that helps to retain African American male students in the COS. Most of the respondents agreed that the course caused them to rethink their careers and future. This factor is similar to the findings of Strayhorn (2008), who determined that intervention programs such as the CSS course are essential in improving retention and completion rates. This finding is also aligned with that of the NCES (2014) that reported out of the programs designed in the United States, 84 were specifically designed to address the retention and successful completion rates of African American males and other underrepresented students. The retention rates could be improved if the goal of the CSS course prompted first-year students to learn to integrate a new kind of behavioral and critical-thinking strategy (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012). The development of such strategies will allow them to navigate skillfully through the college experience--in and out of the classroom. Satisfaction with the CSS course has allowed students to think about their education and career, remain in college, and

strategize about how they can achieve more in life. This is similar to the findings of Gibson (2010) who reported that satisfied students in the higher education institutions tend to be loyal to their goals and have the ability to remain in the institution, complete their program, and possibly maintain contact and support of an institution after graduation.

Ninety-three percent of the COS participants noted that they were taught writing and reading skills, time-management strategies, and vital tips on how to achieve life success through the CSS course. These results concurred with Tinto's (2012) findings that stated the successful transition of students from secondary to postsecondary education is a test of tenacity that will be determined within the first 6 weeks of matriculation. Students who are ill-prepared to meet the academic and social adjustments required of higher learning can become overwhelmed. In addition to being ill-prepared, society has made it very difficult for an African American male, especially those with criminal backgrounds, to even qualify for government funding to help change their lives (Chin, 2018).

Societal expectations and lack of support are examples of the difficulties African American male students face in their day-to-day existence (Grier-Reed, Ehlert, & Dade, 2011). Supportive environments and instructors of the CSS course have contributed to student retention at the study site. This finding is similar to the findings of Deci and Vansteenkiste (2004) that stated, lack of social support coupled with the presence of a chaotic and rejecting environment, will negatively affect the student's activity, performance, and development. When African American male students lack social

support and exist in a rejecting environment, they are less likely to perform well in school activities.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of African American male students engaged in a CSS course to discover what they perceived to be a major influence on the retention of their population in the community college. Purposive sampling was used to select the 20 participants for this study. The predetermined criteria for selection of the participants were being African American male students who had previously or were currently enrolled in the CSS course at the COS. The researcher applied a qualitative approach to this case study where interviews were conducted to gather information about student experiences when undertaking a CSS course at a community college. This study was guided by two primary research questions.

Research Question 1 asked the African American male students at the COS to describe their experience in the CSS course in relation to completing their degree program. Major nodes related to research Question 1 included room for improvement, skills learned, and motivators. Within the room for improvement node, subnodes of mentorship, career planning, and social skills were included. The skills learned node included the following subnodes: social skills, planning ahead, navigating systems, and critical thinking. Motivators included inspirational and informative presentations, family, and preparing for the future.

Overall, student participants reported that they believe the CSS course helped and encouraged them to complete their degree programs. Student participants reported the

CSS course provided them with invaluable soft skills such as time management and critical thinking, which are often key components of students' success in college (Brown, 2012). Without these skills, students are often unprepared for further coursework. This was especially important for students that may not have had any experience about the rigors of college. Student participants who had parents and siblings that successfully navigated the college system might have had a better understanding of how to navigate a school environment, which at times be complicated and bureaucratic. For participants who entered college without knowing what to expect, the CSS course provided them with a *soft landing* and helped them fill a knowledge gap of tacit understanding that is often left unexplained in coursework, which focuses on knowledge acquisition rather than college readiness.

Research Question 2 asked the African American male students to describe the support they received from the CSS course that contributed to their retention and completion of their degree program. The major nodes that evolved included resources, support, and barriers. Subnodes within resources and support included teacher and administrative support, financial aid, and time management. Other subnodes included barriers such as financial issues and neighborhood safety. The major overriding theme that united many of the interviewees were students' enthusiastic praise of the teachers of the CSS course. For many students, these teachers did more than simply teach an introductory course. Students often spoke of how CSS teachers went above and beyond to help them and their classmates succeed. This made many students feel like they had someone that cared about them and that they did belong in college despite some of the

barriers and challenges they faced. Participants gave the impression that students came out of the CSS course engaged, confident, and ready to succeed. Overall, students seemed reluctant to discuss the barriers they faced completing their coursework. Participants might have felt that they had the tools they needed to succeed, or they might have been uncomfortable focusing on issues over which they had little control. Financial concerns were prevalent for many students, but participants were reluctant to dwell on them. Neighborhood safety was another concern discussed by participants. However, participants conveyed an air of optimism. More than anything, participants expressed that the most helpful thing they got out of the CSS course was a sense of support, belonging, and encouragement they needed to develop good study habits.

This chapter presented the themes drawn from the nodes and subnodes created by NVivo's data analysis from the historical data, interview responses, and the literature review. There were 20 African American male student participants and their interviews included details regarding personal learning experiences, motivation, satisfaction, and retention factors. Emerging themes included guidance and support in the college success course, role models and mentoring by teachers, satisfaction factors, engagement, social network and teamwork to achieve academic excellence, expectations of the society, and additional support. All the participants indicated that their CSS experience was great, and they were happy and satisfied with the course in the community college. Participants indicated that they were supported and guided by CSS instructors on how they can be successful in college and secure their career goals. The students acknowledged the following motivational factors: (a) motivational speech, (b) success of the course, (c)

CSS teachers' support and guidance, (d) the teaching styles used to convey various academic issues, (e) time management, and (f) planning for the future and self-success. Participants indicated these motivational factors were important facets that support course completion.

Satisfaction factors among African American male students included support from the instructors and teachers, instructors' teaching style, interaction with colleagues, and structure of the course. Satisfaction factors also involve the ability to retain information given to them, the necessity of completing the course, well-structured and focused goals, doing well on assignments, and being able to determine and set future career goals. Additional satisfaction factors included the use of mentors (e.g., those who lived the street life and were still able to overcome), great support and encouragement from instructors who are well-informed, class involvement and teamwork, the ability to self-reflect, and financial aid. Meeting the expectations of the community and society is a challenge that affects the African American male in achieving his dreams. Resilience programs at the COS included wellness centers, academic advisors, tutoring centers, career centers, resource centers, and financial aid or scholarship support.

In conclusion, the CSS course was deemed useful by participants because students have been able to understand who they are through self-assessment, obtained time management skills, strengthened their writing and reading skills, and gained critical tips on how to be successful. Through the CSS course, students understood various resources in the COS such as career centers, wellness centers, and resource centers that will help them to achieve their goals. Student participants also indicated that increasing the

viability of an education using mentoring and motivational presentations as well as instructors' support and guidance could be life sustaining. Increased interactions with community activists could improve students' prosocial behavior, relationship, and reputation among their community members. Overall, the visibility and personal relationships with mentors will help students complete their program and urge them to evaluate or reevaluate of their life choices (Booker & Brevard, 2017). Also, the ability to interact with mentors will support teamwork and social networking skills, which are also valuable skills for completing college and obtaining career goals (Booker & Brevard, 2017). Based on these findings, a mentorship component imbedded in the CSS course would allow the needed support for African American male students. Studies have supported the idea of using mentors in the college environment especially with first-generation and low-achieving students, because mentoring has had a dramatic effect on retention and successful completion rates (Torres, 2006).

Although areas such as financial aid and the school's location were mentioned as challenges for these participants, it was clear from the interview data that purposeful male mentoring would support African American male retention and successful college completion rate. In various ways throughout the participant interviews, some form of mentorship or consistent male engagement was referenced. Whenever students are engaged with the culture of the institution and community, their chances of being retained will increase (Tinto, 1993). Furthermore, this concept of retention starts in the classroom--the one place where the institution has the closest connection to the student (Tinto, 2012).

Section 3 will introduce the project, which outlines a proposed component of the CSS course curriculum. The project consists of developing and implementing a chapter for the CSS course that involves mentoring. Mentoring might bring a fresh perspective to African American male retention and successful completion rates and provide the administrators of learning institutions with qualitative data that can be used to increase retention rates.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of African American male students engaged in a CSS course to discover what they perceived to be a major influence on the retention of their population in the community college. The study was conducted at the COS and involved interviewing 20 African American male students. I focused on understanding the students' perceptions of the CSS course in terms of their academic motivation and persistence and how it translated into their successful completion or transfer. After the collection of data regarding successes and failures within the current course curriculum, the development of a mentorship component as an additional supportive factor to the pre-existing CSS course was presented. The goal is to pair students participating in the course with mentors in a career field related to their areas of interest. By engaging with the mentor, students can develop skills and abilities, create and strengthen career pathways, and gain a greater awareness of opportunities within their chosen career fields. Additionally, mentors can provide the mentees with social support that includes creating an open atmosphere for communication, guidance, and trust.

For this study, the term curriculum refers to planned learning experiences. In this project study, I proposed and developed curriculum for a mentorship program component that addresses the unique needs identified by the African American male students enrolled in a CSS course. The proposed mentorship program curriculum includes the elements as suggested by Prideaux (2003): course objectives, weekly topics to be

covered, assessment, and evaluation processes.

Rationale

Based on the findings from my investigation, I determined that a curriculum plan was the most appropriate method for addressing the established research problem (Prideaux, 2003). According to the results of my interviews with students in the CSS course, I determined that a mentorship component would be an appropriate avenue for addressing insufficient student connections with successful professionals currently engaged in the student's selected career. By providing students with an opportunity to be mentored by successful professionals and guiding their mentorship experience within the coursework, the students can be inspired to connect their academic success with their professional success—just as their mentors did.

Problems identified from this research were a lack of mentorship opportunities and a disconnect between academic success and future job success. A curriculum development project is the most appropriate avenue to address the current problems because it enhances the pre-existing curriculum (Prideaux, 2003). The goal of the mentorship component and the CSS course are similar. Curriculum consist of planned learning experiences that influence instructional decisions (Parkay, Anctil, & Hass, 2014). Therefore, enhancing the current curriculum with a new curriculum designed to address the research problem can increase the effectiveness of learning opportunities while reshaping the instructional delivery. Students in the course already dedicated time to academic and career advancement, so optimizing the existing learning opportunity maximizes the impact of the project.

An evaluation report would have been an appropriate alternative if the objective was to evaluate the impact of the existing CSS course. That aim was partially accomplished through the data collection and analysis process, but it would not have addressed the identified problem, which was a lack of opportunities for African American male students. A training curriculum and materials project would have been appropriate if the purpose of the project was to train mentors or teachers to provide a mentorship curriculum, but the focus of the proposed project was student's connectedness and success. Therefore, a curriculum plan is the most appropriate avenue for addressing the proposed problem.

Review of Literature

The literature review covered themes related to improving college student persistence (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012) and issues of inequality among the African American population (Gasman, 2012; Strayhorn, 2015a). Background traits, academic readiness, and the ways that institutions provide access, support systems, and close connections with communities for students and society can support student persistence and issues of inequality (Strayhorn, 2017). In this section, I address the appropriateness of using a curriculum to implement a mentorship component and to justify the choice of the project through relevant literature with similar themes. Additionally, I address the findings of Section 2 in context of a curriculum plan development project. Finally, I address how the search for the present literature review was conducted including a description of key search words and the electronic search engines used to identify peer-reviewed literature.

Addressing the Problem Through Curriculum

Mentorship programs facilitated through academic classrooms can foster an environment of inclusiveness and help those who normally might not feel comfortable in an academic or professional environment make meaningful connections (Pon-Barry, St. John, Packard, & Rotundo, 2019). For example, a mentorship program facilitated through a university's computer science department increased departmental diversity and improved persistence rates by helping a diverse group of students feel like they belonged in the classroom and decreasing the chance of ostracization or student discomfort (Pon-Barry et al., 2019). Additionally, mentors are helpful to students because they can often relate at a level that is more similar and more recent to the students' experiences. This is especially true for peer mentors who are students themselves. Even when mentors are professionals currently engaged in their professions, the experience can feel more relevant to students than insights from seasoned professors (Pon-Barry et al., 2019).

The most appropriate method to address the problem of the CSS ineffectiveness through mentorship is a curriculum design project. Embedding mentorship in curriculum has effectively achieved objectives of intervention programs (Morgan, Sibthorp, & Tsethlikai, 2016). For example, Morgan et al. (2016) sought to improve the self-regulation of a group of youths. The group of youth who were paired with mentors during the course showed significantly better self-regulation than the group who did not have mentors. These results suggest that embedding mentorship in the curriculum improved the self-regulation of youth. Though the students in the CSS course are typically young adults rather than youth, the Morgan et al. results are significant to the present study

because it supports the utilization of curriculum-based interventions.

Another facet of the curriculum is the pairing of students with mentors in their chosen field. However, not all mentorship programs are created equal, and not all interventions are equally beneficial to students (Tornetta & Bogdan (2016). For example, one program focused on surgical students and found that personality assessment could positively impact the effectiveness of the intervention. They also recognized that the comradery between mentor and mentee was improved when the pairing had similar interests and a similar personality (Tornetta & Bogdan, 2016). The mentees were more likely to look to well-matched mentors for guidance, which resulted in a more effective professional and academic relationship. This finding supports the general idea of mentorship as part of the curriculum because it allows students to work with individuals with whom they feel a connection. Furthermore, Tornetta and Bogdan found that well-matched mentors could work with difficult or struggling students to improve outcomes.

Further, the transition from one academic setting to another can be a stressful and complicated time for students because they are expected to grow their skills and adapt their processes to match a new environment all at the same time (Barker, Rendon, & Janis, 2016). But by building mentorship into the curriculum, mentees are better able to adapt to their new environments (Barker et al., 2016). This process reduces negative outcomes such as attrition and increases the likelihood of student success.

By incorporating mentorship programs as part of the curriculum, students can access the potential benefits of mentorship without seeking additional resources (Stephens & Wardrop, 2016). This ensures that students who are unaware of mentorship

opportunities, reluctant to try mentoring, or busy with other responsibilities do not miss out on the potential benefits. Providing an additional treatment that included mentorship opportunities has positively benefited students such as increasing their grade achievement (Stephens & Wardrop, 2016).

Curriculum Intervention and Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study focused on student integration and motivation (Tito, 1998). According to the theory, student departure is influenced by individual and institutional factors. Individual factors that influence student departure include academic difficulty, adjustment, and commitment (Tinto, 1998). Institutional factors that influence departure include the tuition cost of the institution, poor class design, or the lack of class availability (Tito, 1998). Implementing a mentorship component into the CSS curriculum could improve both the individual and institutional factors related to student departure.

Mentorship programs can benefit students and ease student adjustment difficulty by providing a supportive social environment (Booker & Brevard, 2017; Mark, 2013). Interventions that decrease the individual factors related to student departure such as adjustment difficulty can improve student persistence (Tito, 1998). Improving the CSS course outcomes and student persistence at the local community college is the overarching goal of this research project. Therefore, curriculum intervention is an appropriate venue for addressing the study's identified problem.

Research Question 1 contextualized in literature. The purpose of the present study was to understand why the persistence rates of African American males did not

improve after participating in a CSS course. The responses to the research questions revealed how African American males described their experiences with the CSS course and how the CSS course contributed to student persistence and completion of their degree program. The following themes related to the first research question emerged: learned skills, motivators, and room for improvement.

In response to questions regarding their experiences with the CSS course, students reported that they learned new skills such as socialization, planning, navigating systems, and thinking critically. Similarly, Kimbark, Peters, and Richardson (2017) found that recent literature on student persistence supports the hypothesis that a course designed to improve student skills can impact student persistence positively. The researchers undertook a study with 197 students in a course similar to the CSS course and 235 students who were not enrolled in an academic success course and found that students who participated in the course had significantly higher persistence, engagement, and academic achievement. These results supported this study's results that students exhibited greater academic skills. However, the CSS course did not result in greater student persistence. This part of the COS results contradicts the findings of Kimbark et al.

This study's results also indicated that the CSS course helped students to develop critical-thinking skills. Several participants suggested that the CSS course made them cognizant of the importance of critical thinking and helped them to develop skills that promoted critical thinking. The importance of critical-thinking skills for success in a community college environment is also a theme in recent literature that showed a correlation between critical thinking and achievement among community college students

through a meta-analysis of 23 studies (Fong, Kim, Davis, Hoang, & Kim, 2017). The overall association between assessed critical thinking and student achievement was medium to small; however, the association between critical-thinking ability and long-term success (e.g., graduating) was larger than the association between critical thinking and short-term success (Fong et al., 2017). Furthermore, the association between critical thinking and success was weaker in male and minority students (Fong et al., 2017). These results might explain, in part, why the CSS course reportedly improved students' critical-thinking ability but did not impact the persistence of African American male students. Furthermore, recent literature suggests that mediating conditions might exist that prevent African American male students from benefiting as directly from critical-thinking skills as other students (Fong et al., 2017; Strayhorn, 2013c). These students are statistically more likely than the general body of community college students to experience economic disadvantages or educational disadvantages in middle school and high school (Strayhorn, 2013c). African American male students might also face current and historically discriminatory treatment that could impact student persistence rates (Fong et al., 2017; Strayhorn, 2013b).

According to the results, another common occurrence was the things students thought could motivate them to succeed in community college. Common motivators included inspiring presenters in the field, family, preparing for the future, and personal improvement. The presence of these reported motivators is also supported by recent literature on students in higher education generally and African American students specifically (McCallum, 2016; Tate et al., 2015). For example, McCallum (2016)

identified the family as a strong motivator for the participants and found that family members, particularly mothers, played a large role in influencing students to pursue higher education and achieve academic success. Participants reported that family members also played an important supporting role in helping them to overcome challenges and stress (McCallum, 2016). Additionally, Ray, Hilton, Wood, and Hicks (2016), indicated that the presence of role models was important for motivating success for African American male students. Though this was not referenced directly as a motivator in this study, students were inspired to succeed by the presenters who contributed to classroom instruction. Therefore, treatments to the CSS course could include the inclusion of a diverse group of presenters and mentors, which may build on its capacity to impact African American student achievement (Ray et al., 2016). Participants may identify with and be inspired by individuals outside of the African American male classification; therefore, mentors and speakers from a broad range of social, racial, and ethnic backgrounds could benefit the learning of all students. However, treatments focused on African American male students should include African American male mentors (Ray et al., 2016).

As part of the findings, participants were also asked to provide suggestions to improve the CSS course. Several participants referenced a desire for mentorship opportunities. Some students stated that a mentorship component could benefit the course, and others referenced a desire for guidance from a trusted person or role model. In either case, literature has suggested that mentorship in a community college setting can improve student achievement and persistence (Ingram, Williams, Coaxum, Hilton, &

Harrel, 2016). Ingram et al. (2016) found that improving life status, reacting to societal pressure, providing for a family, and encouraging faculty were major motivators of academic success. These findings echo the motivational findings of this study. Ingram et al. concluded that mentorship by other African American males is critical to the success of this student group, and mentorship was particularly important for students who lacked male role models in their personal lives who modeled academic and professional success.

Other recent studies projected comparable findings—mentorship is important to the success of African American males in community colleges. For instance, Bukoski and Hatch (2016) conducted a qualitative study with African American community college students, who discussed the struggle to transition into a community college setting where the academic expectations are higher and the schoolwork is more rigorous. Participants expressed the presence of a real personal and academic struggle but were often unwilling to express the struggle in their social circle. The participants noted that expressing stress or concern in their social circle might be a weakness or could cause unwanted levels of concern. To address the need for emotional support, Bukoski and Hatch recommended the community college implement a mentorship program. Additionally, informed best practices and policy changes can improve the educational outcomes for marginalized, postsecondary students (Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013). Establishing a mentorship program for Latino male students is seen as a viable intervention to improve their success in higher education (Sáenz, Ponjuan, Segovia, & Del Real Viramontes, 2015). Bukoski and Hatch and Sáenz, Ponjuan et al. researched different groups but concluded the same thing; a mentorship program as a support system for minority male

students in college needed.

A final theme from Research Question 1 that emerged from the data was how participants hoped the completion of their degree would assist in their future career planning. Most students who participate in a community college degree program hope that it will assist them in developing future careers; however, too many also state that they were unsure how to translate a college degree into a desirable career. The transition from degree obtaining into a career path is a crucial step in student motivation (Hernandez et al., 2017) and something that literature has suggested mentorship programs can facilitate (Badaway, 2017). Mentees with a strong and established mentor are more likely to experience early career success and demonstrate knowledge of early career navigation (Badaway, 2017). In a study of 116 students enrolled in science, technology, engineering, and math disciplines, Hernandez et al. determined that mentors can play an important role in motivating students to succeed in their academic coursework and future careers.

Research Question 2 contextualized in literature. Research Question 2 asked participants to describe the support they received from the CSS course that contributed to their persistence in completing their degree program. Two major themes emerged from the data analysis process: supporting resources and barriers. The first theme covered supporting resources, which included the subthemes of school staff support and support with time management. The importance of school staff supports along with time management are also themes in recent literature on student success in education (Heller & Cassady, 2017; Ruzek et al., 2016; Tovar, 2015).

A study was conducted to understand the impact of teachers' emotional support on student academic success. The responses of the 960 student participants indicated that when teachers were observed to be more emotionally supportive of students at the beginning of the school year, students demonstrated higher levels of engagement and motivation (Ruzek et al., 2016). Mid-year student assessments indicated that students who had emotionally supportive teachers exhibited stronger social skills with peers. This finding is relevant to this study because social-skill development is a core component of the CSS course. Additionally, students who had emotionally supportive teachers were found to have greater belief in their own competence, which positively influenced student autonomy and self-efficacy (Ruzek et al., 2016). Therefore, Ruzek et al.'s findings support the student belief found in this study that teacher and faculty support could positively benefit student achievement.

Recent literature also established time management and the perceived lack of time management skills impacted student success in community college (Heller & Cassady, 2017). Heller and Cassady conducted a study of 885 first-semester community college students with the purpose of understanding the impact of perceived barriers. Their findings concluded that perceived barriers such as a lack of time management strategies, academic anxiety issues, and few resource management strategies all impacted student success. Students who perceived themselves as lacking time management skills or with a certain degree of academic anxiety, demonstrated lower levels of academic success than students who perceived themselves to have strong time management skills and low academic anxiety (Heller & Cassady, 2017). Interestingly, students who began their

community college career later (i.e., ages 23 to 27) achieved less academic success and perceived more barriers than traditionally aged college students (i.e., 18 to 22) or non-traditional older students (i.e., 28 or older). The findings of this study concurred with Heller and Cassady's findings: as students develop time management abilities, their anxiety is lessened and their achievement can improve. However, older students (i.e., 23 to 27) in particular, might need support in overcoming perceived academic barriers.

The second theme of research Question 2 was that students perceived barriers that prevented the CSS course from improving their academic persistence. Participants discussed issues like neighborhood safety and financial insecurity as barriers that might prevent them from achieving academic success. Both barriers referenced by students in the data collection process are supported by recent literature on African American community college students (Boatman & Long, 2016; Vega, Moore & Miranda, 2015); however, the mentorship project has a limited ability to lessen either barrier.

The barrier of neighborhood safety reportedly impacted student achievement in the CSS course; this barrier included all the neighborhoods students had to travel to get to class. For some students, this included their home neighborhood; but for other students, the community college neighborhood was problematic and made them feel unsafe. The theme of students feeling unsafe in their school neighborhood is present in academic literature and this study results suggested that it impacts academic achievement (Vega et al., 2015). In a qualitative study involving 18 students, Vega et al. considered the perceived safety barriers to academic success. For students, insecurity about safety was a factor whether it was a distraction for the students while at home or if it made them

anxious at school (Vega et al., 2015).

The mentorship curriculum project undertaken by this study will likely not help students feel safer in their homes or classrooms. However, future studies could consider how academic institutions can increase the feeling of safety among its students (Vega et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the results of the Vega et al. study are relevant to this study because they suggest academic administrators should consider how a mentorship component might influence the safety of students participating in the course. Potential opportunities for mentorship occurrences outside of the classroom can be placed in locations that students deem safe for them to travel and park their cars.

The second perceived barrier resulting from research Question 2 is financial insecurity impacting student's achievement. Students referenced both the cost of attending school and general stress related to financial barriers as influences on their ability to succeed in community college. Financial hardship is commonly cited in literature as a barrier to student achievement (Boatman & Long, 2016; Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2016; Goldrick-Rab, 2016).

In a study focused on students receiving scholarship awards, Boatman and Long (2016) found that students who received scholarship money were more likely to succeed academically and engage with academic peers outside of class. Though students who received scholarships were more likely to succeed academically than the general students because of a presumed high merit status, Boatman and Long isolated the impact of financial aid. In addition to higher academic achievement and more engagement with peers on schoolwork, Boatman and Long determined that students who received

scholarship money were also more likely to volunteer and serve their community and participate in enriching extracurricular activities. These positive benefits associated with decreased financial concern support the present study findings that students reported financial stress as a perceived barrier to academic success.

Unfortunately, the mentorship curriculum project is unlikely to reduce student stress related to the cost of paying for school or general financial concerns. Future studies can consider possibly combining mentorship opportunities with paid internships or other financially beneficial positions. To incorporate this study's finding into the curriculum project, it is important that school administrators consider student finances when developing a curriculum. Time commitments that take place outside of class hours reduce the weekly hours available for students who work as a financial necessity. School administrators should be sensitive to students' other-time commitments and choose mentorship locations that students can easily reach on public transportation.

Elements of a Curriculum

Regarding college curriculum development, Fu and Bai (2016) stressed that students often begin college coursework with little understanding of the fields they will be studying. Professional development courses or courses introducing students to a field of study or career help the students to understand course expectations and their own interests (Fu & Bai, 2016). For courses introducing students to a specific career or academic subject, Fu and Bai recommended the following topics be included with subtopics adding additional detail:

- Why education matters

- The relationship between academic study and professional success
- Practical skill building: how to study
- Recommendations for future study.

The research on curriculum development relates to this study because it addresses how to educate students who are new to college academics. It also provides valuable insight on how curriculum can be used to introduce students to professional careers (Fu & Bai, 2016). For example, Fu and Bai recommended that professional introductory curriculums include subtopics such as the significance of college courses to acquisition of skills required for job success. According to Fu and Bai, courses which included such information helped motivate students to succeed in their studies. In addition to providing students with a clear connection between academics and professional success, they recommended that introductory courses also include opportunities for practical skill building, which benefit students during later coursework.

The mentorship curriculum development project includes matching students with professional mentors. There is a gap in literature on how introductory mentorship programs should be designed (Fu & Bai, 2016), but prolific research exists on developing entrepreneurship courses. This literature is connected to this study because the mentorship component includes elements of career development, which can include entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship curriculum should include an assessment of student ability and student interests (Maxwell, Stephen, Hezekiah, Paul, & Oyafunke-Omoniyi (2018). According to Maxwell et al., a primary purpose of these curricula is to increase student skill, and achieving that objective requires measuring and understanding the

students' current skill level.

Once the professor assesses the general academic level of the students involved in the course, Maxwell et al. (2018) suggested that the second and primary objective of an entrepreneurship course is to increase critical-thinking ability. Many ways to increase students' critical thinking exist, but Maxwell et al. offered that one recommended method is the introduction of students to professional mentors. The researchers argued that mentors are well-positioned to encourage critical thinking naturally through engaging conversations. Additionally, mentors introduce students to the type of critical thinking required in their chosen professions. Other methods for increasing critical thinking include problem-solving activities undertaken in a classroom setting (Maxwell et al., 2018).

An objective of the CSS course is to increase student academic success and persistence, which includes increasing core academic competencies such as writing and communication (Kong, 2018). Student reading, writing, and communication abilities are of prime importance to future employers (Kong, 2018). In many cases, introductory courses include elements of remediation to build student skills to an acceptable college level (Boatman & Long, 2018). However, the success of remediation courses is determined by many factors, which include curriculum design and teacher competence (Boatman & Long, 2018). If designed incorrectly, remediation courses have the potential to set students back in college without providing observable academic benefit such as higher achievement persistence; therefore, Boatman and Long recommended that remedial and introductory courses focus on building skills what will be useful to students

in all majors such as reading, writing, and critical thinking. Emphasis on specific subjects such as math primarily benefit students who intend to enter majors where math is a core component (Boatman & Long, 2018). Boatman and Long's findings concurred with those of Maxwell et al. (2018) when recommending that building critical thinking should be a core component of introductory curriculum.

Other research supports the conclusion that covering major specific topics in introductory courses can influence students' decision to pursue the subject as a major (Dawson, Allen, Campbell & Valair, 2018). In a study involving students in an introductory computer science course, Dawson et al. found that learning outcomes were substantially worse for non-major students than major students. Based on experimental designs and student satisfactory surveys, Dawson et al. developed recommendations for discussing technical topics with students who do not intend to pursue the topic as a major. These findings are relevant to the mentorship curriculum because they discuss how to shape course learning objectives to find the needs of students from varying majors. The recommendations included to (a) design technical topic learning around project-based assignments, (b) reduce the number of learning objectives to avoid overwhelming students, and (c) build opportunities for peer and mentor support (Dawson et al., 2018). Additional recommendations suggested that instructors build a connection between technical learning and real-world applications. Introductory courses should have broad applicability, as non-major students will likely have greater interest in a subject if they understand the real-world applications (Dawson et al., 2018).

To fully address the problem or course objectives, curriculum design should begin

with a problem definition. In addition, the curriculum content is entirely dependent on the problem being solved through the course and the content must define the problem as the learning objectives of the course (Romiszowski, 2016). In the case of the enhanced CSS course, the learning objectives relate to building student academic skills, study habits, and ability to persist towards degree obtainment. Instructors are encouraged to define what exactly they are trying to solve through the educational opportunity (Romiszowski, 2016). Next, the instructors determine what role instruction has in solving the problem. For example, the CSS course cannot ensure that all students have adequate time to focus on their studies, but the course can ensure students understand the general time commitments associated with different times of core academic courses (math, science, English). Following that, the instructor selects solutions to the stated problem by determining the study objectives. Finally, the instructor produces a curriculum that connects the individual solutions into a single learning roadmap (Romiszowski, 2016).

The CSS course includes transitional support for students who are new to college-level curriculum and instruction. It is important for college and university administrators to build transitional support into their introductory courses (U.S. Department of Education, 2016a). Students achieve better educational outcomes when their transition into college-level academics is fully managed. Educational leaders suggested that curriculum development include (a) an early assessment of who the students are and what are their learning objectives; (b) determine and acknowledge student concerns, fears, and preconceptions; and (c) an acceptance and integration for a workplace skill-building component into college academics (Kift & Nelson, 2005; U.S. Department of Education,

2016a).

The literature included in this review was gathered using the following search terms individually and in combination: African American, male, college, student, financial aid, support, mentorship, time management, stress, success, persistence, drop-out, and curriculum. Journal articles were gathered using Google Scholar and EBSCO Host. In the remainder of the section, the project, evaluation plan, and project implications will be described.

Project Description

The project is a curriculum plan designed to put a mentorship component in place for students participating in the CSS. The mentorship program will be an added element to the existing CSS curriculum. In addition to other curriculum elements such as academic and study skills, self-motivation skills, and problem-solving skills, the curriculum will include professional skills. As part of the new curriculum area four, professional skills, students will be matched with professional mentors in the career field of interest of the students. Classroom faculty will develop a contact list of professionals interested in mentoring students in common fields such as business, computer science, teaching, and medicine. Students will have the opportunity to recruit their own community mentors, if desired. The students will be required to work with mentors for at least one hour a week for the duration of the CSS course. The curriculum will include weekly topic questions for students to discuss with mentors and assignments for connecting the mentor relationship to classroom activities.

The main resources needed throughout the curriculum are access to classroom

time and willing mentors. I have access to the classroom time required to administer the curriculum and I have compiled a list of professional mentors interested in working with students. If necessary, I will assist students in locating and recruiting mentors working in their chosen field. A major resource to the curriculum project is the prior existence of the CSS class, which serves as the foundation and delivery system for the mentorship curriculum.

A potential barrier to implementing the curriculum is the inability of students to find a mentor in a specific field of interest and time commitments from the mentors and the students. To mitigate these barriers, I will assist students in finding mentors. Additionally, other out-of-class work for the CSS course will be reduced to compensate for the required minimum of one hour weekly spent with mentors. Prior to starting the mentorship component, I will contact all the volunteer mentors and inform them of the time commitments.

The curriculum will be implemented at the beginning of the CSS course with assignments related to the mentorship occurring weekly. It is the teacher's role to provide assignments and discussion questions for the mentees to bring to their mentors. The students are responsible for meeting with their mentors and completing the assigned work. It is the responsibility of the mentor to attend scheduled meetings and provide a safe and supportive conversational environment for students.

The purpose of the proposed curriculum is to increase student academic achievement by providing students with mentors in their chosen field and guiding the mentor-student relationship through the provision of discussion topics and questions. The

curriculum is designed for entry level college students in need of additional support in their transition from high school to higher education. The scope of the curriculum will be limited to the student-mentor relationship and will cover topics related to academic success, career planning, and balancing educational and personal commitments. The curriculum will take place over 9 weeks.

Students will be asked to provide journal entries discussing their interactions with the mentors related to the assigned topics. In some instances, the students will be asked to provide a written record of their primary learning. Students will also be asked to interview their mentors on topics related to the curriculum scope. The curriculum will include a final presentation where the students will provide a summary of their mentor's career, career path, and academic insights.

The primary materials for this course are the course syllabus, electronically provided assignments, and student written submissions. Students will be asked to keep a private journal recounting their mentor-student interactions. No other materials will be used for the course, although the mentors themselves are primary resources. The objectives of the course will be to increase student achievement through inspirational, motivational, and educational interactions with mentors. Students will be assessed primarily on the written and verbal assignments with the basic grading criteria being completeness, engagement, and effort. Secondary consideration will be given to presentation ability and writing sufficiency. The focus of the course will be to facilitate student learning; therefore, the students will not be graded rigorously on skills gained or specific knowledge acquisition. Students will be graded on effort and completeness of

assignments.

Project Evaluation Plan

The project will be evaluated using a goal-based evaluation. A goal-based evaluation evaluates the outcomes of the project against the project goals (Shinn, 2002). The ultimate goal of the proposed project is to increase the impact the CSS course has on the persistence of African American male students. Because of the time constraints associated with the project, it will not be possible to assess whether students who participate in the mentorship component completed their degree course. Rather, the interim goals of the project were to address the student feedback uncovered during the data collection phase of this research. Specifically, the goals of the mentorship component will be to increase student perception of their self-efficacy, establishing the connection between a degree program and a job, and providing support from mentorship figures. Student efficacy is positively associated with student achievement and student persistence (Farrand, Shaheen, Wild, Averil, & Fast, 2018). By exploring the impact on student self-efficacy, the results of the study could support the relationship between mentorship and student persistence.

This qualitative project was designed to assess whether mentorship support would increase student perceptions of self-efficacy and persistence. This type of evaluation was appropriate for the proposed project because the purpose of the project is to increase the perceptions of self-efficacy and persistence. Student perceived self-efficacy can be useful in addressing perceived barriers to success and encouraging perceived persistence (Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017). If the mentoring project is successful, then the goals (i.e., self-

efficacy, persistence, and motivation) were obtained, and therefore, a goal-based evaluation will be appropriate. Interviews were undertaken with all students participating in the mentorship component.

The main stakeholders of the mentorship project are students, mentors, and the teachers. The students are key stakeholders because the project is designed to benefit them. The teachers are also relevant stakeholders; they are responsible for leading the class and staying involved in the mentorship component even though the mentor is working directly with his mentee. The mentors are stakeholders because they are donating their time to benefit the students. However, time spent on the mentorship component does detract from time spent in other areas, but the teachers are ultimately responsible for leading student learning throughout the course material.

Project Implications

The project has potential to change the CSS course outcomes. Students provided positive feedback about the CSS course prior to implementation of the mentorship component, but the results showed that the course did not quantitatively improve student persistence. Inclusion of the mentorship component should produce positive implications for student persistence within the course. After the inclusion of the mentorship component, students should be encouraged to persist through the course at higher rates than they did prior to the course. If the addition of the mentorship project increases student persistence, then it will benefit the entire school population and the community (Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017). In addition to positively benefiting the career potential of the graduating students, the project benefited the school by encouraging student

persistence (Sneyers & De Witte, 2017).

Finally, this project has larger implications for social change in higher education. Based on the success of the mentorship course component, mentorship components could be incorporated into similar classes at other community colleges, 4-year colleges, and universities (Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017). Increasing the persistence and academic success of African American male students would create a positive social change by providing a clearer educational path for African American males to achieve academic and professional success. By including mentorship as part of the academic curriculum, participating institutions provide African American male students with mentors who can encourage participatory citizenship in the communities where students live and work, perpetuating an example of success for future generations of students (Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017).

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of African American male students engaged in a CSS course to discover what they perceived to be a major influence on the retention of their population in the community college. I interviewed 20 African American male students at a community college to discover the perceptions that affect their motivation to remain in attendance at the selected institution. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. How do African American male students at the COS describe their experience in the CSS course about completing their degree program?

2. How do African American male students describe the support they received from the CSS course that contributed to their retention in completing their degree program?

Data obtained from the face-to-face interviews and related documents helped me to design a mentoring component implemented within the CSS course. The primary goal is to implement a mentoring component to support and motivate the African American male student and provide each with resources that can be beneficial for increasing retention and graduation rates at the study site. Section 4 represents this doctoral study as a process to create positive social change. This section also provides a conclusion for the entire doctoral project study.

Project Strengths

The plan that resulted from this qualitative case study was the implementation of a mentorship curriculum component within the CSS course. The mentorship curriculum component is designed to enhance African American male students' (a) career employment opportunities by pairing each student with a male mentor; (b) skills, strategies, and tools presented in the CSS curriculum; and (c) knowledge of their community (Strayhorn, 2012). The strength of this project is the mentoring curriculum component and the perceived influence it will have on the African American male students as they continue to explore their career choices.

The project's curriculum includes the pairing of each student to a mentor who is currently employed in the student's field of interest. Enlisting the support of the community to create a network of candidates to serve as mentors establishes a powerful connection. The process associated with mentor pairing has been explored through multiple facets and programs. With persistent challenges of underrepresented minority students, partnership with a mentor has produced a higher success and graduation rate (Meza, Rodriguez, Trujillo, & Ladd-Viti, 2018). Obtaining a college degree provides stronger career opportunities; therefore, it is important to support minority students through their college years in an academic and social capacity (Crisp, Baker, Griffin, Lunsford, & Pifer, 2017; Meza et al., 2018). Other experts have suggested that the intent and purpose of mentoring relationships provides psychological and emotional support necessary to prompt student commitment for successful completion and retention (Crisp et al., 2017).

Skills such as critical thinking, socialization, planning, and navigating systems taught in the college environment support students, and when taught by a direct mentor, provide the means for greater life skills (Fong et al., 2017; Kimbark et al., 2017; Strayhorn, 2013a). Critical thinking as well as problem-solving skills have been shown to yield success in classroom settings and in the workplace (Nold, 2017). Providing mentors for the African American male population involved in the present study will accomplish two things: Mentors will assist students with academic success and help to prepare these same students to use critical-thinking and problem-solving skills in the business world. The current project addresses and emphasizes the need for these skills to be taught, making this a strength of the project.

This project also adds to existing literature on African American male student motivation and retention at the community college level. African American male student perceptions on motivation and retention were essential to developing the project to address students' successful completion and retention at the selected institution. This study was intended to extend the conversation on motivation and retention of African American male students and the CSS course. This project can provide only a fraction of what is needed to increase African American male student motivation and retention, but it is adaptable and cost efficient, which makes this study model appealing for other higher learning institutions looking to improve retention rates of their student population. Higher learning institutions can choose to replicate, revise, or model the mentorship component based on the needs of their institution. In addition, the CSS facilitators should be able to determine if implementation of the mentorship component is improving student

motivation and retention within the CSS first-year course.

Project Limitations

The current project has several limitations. One limitation was the sample size and the setting. The sample size was relatively small in comparison to the overall African American male population at the study site. I collected data from 20 African American male students out of the 120 currently enrolled at the study site. Thus, generalizing results to the study site and other community colleges might be difficult. This project was also limited to one of the six campuses in this college cluster; therefore, findings are not generalizable to each campus. Additional research at minority-serving institutions can mitigate these limitations and improve generalizability of the findings (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). In addition, a limitation of the project can be the unwillingness of the study site's current administrators to institute the mentorship component. Therefore, not buying into the students' perception allows the institution to maintain the status quo, which might not be productive for the study site and student retention.

Another limitation might involve the data collection process because of the weakness of collective qualitative data. Some student participants might not have been objective when sharing their personal feelings, whereas a quantitative survey would generate responses without participant subjectivity (Almeida, Querios, & Faria, 2017). The benefit of qualitative data, however, is the depth and scope of information that can be collected and is in alignment with the purpose of describing the experiences of the students in the community college setting.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Though success in the implementation of the current mentorship project is desired, there are aspects of the program that might not be considered; therefore, recommendations for an alternate approach must be presented. The background of the problem and approaches for a solution are expressed in the current study. Results indicated that incorporating mentors could be a means for success. But even if the project is accepted and the mentorship program is implemented within the course, it is not assured that facilitators will agree to change their behaviors in and out of the classroom. The implied change underlying the project is in the mindset of the individual facilitator in that facilitators need to be excited to improve their abilities in helping more students to achieve their goal of successful completion (i.e., be the mentors). However, if course development workshops are not approved, alternative approaches can include study site administrators improving the existing standard operating procedures in its instructor development processes. They could also institute informal learning requirements through annual performance evaluation system such as mandating a required mentoring component. Such additions could include the establishment of required advisory and counseling supports for the students.

Recommendations for alternate programs must also be viewed through the student's ideas of what constitutes a motivating factor. The present study indicated that such factors included having inspirational speakers working in the current field of study of interest to students, hearing of the personal improvement of the speakers, and students' anticipating their future endeavors in the business world. These factors could be a focus

on any future or alternative approaches, as they may be necessary in the implementation of training and prompting of vocational skills. It would be advantageous, according to the current study's results, for future and alternative programs to offer group sessions with other students in a self-help group platform where they can share hopes, fears, and successes under the guide of a qualified counselor.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, Leadership and Change

Having begun the doctoral degree process 15 years after completing a master's in education and being an older adult learner, I believe I have been well-suited to this scholarly journey. As a lifelong learner, I have always been interested in discovering new ways of thinking and creating new strategies that refine existing practices. Having engaged in teaching CSS, I began working on this topic immediately upon enrolling in the doctoral program. The repetition of educational topics throughout the course studies did not resonate with me; however, during the writing of this project study, I have been able to see the benefits, which have clarified my critical thinking as an educator. In addition, my perspective has broadened because of the research-based evidence, thoughts, and perspectives presented by Alzamel (2014), Booker and Brevard (2017), Strayhorn (2015c, 2017, 2018), and Tinto (1996, 2012).

Through my experience while conducting this qualitative research and enduring the journey of completing this degree, I have learned that scholarship transcends. For me, scholarship is the ability to persevere through the many challenges that were present during this doctoral process. Scholarship is the ability to stay focused on a goal and persist with resilience until the goal has been successfully achieved. As an educator, I

learned that everything I thought I knew about writing and research from my previous educational experiences in undergraduate and graduate school were no comparison to the difficulty of doctoral research and writing.

Completing this study has also made me more conscious of what I write and the evidence that I use to support my claims. I have learned that doctoral research and writing are essential to scholarship because they have the potential to create change and inspire success. This journey has also taught me many other skills that will be useful for my future in higher educational leadership. I learned the importance of patience, time management, prioritizing, planning, goal setting, and most important, discipline. As an educator, mentor, and community member, I had to be intentional about writing and answering my research questions. This showed me how important it is to consider institutional review board procedures, data collection strategies, and descriptions.

When I received board approval and was able to answer my research questions through analysis of the qualitative data, I was elated. At that moment, I realized that I was one step closer to making a positive impact on the lives of students, faculty, and staff at the selected study site. Overall, this doctoral study has provided me with a variety of tools that I can use to create change not only in higher education but my community as well. As a lifelong learner, my journey for social change does not end with this degree; I plan to expound on my research because of this scholarship experience.

Further, conducting this project study required extensive research, which cultivated my thinking on discovering answers to questions arising from interviews and on the development of research strategies stemming from those discoveries. I learned that

the project must align with the study results and that the goals and objectives must be clearly established. The development of the project allowed me to fine tune my ideas on the importance of mentorship. I can also appreciate the procedure developed to gather the correct information that would lead to the solution--mentoring--to support and enhance student motivation and retention at the study site.

I chose to research retention of African American male students based upon on my prior experience as an adjunct facilitator of the CSS course. This is where I saw a need to assist the African American male student population and how I can also help my community. This project consisted of personal interviews with African American male students enrolled in the CSS course. The results of the interviews helped me to design a mentoring component for CSS that will help alleviate the challenges--student motivation and retention. As I worked on the development of the project, my study of scholarly research aided in conducting a thorough, research-based evaluation of future programs at the study site. I hope the study site will accept my proposal to embed the mentoring component within the CSS course to help with student motivation and retention.

A mentoring component could also be used throughout various higher educational institutions for first-year students enrolled in CSS. Coordinating this project requires time and effort. To evaluate the success of the mentoring component, I developed an evaluation tool that can be used as a pre- and posttest for the mentoring portion of the course. This evaluation was crafted to identify improvements in student motivation levels and suggestions for changes or modifications for future improvement and support.

Working in the educational and criminal justice system for over 15 years has afforded me the opportunity to interact both formally and informally with various African American males who either tried college or were hesitant about attending college. Experiencing leadership has allowed me to recognize inequality and do something about it. As a leader, I have enhanced existing practices to ensure an even distribution of opportunities for success. This project study has enabled me to see and understand the needs of the African American male student and devise a means to affect the improvement in student motivation and retention at the study site.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The importance of this project emphasized what I learned during the process of drafting each section. What became apparent to me, as each section was created, was the specific need for African American male students and what can be achieved by a focus on provisions that offer the steps to success. Each community college student can make a difference in the world; and regardless of a student's beginnings, they have a right to success. As the method I created for this mentorship program evolved, I recognized the challenge and understood that more assistance would be needed to solve the problems, and I believe my program can offer such help.

I hope the study site administrators will be influenced positively with the addition of a mentorship component to enhance student retention; however, the greatest impact would be reflected among African American male students and their community involvement. Improved motivation could translate to higher successful completion and retention rates. The two literature reviews for this study supported the idea that

mentorship supports motivation and improves relations (Booker & Brevard, 2017; Butler et al., 2013).

The journey toward earning my doctorate in education leadership has transformed me in many ways. I have established confidence in my ability to identify and refine educational issues and programs to create positive change within higher education. This experience has allowed me to focus on career opportunities and possibilities within higher education that I had never imagined. During this process, I learned that great leaders learn from those with experience and who listen when recommendations are offered for support. I now recognize the importance of mentorship programs within academia and how the ability of CSS mentors has the potential to help produce another generation of leaders. Findings in the literature indicated that student retention is correlated to student skills improving (Boatman & Long, 2018). The connection indicates that students' self-efficacy does matter to their success. Retention is a critical factor within the African American community college student's success for changing the marginalization found in the workforce today (Tinto, 2012).

I learned my committee chair and members were assigned to support me and provide the flexibility to discover my hidden leadership abilities. Professionally, this process has taught me to communicate more effectively and set career goals. My research, critical-thinking, and problem-solving skills were enhanced, and I became more confident in my ability to create change within an educational institution. Because of my enhanced communication skills, my network with others in education and community development has expanded. As an African American female, a person whom history once

forbade an education, I want to inspire individuals like me to dream big and know that all things are possible if they believe and do not give up. I want to motivate and encourage impoverished students to know that with hard work, dedication, motivation, and a goal, their visions can become reality. I learned through this process that leadership is about being a positive role model for others, overcoming trials, providing resources, creating opportunities, and most of all, giving back to one's community.

Potential for Social Change

This project, if successful, can potentially impact social change at the study site and similar institutions across the country. I trust this project will increase the existing literature on the retention of African American male students and the value in mentoring. Social and community change can be accomplished through this project. As these African American male students increase their retention rates, and subsequently the completion rates, the institution, community, and the students experience success. The study and the added component of mentorship give students an opportunity to show what has been gained for their everyday life to be successful.

As I crafted this plan to insert a mentoring component within the CSS course of the COS, I considered other institutions of higher learning. This project can be revised and reformatted to accommodate other institutions that struggle with student retention. The knowledge gained from interviewing participants and reading current literature on the subject helped to establish the framework for my project. Social change is possible if the university approves the model; participants must utilize the resources presented and actively engage with the mentors. Overall, the goal of this project is to create positive

social change that impacts retention and increases student engagement and successful completion.

Reflective Analysis of Personal Growth

As a scholar. My experience producing this scholarly work broadened my understanding of the needs African American male students have in the community college setting. The planning and building of such a program heightened my own skills as an academician as I pursued a solution to assist with these students' success. As I reflect on my development as a scholar, I can truly say a few things have significantly impacted every area of my life. My critical-thinking and problem-solving skills along with my research and networking skills have improved. This project study revealed to me the importance of thinking *outside of the box* and being innovative when it comes to resolving issues that affect social change. As a scholar, I had to read, review, analyze and summarize peer-reviewed research studies to create an extensive literature review on the topic. While on this journey, I also gained a greater appreciation for the term *community* and the role it plays in learning institutions. I learned that one must possess a passion to engage in a study, especially if they plan for the outcome to be effective. By conducting a qualitative case study, I was able to gain an in-depth perspective and understanding on the topic involving African American male retention rates.

As a practitioner. I believe the creation of this scholarly work has helped to make me a more qualified and capable leader within the field of higher education. This project has emphasized that teaching is more than simply providing lessons to a classroom of students. A good educator understands the need for every student to succeed

and will work towards the success of each one, even in the collegiate environment. I am passionate about providing an education and more so about seeing my students succeed. Working through the different facets of this project has shown me there is so much more to success than what I present in the classroom.

As a scholar practitioner, I have learned that my effectiveness is predicated upon me remaining a lifelong learner and the desire to aid others. A true practitioner is excited about ongoing learning and sharing acquired knowledge with those who can benefit the most from it, while effectively promoting community and social change. Change is unlimited and transferable; as a lifelong learner and educator, I seek to evoke change within whomever I encounter. This doctoral process required me to conduct extensive research and develop a project proposal using scholarly writings. However, going into this doctoral process, I lacked confidence in my abilities and skill level needed to successfully accomplish a doctoral degree. However, as I progressed through this journey, I gained the necessary skills and knowledge as well as the motivation to see this project study into existence.

As a project developer. Over the past 15 years, I have participated in various course development workshops, but it was not until I started this doctoral degree process at Walden University that I believed I could redesign and develop a course. As I reflect on this experience, I always knew I could do it, but lacked the confidence and skills needed to put my concept into a cohesive format. With help from Walden University, other scholars, and by the grace of God, I was encouraged to press forward and complete the project. After completing interviews with several urban African American male

students engaged in CSS courses, my interest and passion to do more has grown tremendously. Passion is what drives a person to want to make a change. As this was the case for me, I developed the format and implementation proposal for the integrating mentorship within the CSS course. I wanted to ensure that this project was realistic and practical for the study site. It took quite a bit of time to plan the overall project, but I learned the importance of planning, analyzing, and evaluating methods when introducing a new component to an existing curriculum. It is the difference between success and failure.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This program was designed to provide African American male students, at the study site, with resources that can be useful to help increase their engagement and retention. Data from interviews suggested that adding a mentorship component to the current CSS program would benefit African American male students positively. However, another possible implication would arise if the project were extended to other student populations besides African American males. The project would require a considerable commitment from the study site stakeholder: administrators, facilitators, community members, and the students.

The implications for success are that over time, the study-site and community members will view mentoring as beneficial as students empower themselves with knowledge and skills they need to support completion and retention rates. Future research can center on evaluating the effects of mentoring on student motivation and retention after its implementation and if the data collected for the project were appropriate for

creating the program change, a method similar to Tinto's (1996) elicitation of adult learners who plan their own training. Further research could scrutinize retention rates for a period after the students have successfully completed the CSS course to determine if participation of mentors increased student motivation and completion in a positive manner.

If the study is successful after implementation at the COS and the evaluations reveal a higher retention rate, the study site administrators could apply the design to other student populations on campus. Development of a mentorship component such as this one could have a positive impact on the field of higher education. Additionally, this project can be a resource for other institutions and future researchers seeking to improve retention rates and increase student motivation through mentorship. Meanwhile, I strongly believe this solution can be replicated and used nationally to create social change within higher educational institutions throughout the nation.

A follow-up study can be conducted after the implementation, completion, and evaluation of the redesigned CSS course. This additional study might be insightful and helpful for higher education officials and others within the field of education. In this follow-up study, retention data of African American male students who completed the revised CSS course could be compared to the retention rate of students enrolled the next term. Feedback from students could generate data about their motivation, completion outcomes, and their perspective about the effectiveness of including a mentor in the course. Overall, the feedback provided from key stakeholders will help determine the true impact of this study.

Conclusion

This section provided a platform for self-reflection on my doctoral journey and the creation of a mentorship component to be added to an existing course at the study site. Conducting this study presented many challenges but yielded, what I believe to be, worthwhile results. African American male students who participated indicated that various aspects of their lives were barriers to their willingness to remain enrolled in school. Major conceptual topics about mentoring and motivation were discussed and used to create interview protocols, which guided the construction of the semi-structured interview questions. Mentoring and motivation are topics vital to adult learners who actively seek self-improvement through the successful completion of higher learning certification. Higher learning institutions are designed to instruct, impart knowledge, and enhance skills that are required in the workforce and within our communities. Learner motivation and successful completion of one's goal is a contributing factor to one's community value.

In Section 4 of this doctoral study, I outlined the strengths of this project and analyzed my growth as a scholar, leader, and developer. In the chapter, study limitations, recommendations, and potential for social change were presented. Additionally, I shared the possible implications, applications, and directions for future research on the topic. The overall goal of this doctoral study was to gain a decisive understanding of the perceptions held by African American male students regarding retention and motivation. My passion for underprivileged students' success fueled my desire to find a possible solution to the issue at the study site. The project that was created, based upon the results

of face-to-face interviews, was the insertion of a mentorship component within the existing CSS course, which was designed to educate, inform, and motivate students while improving retention. Overall, this doctoral journey has been grueling, rewarding, and beneficial to my personal and professional growth.

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Appendix A: Project Study

Curriculum Plan: Institutionalized Community Mentoring

Suggestions for institutionalized community mentoring are aligned with the value of informal mentoring and are indicative of efforts within the community college culture (Ellerton et al., 2015). Policies that support and allow for community involvement in students' success are preexisting. For example, civic engagement and service-learning opportunities allow space for institutional interventions that help make room for mentoring and reducing the impact of risk-factors or barriers, which typically inhibit community college student completion. These factors include working full-time, caring for dependents, low socioeconomic status, immigrant status, and remediation needs (Ellerton et al., 2015).

Research study of the high-risk population of African American male community college students enrolled at Community Colleges of Chicago found that the integration of a civic engagement opportunity in course curriculum can increase students' self-confidence. From the sample of 20 African American male students enrolled in CSS, an introductory course designed for first-year students, exit data indicated that the students who completed the course reported that having a mentor not only allowed for greater opportunities for experiences but also cultivated an appreciation for general education, especially in their career path and civic engagement efforts. Having a mentor also supported their confidence to reach their educational attainment. Curricular emphasis on civic engagement and service learning at community colleges champion the atypical modes for changing students' negative habits of mind, which might impede their progress

toward degree completion. More indirect strategies that transform student thinking and break down barriers to student success are worth integrating into the fabric of institutions. Mentoring exists as one such strategy.

Purpose of The Project

The purpose of this curriculum plan is to address student motivation as it relates to retention and successful completion rates for the African American male students. Research was conducted involving a group of African American male students engaged in a mandatory CSS course for qualified first-year college students. Overall, the CSS course is designed to inform the first-year student of the expectations and resilience programs available. Although those who participated in the research study agreed the course was very inciteful, they believed that something was missing. Data concluded that a mentoring component would help to enrich the student learning experience as well as promote student motivation in relation to retention, successful completion, and transitioning rates.

Target Audience

The target audience for this mentoring component is African American male first-year college students enrolled in the CSS course. Over the course of this mentoring component, other students enrolled in the course might be encouraged to participate. Eventually, College Success courses across the City Colleges should be invited to institute this component. However, as additional genders and nationalities are asked to participate in this component, it may be prudent to adjust the training to address the needs of the various target groups.

Timelines

This curriculum plan consists of 13-weeks of mentoring development and interaction within a 16-week semester. The topic of mentoring is intended to be presented at the beginning of the course, and as the course continues, all other material will align with other sections taught in class throughout the course semester. The mentoring will commence off campus and is to be arranged by the student who is selecting a mentor based on the student's career path. Each week, various opportunities are put forth for the student to actively engage with the mentor and focus on the skills introduced in the course. Meetings will occur at various intervals agreed upon by both mentor and mentee. The mentor or mentee will facilitate weekly sessions that will include reviewing the instructor's lesson and ensuring the lessons are understood by the student. In addition, the mentor and mentee implement the lesson in some fashion as it relates to their career educational choice. As an assessment tool, instructors are to ask students to share their stories of successful lessons and practices and discuss questions or concerns that they may have during class sessions. End of the term assessments are to be completed by the mentor and mentee. Once the term has concluded, additional follow-up meetings throughout the school year are encouraged based on the connection the mentee has cultivated during this experience.

Goals**Unit learning goals for the mentees:**

- To support the development of skills and talent
- To support the development of a career pathway

- To gain a greater awareness of opportunities and activities that can broaden personal experiences
- To conduct more research on skills within your chosen career field of study
- To learn how to present work and educational experiences, apply for scholarships, fellowships, grants, etc.
- To become an apprentice and/or volunteer within the college community
- To receive professional experience and critiques of a body of work; portfolio review

Additional Unit Goals:

This unit is established to help identify the roles of the following entities;

- Mentees: Someone who has identified a specific purpose and believes that the guidance and help of a mentor can help him or her achieve their goal.
- Mentors: Are advisors and role models who are willing to invest in the mentee's personal growth and professional development.
- Stakeholders: The person who is commissioning the coaching or mentoring and who may be paying the bill.
- Institution: An organization founded for a religious, educational, professional, or social purpose.

Unit Learning Objectives:

Mentees will be able to:

- Explore what mentoring is all about

- Make the connection on how mentors play a role in student motivation and successful completion of tasks
- Discuss the challenges involved with balancing mentoring and coursework
- Apply strategies for making a sensible choice when choosing a mentor
- Explain why mentoring matters in college and life
- Apply specific skills connected to mentorship

Specific assistance the mentor will provide to the mentee in achieving the above objectives and learning goals:

- Assess mentee's current level of expertise and make recommendations on career path development.
- Advise mentee on resume, personal statement, portfolio, applications, letters of reference, etc.
- Assign mentee independent reading materials specific to objectives
- Provide guidance and support by creating an atmosphere of openness, communication, guidance, and trust
- Assist mentee in identifying academic goals and objectives
- Assign mentee specific technique tasks/assignments aimed to develop mentee's technical knowledge
- Mentor will invite mentee to apprentice or provide guidance for a specified period

Week 1: Mentoring**Goals:**

1. Explore what mentoring is all about
2. Understand strategies to help with interactions and obtaining the best results while engaged in a mentoring relationship

Objective:

1. The mentee will be able to facilitate personal and career development through a relationship with a role model in the career field of interest

Materials:

Video(s) and Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix G), computer with internet access and projection capabilities

Learning Activity:

Students are to find alternate material and write a one-page summary

Assessments: Writing Rubric

Writing Assignment Rubric					Total
Scoring	1 *	2 **	3 ***	4 ****	
Introduction	I did not Include an Introduction	I attempted an Introduction	I included a basic introduction	I included a hook	
Details	I did not include details	I included relevant details	I included descriptive details	I included details that created an image	
Transition Words	I did not include transition words	I included basic transition words	I included transition words	I included a variety of transition words	
Mechanics and Grammar	Six or more punctations, capitalization, spelling errors	Three to five punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	One to two punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	No errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	
Conclusion	I did not include a conclusion	I attempted a conclusion	I include a basic conclusion	I include a well- developed conclusion	
Instructor Notes:					Total Score

Week 2: Having the right mindset for mentoring**Goals:**

1. Apply specific skills connected to mentorship
2. Understand that with a growth mindset, intelligence and abilities can be developed over time

Objective:

1. The mentee will be able to identify at least one strategy mentee can use to foster growth mindset

Materials:

Video(s) and Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix D), computer with internet access and projection capabilities

Learning Activity:

Students are to find an article or video that provides ways to improve one's mindset and then write about a personal situation where they learned from their mistake, citing supporting information from their article or video.

Assessments: Writing Rubric

Writing Assignment Rubric					Total
Scoring	1 *	2 **	3 ***	4 ****	
Introduction	I did not Include an Introduction	I attempted an Introduction	I included a basic introduction	I included a hook	
Details	I did not include details	I included relevant details	I included descriptive details	I included details that created an image	
Transition Words	I did not include transition words	I included basic transition words	I included transition words	I included a variety of transition words	
Mechanics and Grammar	Six or more punctuations, capitalization, spelling errors	Three to five punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	One to Two punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	No errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	
Conclusion	I did not include a conclusion	I attempted a conclusion	I include a basic conclusion	I include a well-developed conclusion	
Instructor Notes:					Total Score

Week 3: Learning Style and Mentoring**Goals:**

1. Apply strategies for making a sensible choice when choosing a mentor
2. To have awareness of learning styles and how they contribute to the effectiveness of mentoring

Objective:

1. Mentee will be aware of and able to communicate their preferred learning style to the mentor who will then be able to know the best mode of delivery to use so the mentee can learn and do

Materials:

Video(s) and Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix D), computer with internet access and projection capabilities, Gardner and Barefoot (2018), *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success* (CCC Version)
Publisher: Macmillan.

Learning Activity:

Learning style quiz, group activity

Assessments: Submit results, oral classroom discussion

Week 4: Choosing a Mentor**Goals:**

1. Apply strategies for making a sensible choice when choosing a mentor
2. Secure exposure to a positive role model who will cultivate personal, educational, and career guidance

Objective:

1. Mentee will be able to make sure the mentor chosen aligns with student's career interests

Materials:

Video and Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix D), computer with internet access and projection capabilities

Learning Activity:

Identify a community mentor, submit a mentor request letter

Assessments: Provide a written report describing their mentor selection

Writing Assignment Rubric					Total
Scoring	1 *	2 **	3 ***	4 ****	
Introduction	I did not Include an Introduction	I attempted an Introduction	I included a basic introduction	I included a hook	
Details	I did not include details	I included relevant details	I included descriptive details	I included details that created an image	
Transition Words	I did not include transition words	I included basic transition words	I included transition words	I included a variety of transition words	
Mechanics and Grammar	Six or more punctations, capitalization, spelling errors	Three to five punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	One to two punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	No errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	
Conclusion	I did not include a conclusion	I attempted a conclusion	I include a basic conclusion	I include a well-developed conclusion	
Instructor Notes:					Total Score

Week 5: Creating a Structured Relationship**Goals:**

1. Make the connection on how mentors play a role in student motivation and successful completion
2. To gain access to professional(s) and the development of career connections

Objective:

1. Mentee will be able to understand how professional connections play a major role in the workforce

Materials:

Video and Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix D), Gardner and Barefoot (2018), *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success* (CCC Version): Macmillan.

Learning Activity:

Student are to find alternate material and write a one-page summary

Assessments: Written Rubric

Writing Assignment Rubric					Total
Scoring	1 *	2 **	3 ***	4 ****	
Introduction	I did not include an introduction	I attempted an introduction	I included a basic introduction	I included a hook	
Details	I did not include details	I included relevant details	I included descriptive details	I included details that created an image	
Transition Words	I did not include transition words	I included basic transition words	I included transition words	I included a variety of transition words	
Mechanics and Grammar	Six or more punctations, capitalization, spelling errors	Three to five punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	One to two punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	No errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	
Conclusion	I did not include a conclusion	I attempted a conclusion	I include a basic conclusion	I include a well-developed conclusion	
Instructor Notes:					Total Score

Week 6: Choosing a Career**Goals:**

1. Make the connection on how mentors play a role in student motivation and successful completion
2. Obtain guidance that will ease the transition from school to work

Objective:

1. Mentee will be able to align educational major with career interest and mentor selection

Materials:

Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix D), Gardner and Barefoot (2018), *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success* (CCC Version): Macmillan.

Learning Activity:

Self-analysis

Assessments: Oral classroom discussion

Week 7: Time Management**Goals:**

1. Discuss the challenges involved with balancing mentoring and coursework
2. Prioritize tasks based on importance and urgency

Objective:

1. Mentee will be able to understand time management tools and application to improve time management skills

Materials:

Video and Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix D), computer with internet access and projection capabilities, Gardner and Barefoot (2018), *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success* (CCC Version): Macmillan.

Learning Activity:

Video(s), Meeting Log

Assessments:

Oral classroom discussion; Mid-term covering the first seven topics; mid-term evaluation(s)

Week 8: Thinking Critically**Goals:**

1. Apply strategies for making a sensible choice when choosing a mentor
2. The ability to properly evaluate options by looking into all possible outcomes of a situation

Objective:

1. Mentee will be able to identify core skills associated with critical thinking

Materials:

Video(s) and Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix D), computer with internet access and projection capabilities, Gardner and Barefoot (2018), *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success* (CCC Version): Macmillan.

Learning Activity:

Students pair up and discuss their responses, be prepared to share

Assessments: Oral classroom discussion

Week 9: Job Skills**Goals:**

1. Explore what mentoring is all about
2. To increase employment opportunities

Objective:

1. Mentee will be able to acquire the abilities needed to successfully complete employment application, resume, and interview

Materials:

Video(s) and Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix D), computer with internet access and projection capabilities

Learning Activity:

Employment worksheet and application exercise; mock interview; resume

Assessments: Interview rating, one-minute paper

Writing Assignment Rubric					Total
Scoring	1 *	2 **	3 ***	4 ****	
Introduction	I did not include an introduction	I attempted an introduction	I included a basic introduction	I included a hook	
Details	I did not include details	I included relevant details	I included descriptive details	I included details that created an image	
Transition Words	I did not include transition words	I included basic transition words	I included transition words	I included a variety of transition words	
Mechanics and Grammar	Six or more punctuations, capitalization, spelling errors	Three to five punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	One to two punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	No errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	
Conclusion	I did not include a conclusion	I attempted a conclusion	I include a basic conclusion	I include a well-developed conclusion	
Instructor Notes:					Total Score

Week 10: Appreciating Diversity**Goals:**

1. Explain why mentoring matters in college and life
2. Ensure the reader has a clearer understanding of working with those that look different

Objective:

1. Mentee will be able to recognize various situations that will enhance learning to advance in multicultural education, equity, and social justice areas

Materials:

Video(s) and Supplemental Handbook, computer with internet access and projection capabilities, Gardner and Barefoot (2018), *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success* (CCC Version): Macmillan.

Learning Activity:

Independent thought assignment

Assessments: Oral classroom open discussion

Week 11: The environment and its influences**Goals:**

1. Make the connection on how mentors play a role in student motivation and successful completion
2. To make readers aware of how their environment has a role in their success

Objective:

1. Mentee will be able to recognize how the ability to succeed both academically and socially is associated with personal environment.

Materials:

Video(s) and Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix D), computer with internet access and projection capabilities

Learning Activity:

Student are to find alternate materials to present in-class

Assessments: In-class open discussion

Week 12: Money Management**Goals:**

1. Apply specific skills connected to mentorship
2. Understand why money management is important, and be able to list the benefits of saving; create a simple savings plan

Objective:

1. Mentee will be able to open a bank account (checking/savings) and create an investment portfolio

Materials:

Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix D), computer with internet access and projection, Gardner and Barefoot (2018), *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success* (CCC Version): Macmillan.

Learning Activity:

Video(s) (see Appendix D), Piggy bank theory, budgeting, writing exercises on personal bad habits **Assessments:** Writing Rubric

Writing Assignment Rubric					Total
Scoring	1 *	2 **	3 ***	4 ****	
Introduction	I did not include an introduction	I attempted an introduction	I included a basic introduction	I included a hook	
Details	I did not include details	I included relevant details	I included descriptive details	I included details that created an image	
Transition Words	I did not include transition words	I included basic transition words	I included transition words	I included a variety of transition words	
Mechanics and Grammar	Six or more punctations, capitalization, spelling errors	Three to five punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	One to two punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	No errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling errors	
Conclusion	I did not include a conclusion	I attempted a conclusion	I include a basic conclusion	I include a well-developed conclusion	
Instructor Notes:					Total Score

Week 13: Credit**Goals:**

1. Apply specific skills connected to mentorship
2. Understand the different forms of financial credit and how it works

Objective:

1. Mentee will be able to recognize the role credit plays

Materials:

Supplemental Handbook (see Appendix D), computer with internet access and projection capabilities, *The Credit Game: A Young Adults Guide to Successfully Building and Understanding Credit* by Kyjione Lee Jack (2007).

Learning Activity:

Play a credit game

Assessments: Oral and written assessments

Appendix B: Participant Profiles and Pseudonyms

No.	Pseudonym	Age	Year and Semester in College	CSS course
1	P1	18 years	First year, second semester	Completed
2	P2	38 years	First year, first semester. The student came to community college after a few years of being out from the college	In-Progress
3	P3	27 years	First year, first semester. The participant returned to community college with a better understanding regarding the importance of certification	In-Progress
4	P4	19 years	First year, second semester	Completed
5	P5	19 years	First year, second semester	Completed
6	P6	21 years	Second year, first semester	Completed
7	P7	23 years	Second year, second semester	Completed
8	P8	26 years	Second year, second semester	Completed
9	P9	21 years	Second year, second semester	Completed
10	P10	22 years	Second year, second semester	Completed
11	P11	19 years	First year, second semester	Completed
12	P12	18 years	First year, first semester	In-progress
13	P13	23 years	Second year, first semester	Completed
14	P14	21 years	First year, second semester	Completed
15	P15	20 years	Second year, second semester	Completed
16	P16	18 years	First year, second semester	Completed
17	P17	22 years	Second year, second semester	Completed
18	P18	21 years	Second year, second semester	Completed
19	P19	22 years	Second year, second semester	Completed
20	P20	19 years	First year, second semester	Completed

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Before conducting key in-depth interviews, the primary investigator/researcher will confirm that students selected for the interviews have completed and turned in consent forms. The primary investigator will also review the consent form with the students at the beginning of the interviews to ensure that students fully understand what it means for them to agree to participate in the study. Privacy and confidentiality will be adhered to and the interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

Interview questions:

1. What is your age?
2. What is your current level of study?
3. Describe your experiences as an African American male student enrolled for CSS course in community colleges.
4. What do you feel are the motivation factors among the African American students enrolled for CSS course?
5. What do you feel are the satisfaction factors among the African American students enrolled for CSS course?
6. What do you feel are the retention factors among the African American students enrolled for CSS course?
7. What challenges do you face as an African American male student that affects your retention?
8. Does the institution have resilience programs in place that you find helpful? Please explain.
9. Does the institution have intervention strategies for African American students enrolled in the CSS? Please explain.
10. In your opinion, do you think the intervention retention strategies among African American students in CSS course are effective and satisfactory?
11. In your opinion, what new intervention retention strategies could the institution implement among African American students in the CSS course?
12. What are your suggestions for improving the intervention retention strategies among African American students to improve retention rates in the CSS course?
13. Are there any other recommendations that you have?

“Thank you for your participation”

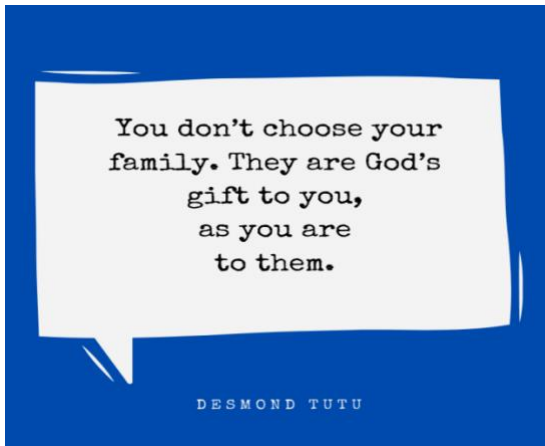


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Supplemental Handbook
Authored by: Dr. Angee Ponder

In this chapter you will explore:

- The meaning and value of having a mentor
- How and why having the right mindset for mentoring is important
- How to select your mentor
- How taking notes, thinking critically, time management and appreciating diversity plays a role in the workforce
- How to complete a job application
- Why diversity is important
- How to develop a pro-social network
- How to manage money



Studies have suggested that people who learn from mentors (i.e., people with more knowledge and experience) tend to do better in life (Van Ginkel, Verloop, & Denessen, 2016). It is generally believed that anyone who wants to make a remarkable impact has to have a big picture in mind, and the best way to have such a picture is to have a relationship with someone who has gotten to where you want to be or has plied the same road you intend to ply. We all remember

during our elementary days that we did not get to do any math assignment or classwork without having an example done by our teacher in class. That is the true picture of life; it is easier to get things done after learning from someone who has done it before.

What is mentorship?

Mentorship is the process of being influenced by individuals, ideals, or society. For simplicity, we will use the term “mentorship” and the term “influence” interchangeably (Thomas, 2018).

Who is a mentor?

A mentor is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as an “experienced and trusted adviser.” A mentor is a person, sometimes older or even a friend who guides a less experienced person by building trust and modeling positive manners. A mentor is always willing to become part of your life and would play at least some of the roles listed below:

- Listens and asks you questions
- Offers information and knowledge and share informal networks
- Provides advice on career development
- Offers broader views
- Offers support and encouragement
- Gives an insight into your work and career
- Offers guidance and advice regarding qualifications
- Be a critical friend
- Encourages self-reflection
- Helps you identify areas for development

A mentor plays a crucial role in the development of an individual. However, the role of the mentee cannot be overemphasized; you have the responsibility to make things happen and put the knowledge acquired from the mentor into action plans.

Who is a mentee?

In simple terms, a mentee is someone who is trained, guided, and advised by a mentor. The mentee may seem to be at the bottom of the chain but has total control of the development rate. As a mentee, you must have the following characteristics to be effective:

- Teachable
- Good communication skills
- A relationship builder
- Flexible
- Accessible
-

Importance of mentorship:

Right from the beginning of this class, we have been talking about how important mentorship is to human development. We all have one point in our lives been mentored either consciously or unconsciously. If you look at your life presently, where you work, what you think, what you love doing, etc., then you would notice that these entities are all influenced by the mentors, either consciously or unconsciously. Listed below are some important contributions of mentorship:

- Professional Socialization
- Personal support
- Development
- Reduces chances of making mistakes
- It is essential for reaching remarkable heights
- Goals are achieved more easily
-

Importance of mentorship to a college student

Mentoring is significant, not only because students can learn knowledge and skills from mentors but because mentoring offers professional socialization and personal support to promote success in graduate schools and beyond. Quality mentoring dramatically improves the chances of success for the students.

Research shows that students who receive successful mentoring also have a better chance of securing academic tenure-track positions or a more significant potential for career advancement in administrative or non-university sectors.

Instructor's note

Present the video below to the class.

- Video link:
 - <https://youtu.be/nYeH0Sy7cA0>
 - <https://youtu.be/UMdwnIRcMas>
 - https://youtu.be/gkO_uQJji-o
 - <https://youtu.be/s14iariF-Js>

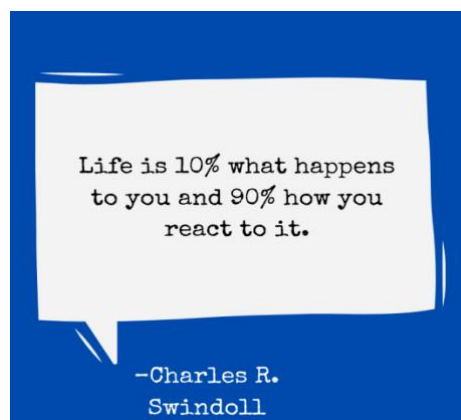
Today, more people are consciously seeking mentoring to thrust their careers forward. So, whether you are on the giving or receiving end, collaborations will help your career as well. Mentoring partnerships can be personally and professionally enriching for both parties. It is a chance to develop communication skills, widen your points of view, and consider new ways to approach situations. And in the end, both the mentor and mentee will push their careers forward.

Today, more people are consciously seeking mentoring to drive their careers forward. So, whether you are on the giving or receiving end, collaborations will help your career as well.

Mentoring partnerships can be personally and professionally enriching for both parties. It is a chance to develop communication skills, widen your points of view, and consider new ways to approach situations. And in the end, both the mentor and mentee will push their careers forward.

Below are some of the important points of mentorship for a college student

- Gain practical advice, additional financial-aid guidance regarding grants, and internships or fellowships for ongoing educational studies
- Growth and expansion of personal and professional pro-social networks
- Lend support to a higher rate of success in educational completion, better performance with academic coursework, and transitioning into the workforce
- Help to reduce personal burdens and build motivation, encouragement, and support
- Become more empowered to make decisions
- Develop your communication and study and personal skills
- Develop strategies for dealing with personal and academic issues and increase social and academic confidence
- Identify goals and establish a sense of direction



Benefits to the Mentor

- Improve communication and personal skills
- Develop leadership and management characteristics
- Reinforce study skills and knowledge of mentee's subject(s)
- Increase mentee's confidence and motivation
- Engage in a volunteering opportunity valued by employers
- Enhance your CV/Resume
- Increase circle of friends/network

- Gain recognition for your skills and experience
- Benefit from a sense of fulfilment and personal growth

Having the right mindset for mentorship

This section is based on how we will move away from our negative mindsets and develop a vibrant, positive attitude, which is the main factor in effective mentorship.

Developing a positive attitude after being mentored by good examples can be simple.

However, developing a positive attitude when mentored by poor examples can be very difficult; the transition can only occur if you learn from your examples and make better choices. In a straightforward illustration, *do as I say, not as I do*--in other words, do not repeat bad behavior.

Building and maintaining a positive attitude

Mentors may offer useful guidance and knowledge, constructive criticism, encouragement, and other people as tools to help you achieve your goals. You have probably had several positive, influential mentors in your life.

In this section, ways in which you can build and maintain a positive attitude will be covered:

1. Remember that you control your mood.
2. Adopt beliefs that positively frame events.
3. Create a library of positive thoughts
4. Avoid angry and negative media.
5. Use more positive vocabulary.

Starting with the right mindset

A positive attitude does not mean you are ignoring your life's issues. It just means being an optimist and looking for the good in everything rather than focusing on the wrong things.

Do you have a positive attitude?

If you do have a positive attitude, you will notice that you have been able to overcome many of your negative situations, which initially seemed impossible to overcome. This is evidence that a positive attitude helps you during the mentorship.

Why you need a positive attitude during the mentorship

It is easier to be mentored when you have a positive attitude because you would see the good even in a demanding situation.

1. You need to have a positive attitude to be teachable
2. A positive attitude makes you accessible
3. A positive attitude brings you closer to your goal
4. A positive attitude eliminates negative emotions
5. A positive attitude attracts the right set of people

After a mentorship program has come to an end, maintaining the relationships you have formed will feel substantially more difficult. It is common to feel uncertain about how to step forward without organized activities or regular interaction. You have already remembered that after graduating, you can no longer drop by every week during your professor's office hours; however, finishing a structured program need not be the end of your mentorship. Here are four tips on how to sustain a successful relationship with your mentor:

- Determine the best way to communicate
- Commit to regular meetings as best you can, and make them worthwhile for your mentor
- Be flexible
- Stay in touch and keep your mentor in the loop

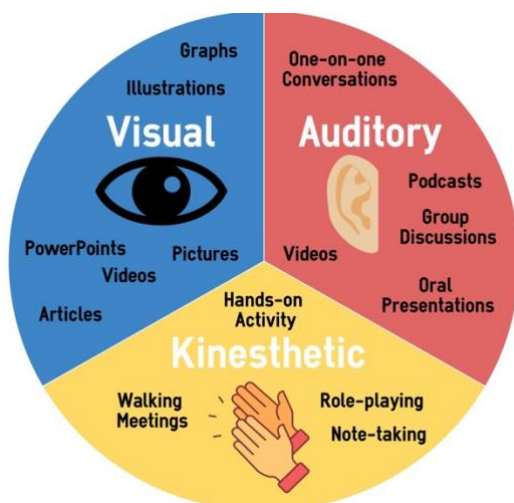
How individuals learn

Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge or skills after being taught, studying, and/or having experiences. Every individual needs to understand the best way he or she can acquire knowledge. Even with the excitement about a mentor relationship, you need to figure out a way to understand the information being presented beyond the textbook more effectively. So, before you begin, take a moment to understand the best way you learn. Below are some effective learning practices you can adopt:

- Learn in short bursts of time
- Take notes by hand
- Summarize the information
- Keep your learning sessions brief and frequent
- Take a study nap
- Teach someone else (or pretend to do so)

You should recognize the best way you learn before starting a mentoring relationship as this will help to maximize your mentoring experience. There are seven different learning style:

1. Visual: Some people may prefer using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
2. Aural: Individuals who prefer to learn using sound and music.
3. Verbal: This set of people prefers using words in both speech and writing.
4. Physical: People who prefer using their hands, body, and sense of touch.



5. Logical: This set of people uses logical systems.
6. Social Learners: They love to learn in groups or with other people.
7. Solitary: They prefer to work alone and use self-study.

In addition, as added support when selecting a mentor attempt to identify the kind of mentoring process your mentee prefers as you would want this experience to improve your mentoring the mentoring experience, education and provide better assurance regarding your chosen career path.

Now, let us take a little time to really delve into learning styles. Knowing your particular learning style will help you throughout life, both personally and professionally. When we speak of learning styles, we are focusing on three specific styles of learning: visual learning, auditory learning, and kinesthetic learning.

Visual Learners

If your preferred style is visual, you prefer to think in pictures or movies. This style is most effective when you want to create and recall images when you read or when you are taking a written test. Many work environments cater to highly visual learners because they can retrieve information they have reviewed much faster. The old adage, “one picture is worth a thousand words” is true for visual learners. Visual learners tend to be neat and organized and their learning style preference tends to match most closely most educational and company working environments.

Auditory Learners

If your highest preference is auditory, you prefer to learn by listening and often recall the words you have heard in your mind. If you are taking a written test, this tends to slow you down because you are speaking to yourself as you read. For faster learning results, you will want to learn how to add some visual thinking strategies.

Kinesthetic Learners

If your highest preference is kinesthetic, you prefer hands-on learning and most likely love to move around frequently like an athlete and build things with your hands.

It is important to note that this quiz is only an indicator of your best learning style. It is not meant to pigeon-hole you into any specific method of learning. To the contrary, it is meant to enlighten you of the weaker areas, so that you will be mindful of where there is untapped opportunity for growth and development. There are quite a few other learning styles, and your particular way of taking in information may be any combination of the styles mentioned.

What gets in the way of the learning process?

For you to grasp everything your mentor offers, you will need to find a way to overcome everything that may threaten to alter or disturb your learning process. You need to ask yourself this question; “What are my major distractions?” If you can genuinely identify

what distracts you the most, then you will have to deal with it. For instance, social media may distract you. You can watch some interesting videos on how to do away with social media for some time. If that is what you need, then by all means, do it!

Here are five tips to help you stay focused and avoid distractions

1. Wake up earlier
2. Minimize or eliminate phone distractions
3. Use the Pomodoro technique to break down work tasks into intervals and separate the tasks with short breaks (Cirillo, 2014)
4. Remove distractions (e.g., social media, Facebook, Instagram, Tic Tock)
5. Find more engaging or fun ways to learn

Many of these approaches to prioritizing your time apply to life in general, so do not be quick to discard any of them.

Activity

Take a few moments and take a quiz to assess your learning style. The quiz is free and available at <https://www.howtolearn.com/learning-styles-quiz/>

This online quiz will present you with a list of preferences. Be sure to only check those preferences that you agree with. There are no right or wrong answers; just answer honestly. When you have completed the quiz, provide your name and email address to receive your results.

Choosing a Mentor

Conscious mentorship is the process of being mentored by an individual and/or environment that is determined by you.

Benefits of this phase

This phase of mentorship gives you the ability to focus your energy in one particular direction. Let us look at some aids of conscious mentorship.

1. Provide a way of seeing through difficulties
2. Improves productivity
3. Reduces the stress of transitioning into a new phase in your life
4. Increases motivation and confidence
5. Speeds up the learning and reinforces the process



Choosing the right mentors

Mentorship is critical for the development and training, but too often, not enough emphasis is placed on choosing the right mentors. Let us dive into some simple steps you can take in choosing the right mentor.

1. Know yourself and what you are looking for
2. Do not go with the flash; check the content before you decide.
3. Talk to different types of people
4. Look for specific qualities
5. Seek many types of mentors
6. Look for common ground
7. Think about your goal
8. Let the relationship evolve organically

The role your mentor plays

The concept of mentoring continues to evolve year after year, but the position of a mentor and its potential impact remains the same. Mentors may play an essential part in the personal, social, and professional development of an individual. Several major organizations are starting to implement mentorship programs where senior employees are helping to train and direct members of junior staff. On the job training is also a form of mentoring being instituted throughout various businesses. Mentoring has been around in a completely organic way for decades; so, the use of educational institutionalized community mentoring should be just as effective.

Create A Structured Relationship:

Mentors recognize the value of having formed a formal relationship with the individual being mentored. Mentors set the partnership goals upfront so that each individual knows explicitly what their standards and obligations should be.

Encourage:

Encouragement is one of the critical functions of a mentor. However, encouraging does not mean the mentor completes tasks or develops the career for the mentee. Granted, they should share their experience and skills required to aid and support the mentee's in his quest for successful career selection.

Clarify the Big Picture:

Once a mentee expresses where they are planning to be in a given period, a successful mentor will explain the big picture by offering suggestions as to what steps are needed to make the expected goals a reality.

Serve as Solid Role Models:

Good mentors frequently serve as role models for those under their tutelage through participating in professional, personal, and social acts that others would aspire to strive toward and imitate.

Demonstrate A Positive Attitude:

Mentors also help their mentees realize that errors and failures are not one and the same. If one will continue to make mistakes; he or she will crash into the brick walls. A mentor can then assist their mentee in discovering ways to work through errors and cultivate a better approach to failure and success.

Is Not Afraid to Offer Constructive Criticism:

Successful mentors usually do not withdraw from giving constructive criticism. Feedback is essential to the personal and professional growth of the mentee, albeit not always encouraging.

Value Differing Opinions:

A successful mentor will often respect the opinions of his or mentee. Even those involved in the most positive and stable personal and professional relationships may hold counterpoints periodically.

Skills required

- Self-Awareness – you should have a good understanding of your strengths and development needs.
- Organizational know how
- Credibility – you must have personal and professional credibility; this may include being a member of relevant organizations.

- Accessibility – you must be willing and able to commit sufficient time to your mentee to offer support and guidance.
- Communication – you need admirable communication skills and able to understand the ideas and feelings of others. You also need to be a very good listener.
- Ability to empower – you must be able to create a working environment where it is safe for individuals to try out several things, allowing them to contribute in different ways.
- A desire to help others develop – you must understand how individuals develop and have the experience, formally or informally, of developing other people.
- Inventiveness – be open to new ways of doing things and different ways of working.
- Empathy – Ability to empathize with others.
- Understanding – You should be ready to try to understand different perspectives, approaches, and possibly backgrounds of different mentees.

What to cover at the first meeting?

It is necessary to develop a relationship between the mentor and the mentee during the first meeting and to find an acceptable way of working. At the initial meeting, the mentor and mentee will set out their expectations about the process. This ‘contract’ sets out principles, basic rules, and administrative arrangements. The ‘contract’ will be unique in every connection.

In the first meeting, the structure of the relationships should also be defined, and again, this will be special to each mentoring relationship. If it is evident after the first meeting that the ‘chemistry’ is not right, then it is best to end the relationship and move on.

Luet, Morettini, and Vernon-Dotson (2018) suggested covering the following items in the first meeting:

Introductions

- Career history – how did you get to this point?
- Interests outside of work
- What/Where do you want to be in 3-5 years?
- Greatest achievements/disappointments in your career?
- What does your picture of success look like?

Expectations

- What expectations do you have of the process as a mentor/mentee?
- Is the mentor there to guide, support, challenge, listen?
- What role does the mentor anticipate s/he will have?

- What areas of discussion fall within/outside the mentoring relationship?
- What will make this a satisfying and useful relationship for both parties?

Goals and expected outcomes

- Consider possible success factors/desired outcomes
- What would the mentee like to improve in their current role?
- What would the mentee like to know/improve for future roles?
- Where would the mentee most value guidance/advice/a sounding board?
- What are the mentee's current priorities?
- Agree to record objectives for both parties?

Logistics and availability

- How frequently do you wish to meet, and for how long?
- Do you want to set an agenda for the next meeting?
- Are there any issues that you want to start on now?

Dealing with problems and openness

- How we deal with issues when they arise
- The safe and confidential environment

Managing the meetings

You should take on the role of a facilitator during the sessions using questions and a non-directive, non-judgmental approach. The purpose of the meetings might be for some or all the following reasons:

- Reviewing and identifying the mentee's experience
- Helping the mentee to recognize individual strengths and areas for development
- Discussing professional and work issues
- Agreeing what support is required
- Exploring the options open to the mentee
- Coaching on specific skills
- Supporting the mentee to set achievable, accurate and stretching action plans

Remember, meetings will not be the only form of connection with your mentee. Telephone calls, emails, and brief on-the-job discussions will be a part of the process, but you should have a fixed number of scheduled meetings with your mentee set to fit around the action plan of the mentee, and around precise points in their development.

Effective meetings

- 1. Have a clear structure and purpose. Before the meeting, study the structure and the time parameters. These should be agreed upon during the initial meeting when you are contracting with the mentee.
- 2. Think about the content of the sessions. There should be a balance when looking back and reviewing the mentee experiences and reviewing if objectives set have been achieved; if not, why not?
- 3. Keep to dates and times set. It is easy to let the day work get in the way but try to focus on the benefits to everyone (including the organization) of engaging in this process. Give it the urgency it requires to be successful.
- Enjoy the experience!

Making Right Choices on Major and Career

Every day, we all face countless choices. Some have little effects such as whether our ice cream should be in a cup or cone; and other decisions can change lives. And although some of these choices may impact our lives today, for years to come, other choices will not affect us. What is important to remember is that we are a product of our options. Each option leads to deciding who we are and how we vary. The decision-making process starts with making good choices.

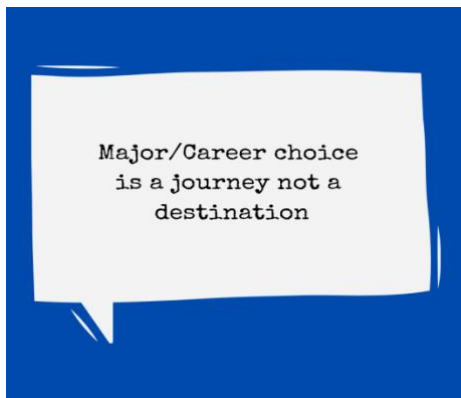
Instructor's note

- Ease the students into the class by sharing their own experiences on how you made the right career choice.
- Present the video below to the class.
- Video link: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/how-to-determine-your-strengths-use-them-to-choose-a-college-major.html>

Choosing a mentor that aligns with your major/career choice

Ask yourself these similar questions:

- Is career employable?
- Will you still enjoy the work years from now?
- Will career pay?
- Will the job still be needed later in the future?



You still have time: give yourself time to think properly. Do a lot of research. Talk to a career advisor, your parents, and even your friends. Make sure you are open-minded to what people say and take enough time before making your decision.

Lastly, evaluate your options and create a plan: Now, you have been studying majors and determining which might best fit your unique situation. What happens next? Confirm your choices with the relevant knowledge and related experiences. Be sure

to update your major when you are ready. Make a plan for gaining practical knowledge and skills.

What are your motivations?

Do your greatest motives come from your own desires, skills, beliefs or other factors?

Is your primary motivation based on the amount of money you think you can earn rather than interest in the field itself in a given area? Explain

Will external pressures (e.g., from family, colleagues or the job market) affect your decisions and influence them? Explain

Eventually, who will have to live with the consequences of this decision — you or others? Explain

Would you consider choosing a major because you think it is going to be easy?

What are the realities?

Can you meet the entry-to-major criteria on time, particularly in more restrictive departments (e.g., nursing, sciences, etc.)?

Do your interests, abilities, values, and motivations conflict or do they agree?

How much extra time will it take to graduate if a significant number of credits that cannot be applied to a major have already been completed?

Choosing a career

It can be challenging to choose the right career; however, getting an established career direction can help you get a job. But you can set yourself on a path to a successful, fulfilling career that can provide for you and your family with a little hard work, some preparation, and some serious self-reflection.



Challenges of Choosing a Career

- Anything from fear to a lack of information on the path to a career decision will throw up a roadblock. The more you are aware of the pitfalls of choosing a career, the more prepared you will be to face the process.
- Wrong mindset: Some people believe that there is a perfect career for each person, thereby, limiting their options.
- Fear of failure: In a quest for the right career choice, the element of the unknown often rears its head. A person may fear that once they commit to it, they will not like the career. That person may be afraid that he or she might not be good at it.
- Barriers to education: Some careers require job seekers to achieve specific levels or types of training. If a person's profession needs advanced training, but he or she needs to start working now; the situation may lead to indecisiveness about choosing another career that the person has little or no interest in.

How to Make the Right Career Choice?

Evaluate your interest:

- think about your childhood dreams
- assess what you love doing

You must think about yourself before you can pick the right profession. In combination with your personality type, your values, interests, soft skills, and aptitudes make some occupations a completely inappropriate fit for you and others.

Consider your current situation

- If you want a job that will make you very happy, you need to have a perfect understanding of what you want and enjoy.
- Consider your financial status. Some careers require particular levels of education, and this may be quite expensive. However, being poor should not restrict you from being who you want to be. There are a lot of government programs that help with schooling such as grants, scholarships, etc.
- Think about the amount of education you will have to pass through.

- Make a list of career options and explore them.
- Do a lot of research so you will not leave any stone untouched.
- Consider the career options readily available to you.
- Consider your future financial security.

Your purpose for attending college

Confessions of a college student

“The opportunity of having access to a mentor during the first-year college experience as one attempts to navigate their future allowed for the ability to pick someone’s brain, have an unbiased ear to listen, and a nudge in the best direction from someone who’s been where I am now and trying to go.”

- P13 23yrs old

Community College of Study
(COS)

Why College?

College brings concerns about the future. Let us go more in-depth.

Instructor’s note:

- Start the section by ensuring the audience pays close attention to the video below.
- Video link:
<https://youtu.be/O95oRLl6ks4>

The College Experience

When you just became a college student, agree with me, the occurrences below happened.

1. Dealing with less freedom
2. First-year motivation and commitment
3. Dealing with newfound freedom
4. Pure innocence and seriousness

Unlike in the high school where you had known almost all your classmates for years, college is probably more diverse in terms of classmates’ race, age, religion, political interests and views, and life experiences.

Typically, everyone--your parents and teachers--made sure you were in school daily, and managing your time seemed difficult at first. Tests and quizzes were given periodically and regularly to test your understanding of the subjects. And yes! Teachers, counselors, principals, and parents gave a lot of guidance. Oh, how that was a bit cool and less mind boggling where college instructors give fewer tests, and then nobody treats you like a kid anymore. You are a full-grown adult, guy.



No, not full. But you are certainly not a kid anymore. You discovered that you must do much more reading now; otherwise, your desired grades will only be ‘castles in the air.’ Those good grades were often easy to get, but only and if you paid attention in class. Above all, the class is larger, more complex, and more impersonal.

The “college experience” has always been viewed as an essential part of growing up. And yes, it is. The truth about the college experience is that it is different for everyone, and we are not accepting that it is going to work out for everyone the same way. The truth about the college experience is that everyone will experience college differently, for better or worse. There is a lot to be said about the college experience. It encompasses so much and, in truth, is difficult to define because every student is different.

Although you attend college to learn, you want to ensure that you are balancing your unit load with other activities as well to round out the college experiences you have.

You remember graduating from high school and scrolling through seemingly endless pictures of old classmates in graduation caps and gowns and celebrating with them: seeing some of them share their graduate school plans, while others were getting married or moving back to their hometowns. And then, your posts were just completely different, “Accepted to university! I cannot wait to be a student,” And then, you shared with your school’s hashtag. This “college experience” has long been touted as an essential part of growing up. In high school, it is what all teachers and counselors and adults talk about. Students try their best to get into a good school, preferably with parents’ money or a scholarship. Then they get to live in lodges, off-campus, on-campus, join clubs or sports or not, earn good grades, and be free.

Let me share a bit. The college experience is different for everyone—and the fact is, it is not for everyone. No one will tell you that part when you are 17 years old. I had no idea I would not be enrolled in a university until age 22, or that I would be scraping together the money to pay for it myself. All I did was to have it in my mind that I will not just go through those years without literally passing through fire. Am I correct? You give something to get something? Do I have what it requires? My mind was so set on the goals that I determined in my heart that I would not live to waste these forthcoming years. So, I prepared. I was resilient and intentional, but it was NOT easy.

I had my bouts of challenges and crying times. I had different breaks amidst reading, in between lecture hours and even during playtimes. Sometimes I feel as though I would have been better off moving on from wanting to get a degree—that I have somehow internalized the desire for a “college experience,” and that is how I ended up enrolled. But there is also a sense of accomplishment. I did not give up on this goal. I am here now, and I am going to give it my best shot. That is the attitude every college student should endeavor to channel into themselves, starting from the first day of classes. After all, you have most likely been dreaming of being a college student even before you entered high school. I am studying the commercial, I am going to be the first woman in my family with a 4-year degree, and I am planning to go to graduate school. I am ambitious and driven and want to help others succeed, too!

Create a purpose for yourself. You know what you want for yourself. Or do you not know? You need to meet with your mentor (get one) or the college counselors. You have

them to help you strategize or re-strategize along the way. You cannot afford to miss it or live the college years on the fly. College is expensive if you did not know it.

How vital is College for you?

Let us consider the points below:

1. A higher standard of living
2. Get a change of environment
3. The playing field for everyone
4. Preparation for leadership roles
5. Preparing for graduate or professional school
6. Developing valuable skills such as critical thinking
7. Social networking
8. Experiences that help you achieve your purpose

And then, beneficial outcomes of College

1. Accumulate knowledge
2. Become more independent
3. Less likely to face unemployment
4. Your college degree can boost your financial savvy.
5. Make better decisions
6. Learn new information (cultures, religions, economies, governments, etc.)
7. Figure out who you are
8. Grow through interacting with people different from yourself
9. Get to gain self-esteem and self-confidence
10. You become more future-oriented
11. Have to tend to your wellness--meaning better health
12. Avenues to earn more money than non-college graduates
13. It makes you a better citizen

Less likely to be

1. imprisoned
2. dependent on alcohol and drugs
3. unemployed
4. Indulge in harmful substances (Pro, Camplain, Sabo, Baldwin, & Gilbert, 2018).

Building Purpose for College

College serves your concerns about the future.

Can you please ask yourself this: “*What am I doing here?*” What was your response? Please pen it down if you did respond; if you did not, find an answer to it. You should know that the clearer your sense of purpose, the easier it is to stay motivated throughout

the years (Bridges, & Bridges, 2019). Ask me how to build a sense of purpose and let me drive the points in. You have:

1. Look to students with similar career interests
2. Visit the career center
3. Talk to advisers, professors, and campus chaplains
4. Set goals that are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and anchored to a period for your college experience and beyond. Determine which short-term steps are necessary if those plans become reality.

Instead of shooting yourself in the legs, think about how you can take control over more decision making and choices that will lay the foundation for your future goals.

Skills and Tips

College is often one's first chance to live independently. It is not uncommon hearing people say that high school years will be the best years of your life. Little do they know that you can make your years in the college even better simply because it is one of the real-life experiences and the last youthful learning ground before entering the adult world. And this is how to get the most out of it.

1. You are in college for a reason – to take classes. This is an obvious point, but as students, we tend to forget what the deal is - the importance of learning during our college years – especially while managing deadlines, trying to moderate coffee takes and dragging our feet and sleep-deprived selves to our morning classes. Always go to your classes. You did not find yourself there by chance; go to class – remember you are spending money and time on going to college; not going is like throwing it out of the window. Also, teachers and tutors share vital and valuable information you need in class that will be either for exams or other needs.

To attend classes and tutorials regularly and take a proactive role in your education and to learn during your university years does not have to be restricted to your classroom, either. If that course on public speaking conflicts with your schedule, consider enrolling in a free class from online platforms. There is always a way if you look for one.

2. Be engaged:
Despite what you can think, college is not just about hitting the books. Take advantage of the numerous learning opportunities that are readily accessible to you; enrich your student life by getting involved outside the classroom. Explore programs your school has to offer, and it will aid you in making new friends and establishing a connection with your school. These college years represent one of the only few times you will have to indulge freely in your hobbies and connect with people from a range of diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. To make the most of your student life, never be afraid to get out of your comfort zone: try out new things, and make sure to meet new people. Do not be surprised at the numerous opportunities available

for students to engaged in on campus. I also encourage you not to restrict yourself to campus activities. Your local community is a great resource for opportunities to get engaged and contribute to a greater cause while doing something you love. Get involved on campus through volunteer work, social awareness groups, or something else you are passionate about. Being young is all about changing the world and maximizing your potentials—being in college offers you that opportunity.

3. Ask for help, never hesitate.
If you ever feel overworked, stressed, or just in need of advice or a friendly ear, your university likely has a plethora of resources on campus. Feel like you need help managing a heavy workload? Head to your university's Student Success Center or student union or make an appointment with an academic guidance counselor to search for help. Feel homesick and burned out? Be courageous and reach out to people you trust or your university's student health services for guidance. There is no shame or pain in admitting that you are having a tough time and need some help – all of us do at times, and you are certainly not alone. Your health--physical and emotional--is so crucial for keeping you on your feet and moving forward so that you can enjoy your college years to the fullest.
4. Seize ample opportunities.
As a college student, you candidly have free rein over how you want to spend your day. Granted, it can end up being challenging to manage things on your own, but also, I bet it is interesting as you begin to figure out who you are, what you want, and who you want to be. College is that time when you should realize your independence; maturity, whether little or much (you will be surprised by how much); you learn invaluable lessons and begin to identify your values and beliefs.
5. You can choose to live off-campus while studying at college. That is a great way to save money, granting you chances to spend more on activities around town or begin working to save money for after graduation. This provides you with an opportunity to meet and interact with people on the other side of your world: that is, those who are not students, who are older with more life experiences, and capable of living life.
6. Volunteering is a tangible way to make a difference in the local community where your college is located. Neighborhoods surrounding your college will also have individual needs and service opportunities that would benefit from your help. Volunteering can certainly help you feel connected to the community you live in and then show you a new side of the place you can freely call home for the next several years.
7. Take care of your body: eat right, get enough rest, and exercise. When you eat well and develop an exercise routine, you feel better. Handling your courses, your study routine, and your active social life will be easy if your mind and body are happy,

well, and healthy. Take care of yourself -- your entire body--and you will be much better off handling everything life has for you.

Conclusion: This article tops it all, check out at <https://collegeinfo geek.com/42-things-i-learned-freshman-year/>

Mentoring experiences of a community college student

“A college mentor can have an indelible impact on the life of a student in many different ways. Check out some of the reasons why I felt having a mentor in college is so important.”

Gives Your Confidence A Boost When You Need It Most

With a rigid curriculum, nonstop exams and assignments, and plenty of studying, it is not unusual for students to feel overwhelmed. I started to worry if perhaps I had made the wrong choice. Or, maybe I did not have it in me to meet the many challenges involved in college.

At times like these, having somebody to encourage you can give your confidence a huge boost and motivate you to set your targets higher.

That is exactly what a mentor does. A mentor will pick you up when you fall and remind you that the destination is just around the corner. They help you to keep going when things get too much to handle.

You Get an Insider’s Perspective

Mentors have a lot more experience than mentees. Your mentor may have gone through the same stages that you are going through now. Alternatively, they know other professionals who have navigated the same path in their career at some time. This puts them in a unique position. I was offered advice and tips on how to handle specific situations, in which direction to focus my energies, and what to de-prioritize on my journey towards graduation. By breaking things down in order of importance, they help you get a better perspective on which activity has more weight in your professional and personal life.



You get Advice on Balancing Responsibilities

Most students struggle with balancing various aspects of their college life—academic, professional, social, and personal. All of these are equally important to develop an all-round personality. Here is where I found myself struggling to juggle all my responsibilities. The mentor helped me to find my bearings and develop a more balanced approach.

Expands Your Professional Network

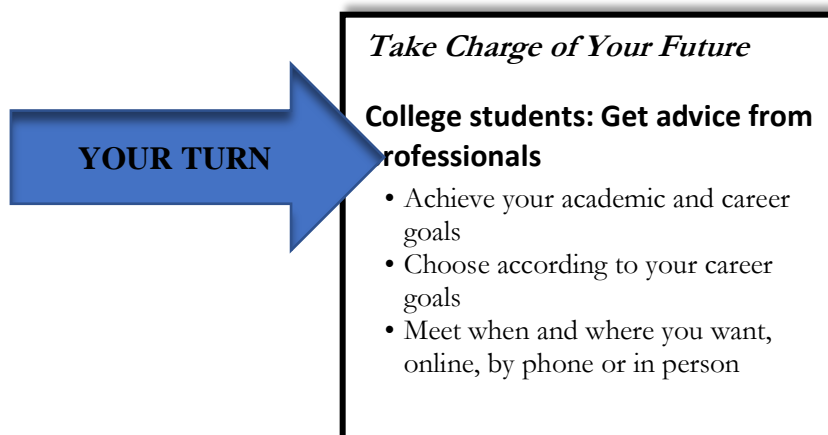
If you have the ambition and drive and are willing to work hard, your mentor will be only too happy to introduce you to colleagues, ex-students, friends, and other relevant people

in the industry who could potentially be of immense help to your career. This can be especially important when you are looking to ease the transition from an academic circle to the industry. That is where most graduates report having the biggest problem adjusting. With a mentor, you are already one step ahead of other applicants in the job pool!

Sharing Can Help Reduce Your Burden

Sometimes, all you need is someone to lend you a caring ear. Just being able to speak to someone and share all your troubles, feelings, emotions, and fears has a way of making these issues seem smaller. Most times, this brought me a level of clarity that makes it easier for me to handle complex issues myself.

Sometimes all a student needs to succeed is somebody to give them guidance and steer them in the right direction. That is what a mentor does.



Activity: *Writing a mentorship request letter*

John Doe
1234 25th Street, New York, NY 00000
Cellular: 444: 444-4444 Alternate: 666: 666-6666
johndoe@cos.edu

Dear [Potential Mentor],

My name is _____ and I'm a first-year student studying [Major] at College of Study. As a participant in the college success seminars course, I'd like the opportunity to get your first-hand insight about a career [In Field of Study or At Company or As a Job Title]. I'm interested in pursuing a career in [Job Title], and I thought your background puts you in an excellent position to provide guidance and support me and my career choice.

In addition to my studies, I am currently [Extracurricular] and [Interwork Experience] I'm especially interested in [Job Title/Function/Company], and I think you would be a great mentor because of your experience with [Job Title/Function/Company]. [More here explaining why mentee chose this mentor, if needed]. I'd like to arrange it where I'm able to shadow you for the next twelve/nine weeks to learn more about your background and develop more insight into your career path and choice.

I can be reached by email at [School Email Address Only] and/or by [Phone Number]. I would like to thank you in advance for allowing me the opportunity to get a first-hand look at my career choice and your support in making a career possible. I look forward to this opportunity.

Regards,

[Name]

Time management

Time is value! Time Management is indispensable! Yes, it is. You think so too? That is why you must learn Time Management here. The skills are invaluable in all we do. You would not and cannot afford to keep on tugging at the fact that the general 24 hours per day is not enough for you.

This section is an essential building block since it provides for you the techniques for managing the time you have, and at the same time, facilitating productivity, allowing you to create the best of you. Be reminded that you have this whole module as one to proffer tools to help you enjoy your/the time.

Instructor's note:

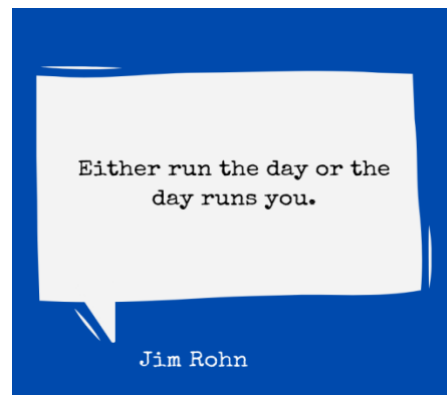
- Present the video to start the class to create an orientation about what Time Management is.
- Video link: <https://youtu.be/Z6kAEQJhSoU>

“Time is more valuable than money. You can get more money, but you cannot get more time.”

- Jim Rohn

Managing your time during mentorship

What do you think the time is? What exactly do you think the time is not? The concept of time is clear enough. One hour consists of a certain number of minutes (60), a day of hours (24), and a year of days (365). But we rarely think about the fundamental nature of time, says one expert. Time is passing non-stop, and we follow it with clocks and calendars. Yet we cannot study it with a microscope or experiment with it. And it still keeps passing. We cannot say what exactly happens when time passes.



*“Time is free but priceless.
You cannot own it but can use it.
You cannot keep it but can spend it.
Once you have lost it, you can never get it back.”*
-Harvey Mackay

Value of time

There is a saying that *Time waits for no man*. It moves on and on and on and in only one direction with not a single chance to turn back despite all our wishes and rants. What is your time worth? What do you think can be birthed out when your time is being efficiently or maximally used? That is your VALUE OF TIME, unlike the Transport Economics' definition, which states it as the opportunity cost of the time that a traveler spends on his/her journey. We all do not use the time the same way. Not at all. So, there are diverse values, even though it is believed that time is precious and priceless. That means we should never waste time no matter how worthwhile you think your time is. Time ought to be used properly and positively. You sure will reap the rewards when time is used either way.

The Value of time depends on your perspective of it. Procrastinators, lazy and unserious people get little, or nothing out of it, and the highly ambitious, self-motivated, and go-getters reap its good fruits. Time gains its value on how you use it. And this determines what you get out of it. All things created by God have an expiring date. "There's a time to be born and a time to die." Putting to you now is that you have a particular range of time (seconds, minutes, and hours) of life on this earth. Nothing is to be done anyhow, anyway, or as you like.

Consider time always; it is a factor that cannot be replaced as it is still eminent. Your value of time determines your next level in life. Always value the time you have.

Valuing time will help you be very productive and effective in the pursuit of your next levels. When you can exert energy to work more efficiently, gain more knowledge and experience. Those who respect and value time can learn faster and work faster, becoming more focused and they tend to pay more attention to their work. You will be more than able to take control of your life and achieve your more significant results because; you have developed a better understanding of how things are the way they are and why things happen, for you have spent quality time doing something. Successful people value their time and seek to continually learn how to control their own time to achieve success.

Each Tom, Dick, and Harry needs time to relax and enjoy quality time with those we cherish. The only way that can be possible is when we value and respect time. Life is hectic, and if we fail to appreciate the time, we will waste it on unnecessary stuff, which may have significant effects on our relationships with the people we love most. Only if we can manage our time well; then we get only less worried about things as we have better chances of improving our entirety because we become less stressed about life's challenges and achieve maximum productivity with whatsoever life has placed in our hands.

"Time is the scarcest resource, and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed."
-Peter F. Drucker

Time management is the process of planning and exercising conscious control of time spent on specific activities to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity (Wikipedia). Time management is the coordination of tasks and activities to maximize the effectiveness of an individual's efforts. Essentially, time management is enabling people to get more and better work done in less time.

Time can be managed by first estimating how much time a task should require, and when it must be completed, and then adjusting events that might otherwise interfere with its completion so that it can be completed in the appropriate amount of time. Because the time available for any activity is usually limited, and of course, cannot be stored, and because goals may be multiple and conflicting, it often involves the setting of priorities and the triage of tasks.

Embracing time management techniques is not about grasping a lot of tasks into your day, but to simplify how you work to do things better. By adopting good-time management techniques, you will have more time to do the things you love.

Skills and strategies of time management

We all want to save time regardless of those times. We just wish to a rush in the hours. Managing our time will always require that a range of skills, tools, and strategies be used when we need to accomplish specific tasks, projects, and goals that are conforming to a due date. Various time management tools are available to help with the process: tools like our personal computers, calendars, and day planners. Also, time management software is available for our more complex applications or jobs we have to accomplish. Written and online timesheets and mechanical or electronic time clocks are also devices to employ to help manage time better.

The most straightforward time management aid is a task list or to-do list. I suggest you try it. It is not a hassle. You bring up a list of tasks to be completed such as chores or procedures towards completing a project. The list is a kind of inventory tool that serves as an alternative or supplement to our memories. When you get one of the items on a task list done, you check or cross off that particular task.

Planning: When you plan anything (e.g., your success, tasks, events, or your life) and have a general and well-defined plan (and know what your most important tasks are), you can then be sure your job is going to be productive.

Delegation: You do not have to do it all, whether you are a newbie, student, employee, or manager. One best thing about delegating is that it gives you enough time to focus on the essential elements, and it also reduces your workload significantly. No matter the stage you might be at this point in your life, it is always a smart choice for you to learn how to delegate tasks to others and permit other people to share some load with you. If it seems hard for you to delegate that task or take out your time to train others for specific jobs, you can always hire a freelancer.

If done correctly, delegating is a real time-saver for you in any way you implement it. Check out the 4D System.

Prioritizing what you need to accomplish: Time management and prioritization both go together. You will only manage your time effectively in times when you know what is supposed to be done and when. The emphasis is to take up the most important, hardest, or time-consuming task, accomplish it, and focus on other things.

Mismanagement of time

Time can be mismanaged. I repeat, time can be poorly managed. This can be possibly traced to having poor management practices or habits, poor perceptions of time, not finding the right time management tool, or noncommitment. This is when you are unable to manage your time effectively, which paces way for you to experience the following undesirable consequences:

1. Missed deadlines
2. Unnecessary busyness
3. Poor work quality
4. Higher stress levels
5. Work imbalance
6. Lead to a burnout

Procrastination is certainly the most obvious result of poor time management (Heller & Cassady, 2017). Most students who seem not to have control over their time end up letting tasks sit until the last minute, making them feel a lot of stress when they try to play catch up. Remember, procrastination is the thief of time.

There are certain habits and practices people indulge in that make all the above events or occurrences come into play (Heller & Cassady, 2017; Seeger, 2016). They are outright irresponsible for maintaining those habits that do not enhance productivity or effectiveness. Nothing much gets done well; you have only the chance to rigmarole.

1. You choose your next task “on the fly:”

If you do not plan your tasks ahead of time, or at least your general focus, you are up for hurt. When planning is not done ahead, it becomes so easy to feed your attention to the things that pop up and seem “urgent,” though they are unimportant or to focus on easier tasks that are not as important.

2. You never write anything down:

This is a habit that successful millionaire’s practice. I dare you to always have a notepad or pen and paper with you. You will, at the end of the day, speak of how it is working for you. It is also dangerous to not always write any of your to-do’s down.

You bask in how you retain things, that you will certainly remember everything, but important tasks can or might or will slip between the cracks and be forgotten when something “urgent” comes up. Also, write everything out and get it out of your brain, then you can focus your brain completely on the task at hand.

3. You are one who lives with constant distractions:

Most times, we certainly cannot help having distractions. It may be the nature of your job or your engagements. Believe it that often, we attract these distractions to ourselves. We waste on what is not, what does not even require as much as a blink of an eye, what is not important. It is only easy, probably the only reason you find yourself doing it. If you want to be productive and achieve super excellent results, try not to waste your time when it is time to do what is needed of you. When it is time to work, work. On getting to work, do not piddle, work. Always ensure you are doing tasks because they are important, and not just because they are easy.

4. Sometimes, you take on other people’s problems:

In a similar light to the 3rd habit, when you constantly take on other people’s problems, that means you spend your time focusing on their work instead of your work. People need some help at some points in life, and it is not bad to offer a hand of help in a certain direction. It is just that when it frequently becomes all you do; you are hurting yourself and making others dependent on you to always solve their problems for them. You will not always have to solve the issues. Let them know they must think and have a possible solution before they come to you. You can put them through, but do not do it for them. Let your time be spent on things important to your life and make them responsible for what is theirs. You cannot afford to spend all your time and efforts on someone else’s problem. That is way too expensive for you.

5. You constantly do task switching (Multitasking):

Check out, research has shown over and over that multitasking only makes you less productive, not more productive as we all think it does. Similarly, switching between one or more tasks before finishing also certainly wastes time and focus.

Do you not think it takes time to go from one task to the next, and when you come back to a job that was partially finished, that you have to remember where you were and get back into the flow? As much as possible, start a job and try to finish it before starting something else. Granted, you cannot always do it. But, in most cases, it makes total sense, when possible, to plan to still finish a task that you start.

6. When your work area is unorganized:

Sure, a couple of times, some people say they feel more organized when things are spread about. But when you must dig through your stuff always to get things done or to find what you are looking for; you are wasting time. You are spending time. The ideal is to have your room or bag or wardrobes or desk clear of everything except for what you need for the task at hand or for the moment, and by doing so, you will not have to waste time looking for

items. When done, get those items away and get the things you need for the next task. This enhances focus and keeps you organized and saves you time searching through and for things.

Balancing mentorship and college

Mentoring helps you realize how your goals fit into the choices of college, personal life, and career.

Over time, a successful partnership of mentoring evolves. You benefit from the support, skills, knowledge, and guidance offered by your mentor. Subsequently, you and your mentor deepen your working relationship, perhaps even partnering on projects where you become a junior colleague.

It is easy for students to assume that they do not have the time for mentorship in college with other work commitments, family, and other demands. Nevertheless, particularly if you are considering all you stand to gain, you can prepare and prioritize your way to success.

Use these tips and tricks to balance the mentorship relationship and college to meet your professional objectives (Dunn, 2019).

- Stay on schedule
- Separate work and school
- Get a support system
- Study something you enjoy
- Use relevant resources
- Stay healthy and relax
- Keep your goals in mind

Time management is playing an essential role in our daily lives. Even educating yourself and yearning to learn about the crucial time management tips can aid you in various ways. Every second is precious. Never waste it doing something that is not and will not add any value to your life. You cannot afford to do that.

Thinking Critically

Diverse qualifications generally include being rational, skeptical, having unbiased analysis, or

evaluating factual evidence. One who thinks critically estimates what is being heard or read. It helps to explore the motive of the information. You learn through research, asking questions, and not assuming you are right.

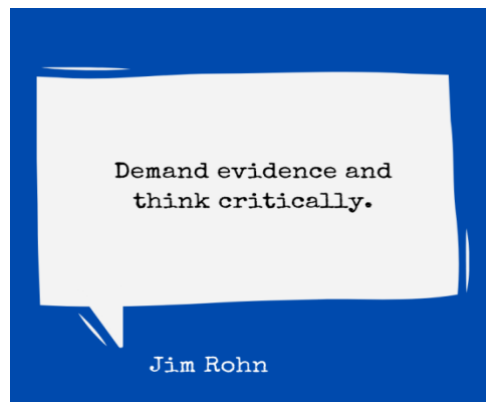
Instructor's note:

- Present the video to start the class to orient the audience on Thinking Critically.
- Video link: <https://youtu.be/-eEBuqwY-nE>

A critical thinker does not take what is being or has been heard or read at face value but uses the critical faculties to determine the evidence and consider the implications and conclusions whatsoever (Frost, Armstrong, & Christiansen, 2019).

Critical thinkers are self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective.

They presuppose assent to rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use (Gordon, & Ospina-Kammerer, 2016). A critical thinker possesses effective communication and problem-solving abilities and then make a conscious decision to overcome egotistical and negative opinions and thoughts. A critical thinker goes through the process of vigorously and skillfully conceiving, applying, resolving, combining, and evaluating facts or information to attain conclusions or answers.



Importance of critical thinking during mentorship

So, do you think there is a need to think critically, given the measures of facts and evidence and trends that exist these days? Absolutely! Thinking critically is essential because it is one's ability to rationalize ideas, events, views, and thoughts to enable you to make logical and sound decisions. Being able to think critically will inevitably lead you to a much better life as you can make the right decisions and question everything and anything. Believe it, you can have a wide range of knowledge and be a weak thinker. A weak thinker is unable to grasp the importance of what you know or be able to put it to use during different situations. At that juncture, you should probably be considered a dusty old book sitting ignored on a shelf.

The ability to think critically is a crucial skill for academic success. The power of thinking critically is considered essential in the academic fields and enables one to analyze, evaluate, explain, and restructure thinking, thereby, ensuring the act of believing without false belief. However, even with knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning, mistakes

occur, and because of thinker's inability to apply the methodology consistently, and because of overruling character traits such as egocentrism.

Critical thinking is also an essential element of all professional fields and academic disciplines (Brookfield, 2020). The process of critical thinking involves the careful acquisition and interpretation of information and the use of it to reach a well-justified conclusion. The concepts and principles of critical thinking can be applied to any context or case but only by reflecting upon the nature of that application. Without critical questioning, we can only gain surface knowledge.

When students are trained to think critically from their early years, we can reduce any reliance on social platforms and structures on which they might become overly reliant (Butler, Pentoney, & Bong, (2017).



Even as structures have a place and can be beneficial to helping develop essential extended skills, if these students can think critically as a natural part of their process, then these platforms can be removed. But above that, being able to think critically, to question, to apply knowledge, means that students will be better prepared to be fully involved in the world away from the classroom, and beyond routinely exams.

Skills to thinking critically

Being able to think critically

is a much sought-after thing that not a lot of people are born with. According to Mark Enser (2019), if you lack knowledge, then that lack impedes your ability to think critically. People, old and young, have been thinking critically in some sense from ages ago, albeit probably in a raw unrefined state. So, it is a case of developing these skills and mastering them to apply balance, rumination, research, and reflection.

We can think about something we know very little about, and we can also be critical about this in an uninformed way, but as we expand our experiences, we also expand our ability to think critically (Didau, 2015).

We need to do all this whilst building core conceptual and contextual knowledge because you can only think critically about what you know (Allison& Harbour, 2009).

Thinking critically calls for the ability to:

- Recognize problems and then find workable ways to solve those problems.
- Understand the importance of prioritization and order of precedence in problem-solving.
- Gather and marshal relevant information.
- Spot assumptions and values.
- Understand and apply language with accuracy, clarity, and discernment.
- Expound data to appraise evidence and evaluate the various arguments.
- Draw justified conclusions and generalizations.
- Examine and test the (your) conclusions and generalizations at which you arrive.
- Reframe your patterns of beliefs only on the grounds of more extensive experience.
- Give just and correct judgments about certain things and qualities in every area of life.

Roadblocks to thinking critically

Have you tried working out this Critical Thinking, and then your brain functions less? Does it look like you do not even engage your brain faculties? They might be happening due to this primary reason: That thinking critically seems complex; critical-thinking situations tend to be more difficult as critical thinking needs to be built on a foundation of language, knowledge, and comprehension. And then, these tasks (when statements and arguments are being analyzed) are quite subtle. Moreover, many people resist the notion that anything could be wrong with their thinking process, and those with the weakest skills tend to be the most resistant.

Improve your critical thinking

How you think often determines the quality of what you deliver as a person. Is it your best or less? And then there is no height or limit to which your thoughts should subside. Yes, we learn whatsoever we have or can do. Listed below are suggested strategies to embed more critical thinking:

- Try seeing things as they are:

When you claim to think critically, that implies that you view things as they are without imaginary thought involving you to engage your eyes to take in what is before you. Granted, things might seem not as they appear to be, but a practical thinker will be able to mark the irony.

- After you observe, make evaluations:

Everyone thinking critically does not merely stop at making different observations and noticing a few things. You must make evaluations based on what you see. Being someone

who thinks critically causes you to dig deeper. It is the main reason why people who have this bend of mind are always successful and doing great. A person who thinks in that way is still open-minded and will never be closed but receptive to ideas that are presented to them.

- Always consider the sides of the outcomes:

Critical thinking means that a person who thinks critically will only conclude how good or bad an idea is based on the pros and the cons (Hitchcock, 2017). Carefully jot down the pros and the cons of the information which you have gathered after a reasonable amount of observation and validity tests.

- Question your assumptions:

Humans make assumptions about almost everything. That is how our brain processes certain information, and how we get along every day. Assumptions are the foundation of our critical framework. But granted, sometimes, these assumptions turn out to be far from true or not entirely truthful. At those points then, the whole foundation needs to be re-built from the bottom up.

- A critical thinker should/must always think several moves ahead.

Do not just think one or two steps ahead? Always think ahead. Imagine you are in a game of the Scrabble, and then you are contending with someone who can conceive numbers of moves ahead. Sure, you have to match intelligence with him. I bet you already imagine the possible problems you may take on during the game. He will win.

- Love and read good books, I mean great books:

Absolutely, nothing beats the transformation a great book brings. Whether it is Moby Dick or Philip K. Dick, great writing has the power to frame debate (literature), enlighten (nonfiction), or unleash emotion (poetry). And reading is not only for bookworms. Elon Musk, the tech giant, said he mastered rocket science by pretty much “reading and asking questions.” You as a starter cannot and will not escape that. You have to create an interest in reading.

- Take out at least 30 minutes daily to boost your brain function.

Out of your usual 24 hours, carve out 30 minutes to make your brain more sleek and powerful. There are several activities to engage yourself into making Thinking Critically possible. Here are just a few ideas:

1. Grant solution(s) to an issue every day. Just spend a little bit of time figuring out a problem and then try to solve it. The issue might be a general or a personal one.
2. Exercise consistently. Thirty minutes of exercise is not big a deal for a critical thinker — even as little as a walk — can help boost your brain function.
3. Also, why not try eating the right kinds of foods. There are fruits and then diets like brown rice that can play key roles in keeping your brain healthy.

Try silent debates, ones not argumentative. Engage in controversial issues and circles of views.

- Thinking Critically requires you to surround yourself with smart people: those more intelligent than you (Brookfield, 2020). If you want to improve or learn or unlearn, get better at something, and develop critical thinking skills, associate with people smarter than yourself. You will not only bet that they rub heads with those more intelligent than they are, but some of that intelligence is going to permeate your perspective.
- Embrace failure if you desire to hone your thinking skills. Better put, appreciate the failing times. Be fearless in the face of failure. Consider it as just another way of figuring out what is not working. Use it to your advantage, learn from your mistakes or lessons.
- Regular question grids (both for teachers to improve the quality of their questioning in class, and for students to use to structure their questioning and answers).

This video will aid this section: <https://youtu.be/dItUGF8GdTw>

“The enemy of critical thinking is not being taught knowledge - as this is required to give you something to think critically about.”

Clare Sealy

Midway Evaluation:

DIRECTIONS: Please use this form to review your experience with your mentor/mentee up to this point. It would be good to meet with your mentor/mentee to discuss your experience and decide on next steps. The form should be completed in a meeting between mentor and mentee.

Activities/interactions we have implemented up to now:
Thus far, in meeting with my mentor, I have gained/sharpened the following knowledge and/or skills:
I have shared the following knowledge/skills with my mentee:
The following are other benefits I am gaining from the mentor/mentee relationship:
The following are ways in which the relationship with my mentor/mentee or participation in the program could be more effective:
Suggestions I would share with new mentor/mentee pairs:
Any other comments:

 Mentor

 Mentee

 Date

 Date

Job Skills

Firms are looking for workers with different skill sets and experiences depending on its market. Yet being a functional expert no longer serves as automatic employment. To complement these core competencies, every company looks for specific “soft skills” in job candidates.

“Soft skills” refers to a collection of leadership qualities, behaviors, attitudes, and social skills which make someone a good employee and work compatible (Brown, 2012; Ibrahim, Boerhannoeddin, & Bakare, 2017). Companies value soft skills because research indicates that they can be as significant a predictor of employee performance as hard skills, as experience demonstrates.

Writing Skills/Building a Resume

It is very important to have good writing skills while in search of a job. Writing is often collaborative. The reality is that a lot of people employ writers and editors because they lack their own communication skills. To be productive, you must be able to work well with others, even when they are hard to get along with or hard to understand. Active listening and assessment skills, regardless of their personality or background, will go a long way towards building a positive relationship with your clients.

When you start thinking about all the details you need to share with prospective employers, it can be difficult to build a CV. You need to show your job history, educational background, skills and qualifications in a way that will help you get selected for a job interview. Rather than simply listing the jobs you have had, it is important to include specific information for the positions you are applying for.

Here are a few tips on creating a resume:

- Choose a template that is suitable for you or design your own
- Plan the context of your resume
- Create a header with your name and contact information
- Compile your personal and employment information
- Give a summary of your qualifications, experience, volunteer work, education, certifications, awards and accomplishments, personal interests, and so on.
- Emphasize on skills that make you a more valuable employee.
- Modify each resume to the specific job you are applying for.
- Ensure you edit and proofread carefully before submitting.
- Print copies of your resume to take to the interview.

Applying for a job

The first step towards securing a job is to handle the application process successfully. Although there is no perfect solution to it, you can give yourself the best odds by doing a little homework and fine-tuning your writing to suit the role you have requested.

Before applying for a job, you should consider the following:

Consider the desired career field: Whether you are moving from another area or looking to make a lateral move, finding work that's both challenging and rewarding to you is essential. It is just as important to know what you do not want to do and know what you want to do.

Determine the skills required for a given position: Feeling that your talents are being used well and appreciated is essential to feeling satisfied at a job. It is important to decide on a worthwhile job to have an idea of which of your abilities will be tapped, and which you will be able to develop. Those skills will help you become an outstanding worker the firm is looking for.

Think about the demands for salaries and benefits: Be frank about your bottom line and be rational. If you need healthcare coverage and need a certain amount of income per month, it is best to do homework on jobs that meet those needs.

Before you apply for a job, ensure that you can

- Do your research to know more about the company
- Write a resume
- Contact the employer to be sure of the application process

Interviewing Skills

- Even the smartest and most qualified job seekers need to prepare for their job interview (Remmington College, n.d.). Why, you ask? Interview skills are learned, and there are no second chances to make a great first impression.
- Do your research
- Practice good nonverbal communication skills this involves demonstrating confidence.
- Upon actually getting an interview, make sure to dress up for the job you want. In an interview, clothing that makes you feel good and confident will influence the way you carry yourself.
- Be swift.
- Present the job interview with curiosity and excitement.
- Look sharp.
- Use appropriate language and do not talk too much.
- Give specific examples.
- Do not appear desperate.
- Listen carefully and ask questions.

Activities

Career Interview

- Tell me about yourself
- What is your job title/position and how long have you been in this position?

- What do you enjoy most about your job?
- Do your work in a “team” or “independent” environment?
- What do you like least about your job?
- What was your major in college?
- What are some of the qualifications I would need for the job?
- What can I do to make myself more qualified for the job?

ACTIVITY

Using your interview and notes, write a reflection paper on what you learned and how this information assisted in your educational career plans.

JOB OBJECTIVE WORKSHEET

The questions below can help you determine what your job objectives should state: what type of employment you are seeking; what you can offer the company; where you want to go with this position.

Answer these questions and write a job objective based on your answers.

What kind of job would I like to have? Three choices would be:

Job 1 _____

Job 2 _____

Job 3 _____

What qualifications do I have for the jobs I listed above?

Job 1 _____

Job 2 _____

Job 3 _____

What can I do to be better qualified for these jobs?

Job 1 _____

Job 2 _____

Job 3 _____

What are my future goals in these positions?

Job 1 _____

Job 2 _____

Job 3 _____

EDUCATION WORKSHEET

Use your answers to the following questions to compile information for Education Data on your resume.

List courses you have taken in high school, vocational school, and college.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Which of these courses have helped you prepare for the position you want?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

In which of these courses have you excelled?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

COVER LETTER WORKSHEET

Answering the questions below will help you decide what information should be included in a cover letter.

What do I want from this company?

What can I offer this company?

What experience do I have that will qualify me for this position?

Practice Activity

Choose three different positions within the mentor's workplace you would like to have. Write a cover letter for each of these positions. Have the mentor critique your letters for clarity, conciseness, and positive wording. Ask them how your letters can be improved.

SAMPLE EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

Name _____ Social Security # _____
 Last First Middle

Street Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

If less than one year, previous address

Type of employment desired: ___Permanent ___Temporary ___Full-time ___Part-time

Position desired

EDUCATION

School Name and Address	Dates Attended		Degree	Major
	From –	To		

ACTIVITIES

List honorary, social, and/or athletic activities. Do not list activities which indicate race, creed, color, national origin, or religious affiliation.

EXPERIENCE

List all previous employment, beginning with your most recent position.

Company Name and Address _____

Type of Business _____ Your Position _____

Supervisor's Name and Title _____

Length of Employment: From _____ To _____ Salary: Start _____ End _____

Duties

Reason for Leaving

Company Name and Address _____

Type of Business _____ Your Position _____

Supervisor's Name and Title _____

Length of Employment: From _____ To _____ Salary: Start _____ End _____

Duties

Reason for Leaving

Company Name and Address _____

Type of Business _____ Your Position _____

Supervisor's Name and Title _____

Length of Employment: From _____ To _____ Salary: Start _____ End _____

Duties

Reason for Leaving

SAMPLE APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

Please PRINT in BLACK ink and complete ALL information applicable.

Name _____ Date _____

Current Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ How long? _____

Previous Address _____

Social Security Number _____ U.S. Citizen ___ Yes ___ No

Type of Work Desired _____ Date you can start _____

EXPERIENCE

Company Name/Address	Dates	Duties	Salary	Reason for leaving
	From To			
	From To			
	From To			

EDUCATION

School Name/Address	Major Subjects	Graduated	G.P.A.	Degree
		Yes _____ No _____		
		Yes _____ No _____		
		Yes _____ No _____		

ACTIVITIES

School Activities (Indicate high school or college) _____

Professional Activities _____

Do you have any relatives or friends employed at his company at present?

If yes, give name, relationship, and division of employment

Have you ever worked for this company or any of its subsidiaries?

If yes, give date and name/location of division last worked

NOTE: Before signing the following statement, please review this application to make certain that you have answered all the questions that apply to you.

I declare that this application presents, to the best of my knowledge, an accurate statement of facts, and I have no objection to the company's conducting such investigation of these facts as it may deem advisable. This authorization shall be valid for one year from this date.

Applicant's signature _____ Date _____

MOCK INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What can you tell me about yourself?
2. Why have you chosen this field as your career?
3. Why did you leave your last job?
4. What salary do you expect?
5. What are your career objectives five years from now?
6. Ten years from now?
7. What do you feel are your strong points?
8. Your weak points?
9. Which courses did you enjoy most in school?
10. Have you had trouble with any courses in school? Why?
11. How would you describe yourself?
12. How has your education prepared you for this position?
13. How do you define success?
14. In what way do you think you can make a contribution to the field?
15. What type of relationship do you feel should exist between a supervisor and subordinates?
16. What was your most rewarding experience during school?
17. Do you have plans to continue your education?
18. What have you gained from your extracurricular activities?
19. Are you more comfortable working in a large group or with just a few people?
20. How do you think you work under pressure?
21. What do you know about this company/job?
22. What do you feel is the most important aspect of a job?
23. Are you willing to relocate? Travel? Work overtime?
24. How do you spend your spare time?
25. How well do you get along with other people?
26. Why should someone hire you?
27. Have you ever had a conflict at work/school?
28. How did you handle this conflict?
29. What do you think about your previous manager/instructor?
30. How do you feel about supervision?

INTERVIEW RATING SHEET

Listed below are some qualities used to rate potential employees during an interview (Arvey & Campion, 1982). After practicing an interview, how do you think you rate on these?

	Above Average 5	Average 3	Below Average 1
Ability to Talk			
Aggressiveness			
Appearance			
Courtesy			
Enthusiasm			
Intelligence			
Maturity			
Personality			
Poise			

Using the values given under each category, add the score for your answers and determine your rating on the following scale:

36 - 45 Ready for the interview

27 - 35 Might handle it; could use more practice

9 - 26 Definitely need more practice

One-Minute PAPER...

Did the material in this chapter make you think about how completing college can help with your employment career choice? Did working with a mentor help you to solidify and/or make the best career choice for yourself? What did you find to be the most useful information in this chapter? What could have been done to make your experience better? What would you like to learn more about?

Applying What You Have Learned...

Now that you have read and discussed this chapter, consider how you can apply what you have learned to your academic and personal life. The following prompts will help you reflect on chapter material and its relevance to you both now and in the future.

1. Develop a six slide PowerPoint presentation to show what you have learned from having had a mentor. You might include slides that discussed your process for choosing your mentor. You might include what insight you found to be key regarding having a mentor. Using the effective writing and speaking strategies taught in the other chapter to help outline your presentation. In addition to text, use visual such as photos, video clips and/or YouTube to address the other learning styles, ensuing to captivate all of your viewers.
2. Having had a mentor during this course was a privilege but think beyond this course and college. How will having had the opportunity to have a mentor help you once you have successfully completed your educational journey? Think about the career you have uncovered and describe how you might use this experience in that career.

Building Your Portfolio ...

“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.”

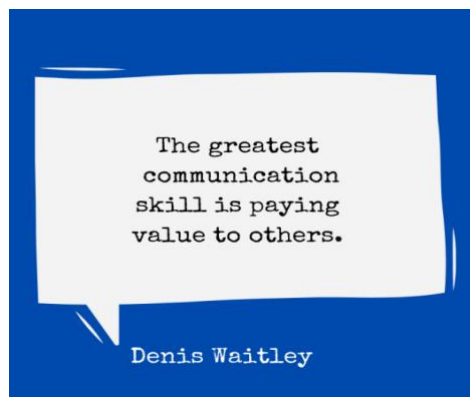
John C. Crosby Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved December 15, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site:

https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/john_c_crosby_13754

Communication Skills

Communicating is central to the life and survival of people and an organization. To achieve a common understanding, it is a process for creating and sharing ideas, knowledge, opinions, data, feelings, etc.

All earthly beings have learned ways to convey emotions and thoughts. Nevertheless, it is the human ability to translate specific concepts using words and language that separates them from the animal kingdom.



Instructor's note

- Ease the students into the class by sharing your own experiences
- Or ask students to share their own experience

Play a video

Video link:

What Is Communication

Communication is the mechanism used by verbal (i.e., voice) or nonverbal (i.e., a nod or wave) means to send and receive the messages (Cowell & Stanney, 2005). Other

means include writing and illustrations (e.g., infographics, maps, and diagrams) as well as to signs, signals, and behaviors. More simply, communication is said to be “the creation and exchange of meaning.”

What is active listening?

Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person, which increases comprehension of one another (Comer & Drollinger, 1999; Doyle, 2019). This section provides you with the opportunity to recognize what active listening is and why it is essential during the mentorship relationship.

Active listening is a soft skill that mentors hold in high regard (Brown, 2012). Active listening redirects the emphasis from what is happening inside your mind to your mentor. During the meetings, this strategy can help to reduce nervousness.

As we communicate with others, we always focus on what we should say. Effective communication, however, involves less talk and more listening. Listening well requires not only



knowing the words or the knowledge that is being conveyed but also understanding the feelings that the speaker tries to convey.

Not only will you better understand the other person speaking when you are a committed listener, but you will also make that person feel heard and understood, which can help build a more in-depth, more reliable connection between you (Sprague, Stuart, & Bodary, 2010).

Palmer and Gasman (2008) suggested tips on becoming an engaged listener:

- Do not disturb the discussion or attempt to steer it to your concerns.
- Show your interest in what they are saying.
- Try to set back judgments.
- Make sure you provide feedback
- Respect your audience
- Recognize that your position is to listen. It is not about you. You should give special consideration to the wishes and unique perspectives of those to whom you talk. One of the easiest ways to show your gratitude is to pay attention to what they are doing.

Emotional Presence/Body Language

An active listener pays attention to the speaker to ensure they understand the information being provided. An incoming call or an Email status update cannot interrupt you. You have got to be there and be in the moment.

Body language is a useful tool for making sure you connect. The right body language makes you a more active listener and thus more ‘accessible’ and attentive to what the speaker says. It also means you are listening to them at the same time.

Learning body language may feel odd, and you will probably even do some of these without understanding them. However, here are some techniques to improve your listening skills:

- Make sure you face the speaker
- Move closer to the speaker
- Incline your head towards the speaker
- Hold eye contact for longer

Palmer and Gasman (2008) supported the following emotional listening techniques:

- Building trust and establishing rapport
- Demonstrating concern
- Paraphrasing to show understanding
- Nonverbal cues which indicate agreement such as nodding, eye contact, and leaning forward
- Brief verbal affirmations like “I see,” “I know,” “Sure,” “Thank you,” or “I understand.”

- Asking open-ended questions
- Asking specific questions to seek clarification
- Waiting to disclose your opinion
- Disclosing similar experiences to show understanding

Questioning Skills

Asking questions is important to determine how we learn, how we stay safe, how we interact with other people, how we make decisions, and so on. It is a core human ability, but few people stop worrying about how they ask questions, or whether they could be better off doing so.

One easy way to become more conscious of how questions are used is to be familiar with the five types of questioning.

1. Questioning to demonstrate superiority or undermine.
2. Questioning to elicit specific information.
3. Questioning for self-curiosity.
4. Questioning for other curiosity.
Seeking the right question.

Instructor's note;

- Students are to do a little research on the types of questioning
- Students are to give examples of each type of questioning and determine the best for mentorship
- Students are to develop engaging questions to ask their mentors

Note-Taking/Keeping Record

Mentees who are not familiar with effective note-taking strategies suffer a distinct disadvantage over those who have a program. Mentees who do not know the right way to take notes think taking notes is a waste of time.

To help the mentoring process and act as a memory jogger to optimize the benefits of your learning, you will plan for each meeting by documenting the major issues you will address and mentioning the steps you plan to take prior to your next mentoring session.

By having these documents together, you can create a mentoring log of your learning. Your mentoring emphasis may be directly related to your work, so your thoughts on your progress may be captured to demonstrate your growth throughout the mentoring relationship.

Effective training comes from active listening and understanding. Note-taking offers a tool for you to retain information and process it at a later date. If you write it down, there is a higher probability that you will be able to recall it when it matters most.

Activities

Record Template

Goals for the mentoring process

Agreed goals for this session

Summary of the session

Action points for follow up

Any other comments – mentee

Any other comments – mentor

Appreciating diversity

Diversity is the status of people of different ethnicities and social backgrounds (Hawlina, Gillespie, & Zittoun, 2019). We also vary in gender, language, manners and culture, social roles, sexual orientation, employment, skills, earnings, and many other areas. Diversity makes it hard for people to connect and tolerate one another (Torrens, Salinas, & Floyd, 2017).

Diversity “refers to the undeniable fact of human life,” namely that there are many different types of people and to the notion that this diversity fuels political, economic, and social vitality and creativity. Diversity is everything we are or not. Diversity encompasses all those differences that make us unique including race, color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, age, and physical and mental ability. Like other prosocial skills, over time, diversity can be developed with intentionality, knowledge, and practice throughout a lifetime.

Instructor’s note

- Explain to the class what appreciating diversity means
- Play a video:
http://tse1.mm.bing.net/th?id=OVP.2iueQiXWHY3_LDrhcj6M0QEsDh&w=242&h=136&c=7&pid=2.1&rs=1

Leveraging diversity during mentorship

Diversity in the classroom is having a group of students and understanding that everyone is unique in their own way. Their discrepancies could include their level of reading, athletic ability, cultural background, temperament, religious beliefs, and the list continues.

Diversity has always existed in the classroom, but it is essential to accept it and make positive use of it in today’s society. As people value diversity, they recognize and respect the fact that people are different, and that usually, these differences are healthy. For example, it is easier to assemble a diverse team with many skills and with various ways of approaching the problem while trying to solve a problem than it is to join a team that has all of its resources focused in one area.



Diversity in the society: It is a good way for us to respect the custom, languages of our fellow members in the community. Recognizing rich cultures means seeking a better understanding and appreciation of the backgrounds of different peoples. Recognition will come from studying their stories, giving each of us a more detailed and robust understanding of how different cultures and societies lived in the near or distant past. It is essential to create a critical dialog on these histories because it creates time and space to examine how this history shapes the presence.

Critical thinking and consciousness promote a greater sense of community, knowledge, and general well-being. Such discussions may take place inside or outside a formal classroom setting and with many different views.

Importance of appreciating diversity

Hawlina et al. (2019) shared these key points about the importance of diversity:

- It is important to appreciate diversity since that is what forms the societies in which we live. The diversity creates interdependence within the ecosystem between the organisms.
- Diversity fosters learning among students; students are able to share different beliefs and opinions among themselves.
- Diversity gives you a wide range of talent in the workplace not just the talent that is attributed to a particular ethnicity.
- Bringing people of different backgrounds together with varying experiences of life will produce ideas or perceptions that others may not have ever noticed or been aware of. Everyone has their way of looking at a problem that is influenced by their individual experiences.
- When you encounter diversity in your day-to-day life, you will continuously be exposed to individuals, cultures, customs, and behaviors that differ from your own. You will learn the skills of communicating and engaging with cultures and ideas you are unfamiliar with and acquire a more worldly perspective.
- Promoting diversity is the first step not just towards “tolerance” but towards true acceptance.

Through increasing interactions, access to, and engagement with unique ideas between new people, individuals may recognize more commonality than they thought. Or, they might still be remarkably different, and that is all right.

Understanding diversity in the workplace

Today, most workplaces offer a very diverse environment that include people from all walks of life. The workplace offers specific challenges and opportunities for communication within the company. This assignment will examine how diversity affects workplace communication.

“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.



Diversity, Inclusion, Equity; these words and the issues they point to loom large in the workplace. It is hard to go a week without reading an article about a company touting its dedication to diversity, while another is called out for tolerating oppressive comments and workplace practices

Try it yourself.

Thought Exercise



1. Take out a piece of paper or open a word document on the computer
2. Need a pen or a blank document on your computer and jot down three key words: diversity, inclusion, and equity. Now define them. Write buzzwords, bulleted definitions—whatever comes to mind.
3. What do you notice? Are there clear differences between the terms? Overlap? Do you feel able to explain how they all relate?

Thought Exercise



1. Think for a moment about the diversity of your own team or organization. What is it like?
2. Follow-up question: How would your feelings and reactions change if you were of a different race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion than you are?
3. To be a diverse organization simply means that you have the presence of differences of identity (i.e., gender and people of color) throughout your organization. However, an organization can be diverse without being inclusive. A company can be diverse without being equitable. How?

Note: Student asks question of mentor and takes notes regarding the responses

Thought Exercise



How would you respond if someone asked you the following: “We know that the workplace can be a challenging place for people with ostracized identities. What is your company doing to change that? What efforts is your company making to ensure that women, gender-nonconforming individuals, and people of color (for example) feel included in the workplace?”

Note: Student asks question of mentor and takes notes regarding the responses

Thought Exercise



1. Think about a process (or processes) within your organization in which you are a key player, such as hiring, promoting, or evaluating employees.
2. Try to identify every touch point within that process where individual decision making comes into play—every point where you would want to be as intentional and conscious of your biases as possible.
3. Can you identify your biases? Have you learned or sought out information you need to make that process more equitable?

Note: Student asks question of mentor and takes notes regarding the responses



What If You Belonged to A Different Culture?

Take a few minutes to imagine that you woke up tomorrow morning and found that you belonged to another culture, another ethnic group, or some other dimension of diversity. You might be Hispanic, Asian, African American, or White. You might have a physical or mental disability. You might belong to a different religious group—perhaps you are Jewish or Moslem. You might be a teenager or a very elderly person. You might

live in the deep south or in Alaska. Consider the items below with your new culture/group in mind.

These are just some of the areas in your life that might be affected.

- The friends you associate with
- The social activities you enjoy
- The foods you prefer
- The religion you practice
- The clothing you wear
- The neighborhood you live in
- The job/position you hold
- The vehicle you drive
- The music you enjoy

- The language(s) you speak
- The political party you belong to

Now ask yourself the following questions:

- What parts of my life would remain the same?
- What parts of my life would be different?
- Are you surprised to see how many things in your life would change if your culture changed?

Instructor's note

- Ask the students their view on relationships
- Present the video to the class
- Video link:
<http://tsc2.mm.bing.net/th?id=OVP.rTm>

Awareness

Torrens et al. (2017) offered the following regarding awareness:

- Recognize differences as diversity rather than abnormal behavior or inappropriate responses to the environment.
- Respect the benefits of diverse values and behaviors to people and to the organization.
- Accept that each culture finds some values more important and some behaviors more desirable than others.
- Understand the effect that historic distrust has on present-day interactions.
- Have a clear sense of your individual culture.
- Recognize your own ethnocentricity—the ways in which you stereotype, judge, and discriminate, and your emotional reactions to conflicting cultural values.
- Understand how the culture of your organization affects those whose culture is different.
- Recognize the similarities that are shared across the “human culture,” regardless of the differences that exist among individual cultures and groups. These include but are not limited to desire for safety, good health, education and well-being of our children, love and belongingness, self-esteem (feeling of worthiness), and the ability to pursue and achieve potential.

Relationships (Establishing and Maintaining Relationships)

A relationship is a way of being related or interrelated; it is a way in which two or more people or things are connected. Personal relationships refer to the close connection between people formed by emotional bonds and interactions.

How Listening Works on Both Sides

Effective communication skills are essential to any human's success, with mentoring relationships being no exception. To have a successful mentorship relationship, both the mentor and the mentee must have excellent listening skills (Torrens et al., 2017). Unless you do a good job listening to your mentee and know the simple issues and questions for

which they seek guidance, you will not connect with your mentee and hinder your chance of becoming a great mentor.

Excellent listening skills do not only mean being able to parrot back what he or she has said, as others may have you believe. Using empathic listening is the most successful way of building faith and showing that you genuinely care and understand.

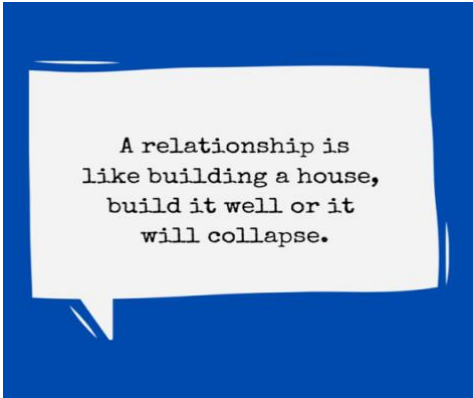
Twelve more keys to active listening in mentoring

Clark (2017) emphasized several ways to approach listening:

1. Be calm—the calmer you are, the more attentively you will listen and the more you will encourage the other person to talk openly.
2. Adopt a posture that indicates to the other person that you are attentive and that you are stimulated to listen.
3. Slowly tune out the rest of the world to focus on the other person. If you start by expanding your awareness, it is often easier to focus.
4. . Suspend judgment—take an attitude of listening to understand rather than assess. Try to avoid concluding either about the person or the issue.
5. Listen with your eyes and intuition as well as your ears: look for dissonance between what is said and what your other senses tell you.
6. Listen to the emotion and mood of what is said as well as the content.
7. Let go of the need to speak and to make your points until you have listened to all there is.
8. Listen to what is not said.
9. Listen for patterns and themes—in the words people use, the images they evoke, the emotions they reveal.
10. Do not feel obliged to keep asking questions: less is more.
11. Allow space for silence.
12. Do not take notes—you cannot attend fully if you do. If you need to take notes, take short breaks in the conversation, where you can both jot down points to remember.

How to establish relationships?

Develop your people's skills: You should learn how to communicate with others, initiate conversations, and have interactions with people. Communication occurs when somebody hears you, not just when you are communicating. One of the biggest dangers of communication is that we can work on the presumption that the other individual has heard the message we try to convey (Wood & Turner, 2010).



A relationship is
like building a house,
build it well or it
will collapse.

Program time for relationship building: You should make time available to interact with others. Create time slots that you can use to build relationships. Giving people time is a giant gift. In a world where time is of the essence, and we try to fit in more than one lifetime,

we do not always have the time to give to our loved ones, friends, and colleagues in the workplace. Technology has somewhat diminished our ability to build real relationships, and we are simultaneously trying to multi-task by texting and chatting (Wood & Turner, 2010).

Guard the limits: You should have time you can devote during your day for social interactions with people.

Be polite and make a connection: Try to find something in common: we all want close links with our fellow humans. You can have a particular interest, hobbies with an individual, which helps to build relationships faster.

Persevere: It takes some time to gain trust. When you stick to it, you can almost always form a relationship.

Go to places and do things: If you want to build a relationship you go where people are and have regular interactions with people.

Learn to accept and celebrate differences: One of the biggest challenges in relationships that we face is that we are all different. We can perceive the world in many different ways. Perhaps a stumbling block that we face as we try to build relationships is a desire or belief that people will think as we do, and thus developing a relationship is so much more difficult.

How to maintain established relationships

Wood and Turner (2010) offered the following advice:

- Learn to pay attention to people
- Communicate openly
- Learn to respect others
- Establish boundaries

Why do we need to establish relationships?

The relationships we have are a means of achieving goals; it is our relationships all added together which is the foundation of an organized effort for change. People need time to build confidence. We need to have trusted relationships every time people work together. When there is a lack of trust, people usually have a hard time cooperating. They overthink about taking risks. Disagreements over non- significant issues seem to erupt.

Maintaining a mentorship relationship

Relationship is a state of being related or connected and can be the most important thing in people's lives. An interpersonal relationship is a reliable, deep, or close connection or acquaintance between two or more persons that range from a brief encounter to a lasting one. The context may vary from family to kinship relationships, friendships, marriages,

associate relations, work, clubs, neighborhoods, and places of worship. Law, practice, or mutual agreement can regulate partnerships.

Good relationships between mentor and mentee should be satisfying and beneficial to everyone involved. Using these ten tips can create a more positive and successful relationship.

- Keep communications open.
- Offer support.
- Define expectations.
- Maintain contact.
- Be honest.
- Actively participate.
- Be innovative and creative.
- Get to know each other.
- Be reliable and consistent.
- Stay positive!

Building a Network

Networking is well known for being the key to a successful life. You can have the skills and education, but it will be very hard to get a job or even build a career without connections. Most people are having trouble networking because they are introverted. Here are seven tips to help, even if you are not a natural people's person.

- Focus on the right people
- Create win/win situations
- Give before you receive
- Become a connector
- Remember to reconnect
- Use social networks
- Start your networking group

Instructor's note:

- Present this video on mentorship to the class
- Video link:
<https://study.com/academy/lesson/mentorin-g-networking-relationships-interpersonal-communication-in-the-workplace.html#lesson>

Activity

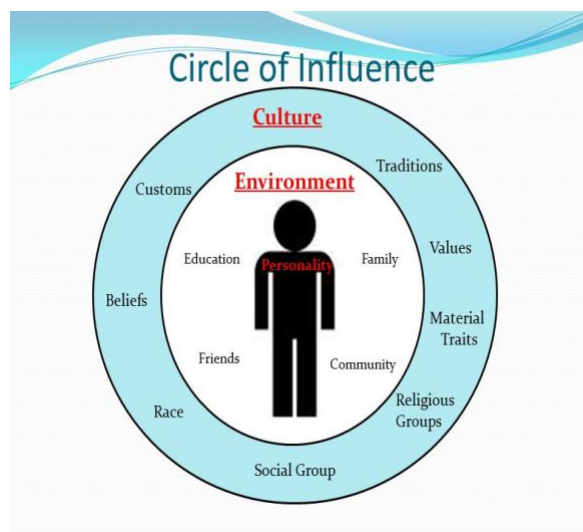
The gift of self-awareness is one of the biggest gifts you can give yourself, meaning the ability to see yourself as others see you. And, if you like the way you are viewed, you should accept it and take steps to strengthen that positive perception and adjust the negative aspects.

Instructor's note:

Instruct participants to ask another the following questions.

- How am I viewed? In other words, what is my personal brand in our organization?

- Where do you see my strengths?
- What do you see as some of my blind spots and how can I improve?
- How I am viewed by leadership?
- What do people say about me when I'm not in the room?
- Could you offer feedback on ways to improve my executive presence?
- Do I come across as strategic or tactical in my day-to-day communication?
- Am I viewed as high maintenance when I send my boss weekly status updates?
- How could I have communicated my idea more clearly?
- When I presented at the last meeting, how did I do? Did my communication style support the message I intended to deliver?



Training-Based Mentoring: Training-based mentoring occurs when mentees reach out for help with a specific skill or task. These engagements tend to be short-term in nature.

The Environment and its Influence

The people who influence you are the people who believe in you

–Henry Drummond

The environment and its Influence

From the previous section, we discussed the initial basics of mentorship. We are going to be looking at the environment and its influence on this section. The environment you find yourself in may be good or bad; nevertheless, this section will teach you how to benefit from any environment.

Definition of environment

Your environment can be defined as the total of everything surrounding you, either living or non-living things (Adams, 2014).

During this period of unconscious mentorship, you become who you are as a result of the environment you live in. This is why studying your environment, and selecting the good, and the really good *bad* example is very necessary.

Characteristics of your environment

Both living and non-living things characterize your environment. Let us look at the characteristic features of your environment that influence you.

- Food
- Temperature
- Type home
- Number of siblings
- Parents
- School
- Sport activities
- Television
- Radio

How to navigate negativity (people and/or environment)

How you get mentored by your environment

From the above list, we have highlighted some of the obvious things in our environment that influence who we are. The things that we do, see, day-in and day-out at this unconscious stage of mentorship will defiantly be our first mentors, as they will influence our decisions, do's and don'ts these are what we call the unconscious mentors, we have a lot of them around us, as they are in physically living in our environment.

How to overcome a negative environment

Being in the wrong environment can lead to a lot of damage; some of the influences can be quickly outgrown, but we need to make a conscious effort to loosen the grip of others--bad friends, negative attitudes from parents, watching the wrong TV program are some examples.

One easy way to overcome these negative influences is by getting a mentor who overcame a similar situation. You can also defeat a negative influence by reading books that point out the issues and provides a way out.

Overcoming pain and negative emotion

Find a place inside where there's joy, and the joy will burn out the pain.

—Joseph Campbell

You may not have experienced such a thing, but at some point in your life, you might have felt you were losing out on a lot of things, and the people you look up to (good or bad) were nowhere to be found. This can be a really tough time, but you can overcome it, or you will overcome it because you start to realize how important it is to have someone with whom you can depend. The negative emotions that come when you are alone or just lost someone important to you need not be nurtured but turned into something positive.

Emotions

Emotion is a strong feeling derived from your circumstances, mood, or relationship with others (Mead, n.d.). Different factors affect your emotions. These factors have to be controlled as they determine if you would be happy or sad, and it is evident that a sad soul does no good to anyone. During the mentorship, you need to be as open-minded as possible; hence you do not want any negative emotion to cloud your thinking.

The different kind of emotional states include:

- Anger
- Fear
- Happiness
- Freedom
- Resentment
- Frustration
- Anxiety

Effects of negative emotions

From the list above, highlight the negative emotions

- Anger
- Fear
- Resentment
- Anxiety
- Frustration

These emotions are not to be embraced as they affect us physically and can lead to stress. It is natural to experience these emotions, even if you are in an environment with only good examples, albeit we are to disavow them.

The effects of negative emotions are:

- It leads to an emotional breakdown
- It breaks relationships
- It disturbs your progress during the mentorship
- It leads to stress
- It leads to unhappiness
- It destroys your health and Increase aging

Overcoming negative emotion

The idea of overcoming negative emotions is a complex one. It does not mean you would never experience them again; it just helps you control and manage them. The first step to overcoming a negative emotion is to embrace the fact that we feel them; the next step is to

determine why we feel them; and finally, allow ourselves to receive the message they are trying to pass across. After getting the message, it is necessary that we move on and work things out with our mentors or on our own.

Mead (n.d.) said you can burn these emotions by

- Walking
- Working out
- Discussing
- Watching TV
- Cooking

The point is, make sure you never transfer these emotions to someone else or let it interfere in your relationship.

Correction

Now you can control your emotions and build a positive attitude, and it is time for you to correct all your past mistakes. This does not mean that you would travel back in time to make restitution or forget everything that has happened. This does mean that you will take your bad experiences, learn from them, put them in a box, and move on determined never to pick them up again. This can only be achieved with firm decisions and deliberate actions such as giving up negative friends, changing your environment, taking new classes, and reading books.

What is correction

Correction is an action taken to nullify errors or non-conformities. It simply means to learn from your mistake and make necessary amendments (Morin, 2017).

Why you need to be corrected during the mentorship

During the first phase of mentorship, you may have experienced different kinds of negative attitudes, before you moved forward. You need first to accept your mistakes and then make amendments. This will help you overcome your past as quickly as possible. Correction is one of the main roles to be highlighted by a mentor.

However, you need to make some corrections before meeting a formal mentor. This would make the mentoring process easy and smooth.

Developing a positive attitude towards correction

You do not have to feel warm and fuzzy inside when you get the correction. You must develop a positive attitude towards correction as it helps improve your value and relationships. Below are some actions plans that help you overcome negative attitudes that come with correction.

- Listen Up: find out if the correction is constructive or simply rude.
- Respond calmly: learn to be respectful no matter what, and always say thank you if the feedback is useful.

- Do not take it personally: try to remove yourself from the situation and see clearly what the person is talking about.

Benefits of accepting correction

Accepting corrections can be offer a variety of benefits (Morin, 2017).

- Corrections help improve your values and attitude.
- It helps your feedback catalog.
- Makes you see situations from other people point of view.
- Gives you access to more ideas.
- Improves your relationship.
- Increases your productivity.

Growth

Growth is the main goal of the mentorship. During the unconscious phase of mentorship, you grow unconsciously, but as you transition from that phase to the second phase of mentorship, growth becomes intentional. No one wants to be at the same level for long. You need to realize you grow from birth to death; the changes that happen in your life depend on what you do, and how much you grow. In this module, you will be learning about growth and its importance.

Why you need to grow

You grow because you need to. You must move from one phase to another. This is one of the pieces of evidence that proves you are almost in the next phase of mentorship. You will notice your feelings change, you now have a passion for unusual things, and you can easily realize your mistakes. These signs show that an individual is almost ready for a bigger picture.

Personal growth is the ongoing process of understanding and developing oneself to achieve one's fullest potential. Personal growth is a vital part of mentorship.

Benefits of growth and development

Personal growth helps you in the following ways;

- Improving your self-knowledge
- Improves your skills
- Improves your career
- Improves your potential
- Improves your relationship
- Improves your social and emotional intelligence

Change

The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.

–Socrates

There is a popular expression that says that change is inevitable. This is true, as it is the only constant thing in humanity, whether you like it or not. You have to change! The next thing that should come to your mind is, “what kind of change do you want?” Good or bad?

This is the question that completes your transition from an unconscious mentee to a conscious mentee. This question births a lot of other questions, and you can only find the right answer by asking more experienced people. Consider a scenario of a man who has been working on a project for 10 years, but with no success. He now decides to do something different; he either agrees his idea is never going to work and move on with his life or goes to a more experienced expert in his field to show him the way to go. Either way, we can conclude he needs the guidance of a MENTOR. This is the point you get to when you start asking questions about how to live a better life.

There is another popular saying that says, “When you hit the ground, the only place you have to go is up.” The easiest way to get to the top is to get someone at the top to lead you through this period of change. Change brings out the better person in you.

What is the change?

By definition, change is the act or process of becoming different (Julunky, 2008). In this course, we are not just looking to become different; we want positive change so you can say change is the process of becoming a better person.

Is change necessary during mentorship?

We cannot overemphasize the importance of a positive change during the mentorship. Anyone who wants to discover a better life must embrace it.

Embracing change

We know it is important to embrace change; here are 10 steps that take you through that process smoothly:

1. Acknowledge that things are changing
2. Realize that change brings stress—welcomed or unwelcomed—it is all good change
3. Align your schedule to the kind of lifestyle you want
4. Eat healthily
5. Seek support
6. Write out the positives as you notice them
7. Get proactive
8. Have a support group
9. Reduce your social media presence
10. Give yourself a break

Money Management

The biggest part of your wealth is your income.

Money has been one of the most crucial factors when choosing a major/career. Both public and private institutions will burn up a rather large debt. Several degrees such as law and medicine usually cost up to half a million or more (“Is medical school worth,” 2020).

What is money management?

Money management is the process of budgeting, saving, investing, spending, or otherwise overseeing the capital usage of an individual or group (Murphy, 2005).

Watch this video to have more understanding of money management.

Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CU4l_rs50Kk



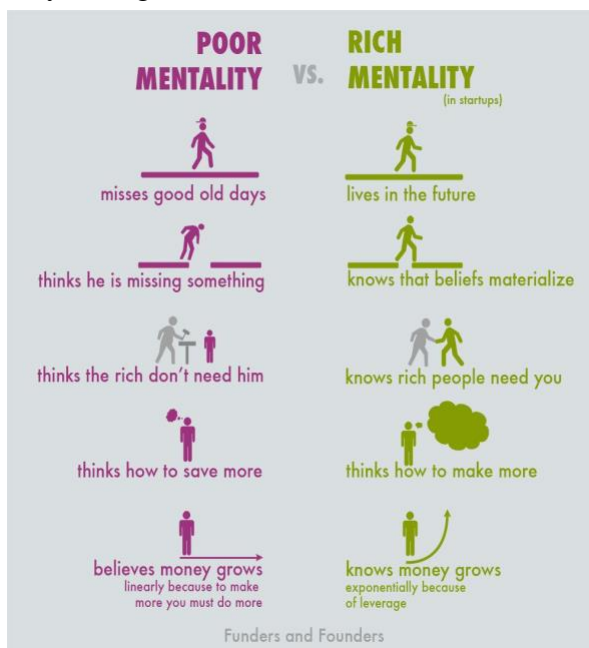
Rich vs Poor Mindset

Money Habits

You may have noticed some bad behaviors that are affecting your finances negatively.

Banks giving Company noticed that these behaviors usually come as necessities and important needs. However, it is just as important as breaking bad money habits in order to form good ones. Before you get to know about some of the good money habits that will help you build wealth, let us review some of the bad ones, so you can identify them more easily. Here are some bad money habits you might need to break.

- Spending more than you earn
- Relying on credit to pay the bills
- Taking out payday loans
- Not being prepared for an emergency
- Paying your bills late
- Failing to save for the future
- Not taking control of your career
- Blaming others for your circumstances
- Hoarding money and never having fun
- Making excuses



These habits are obviously caused by our action or needs. You need to consciously stop them, and that's possible as we all have solutions to your bad money habits. In the activity below, take some time to think about the possible solutions to your bad money habits, and discuss it with someone who has more experience in money matters.

Activity:

Write out all the bad money habits you know you have, and how you want to stop them.

Now that you have identified the bad money habits you have, it is time to develop the good ones. Here are some good money habits that will help you improve your financial status:

- Automate your finances
- Invest your spare change.
- Come up with specific money goals
- Save, do not spend unexpected cash
- Spend 30 minutes a day reading
- Wake up early to meditate
- Surround yourself with successful, high earners

Paying you first (Creating a bank account Checking & Savings)

The Importance of Paying Yourself First

The concept of “paying yourself first” is one of the pillars of personal finance when building wealth. The basic idea is simple to understand. As soon as you get paid, put money into your savings account first. When you pay yourself first, you are mentally establishing saving as a priority. The government is always going to take their cut first, so you must make yourself a financial priority. Understand that your bills still have to be paid to maintain your lifestyle, but YOU and your FUTURE are the priority. Paying yourself first encourages sound financial habits and keeps you from living beyond your financial means. Most people spend their money in the following order: bills, fun, saving. Unfortunately, there is usually little left over to put in the bank for saving. But if you bump saving to the front (saving (YOU), bills, fun), then you are able to establish realistic living expenses and set the money aside before you rationalize reasons to spend it.

Note: paying yourself first will allow you to set up an emergency fund and invest later and start building wealth.

Making your money work for you

Investing is the generic name for all means towards multiplying or otherwise stacking cash. Be it investing in stocks, a foreign exchange, crypto-currency, or directly investing in a business or real estate.

Investing is built on the idea of allowing your money to make more money for you by putting it (investing) into financial schemes, shares, property, or a commercial venture with the expectation of achieving a profit. In finance, the benefit of an investment is called a return.

***Do you give any portion of your money its job?
Why/why not? (Give me an example)***

Investing is a way to set aside money while you are busy with life and have that money work for you so that you can fully reap the rewards of your labor in the future. Investing is a means to a happier ending.

Legendary investor Warren Buffett defined investing as “... the process of laying out money now to receive more money in the future” (Langager, 2020, para. 1). The goal of investing is to put your money to work in one or more types of investment vehicles in the hopes of growing your money over time.

Investing is also about making priorities for your money. Spending is easy and gives instant gratification—whether the splurge is on a new outfit, a vacation to some exotic spot, or dinner in a fancy restaurant. All of these are wonderful and make life more enjoyable. But investing requires prioritizing our financial futures over our present desires.

Investing Vehicles

There are many ways you can go about investing, including putting money into stocks, bonds, mutual funds, ETFs, real estate (and other alternative investment vehicles), or even starting your own business.



Every investment vehicle has its positives and negatives. It understands how different types of investment vehicles work and are crucial to your success. For example, what does a mutual fund invest in? Who is managing the fund? What are the fees and expenses? Are there any costs or penalties for accessing your money? These are all questions that should be answered before investing. Whereas it is true, there are no guarantees of making money, some work on your part can increase your odds of being a successful investor. Analysis, research, and even just reading up on investing can all help.

Now that you have a general idea of what investing is and why you should do it, it is time to learn about how investing lets you take advantage of one of the miracles of mathematics: compound interest.

Investing is one of the ways to make money as you are working less. We have a four-way plan to help produce income known as the Cashflow Quadrant.

The left side of the quadrant (E, S) represents how we exchange time for money. This is 95% of the population but only 5% of the wealth generated.

- Employee (E) – You work for someone else (i.e., teacher, nurse, restaurant manager)
- Self-Employed (S) – You work for yourself (i.e., lawyer, plumber, photographer, web designer)
- The right side of the quadrant (B, I) represents how we exchange resources for money. This is 5% of the population but 95% of the wealth generated.
- Business Owner – People work for you. (i.e., restaurant franchise owner, landscaping company)
- Investor – Money works for you (i.e., investing in a business, buying properties, buying stocks)

Several famous athletes and entertainers have become investors to maintain and increase their wealth. This effort builds generational wealth that can be passed on to their children and beyond.

Steps in managing personal finance

Controlling your personal finance is another important thing that you need to know about as you journey the road to financial freedom. In this section, you will be going through six simple steps that would help you with your savings and budgeting. These steps are approved by **BanksGiving**.

It is normal to feel frustrated about your personal finance; at times, you may feel you do not have enough money to accomplish your goals. All these feelings come to you because you do not know how to manage your personal finance. Regardless of how you feel, you can easily overcome those feelings by applying strategic financial management. These are essential steps for successful financial management.

- **Create a budget:** It is totally impossible to manage your money without having a proper budget. A budget essentially helps you know how your income is allocated each month. It enables you to identify the areas where you need to cut back, and it enables you to see if you can afford some of the things you crave for such as a new pair of shoes, a new car, etc.
- **Trim down spending:** When you live on a strict budget, you can quickly identify areas to reduce spending. People who spend very close to their income level or exceed their income level often experience financial stress because of the pressure that comes when there is a need and not enough money to cater to their habits.
- **Plan for short-term and long-term goals:** You need to plan for long- and short-term goals. Your budget gives you the ability to allocate regular contributions for savings and investment.

- **Take advantage of modern technology:** Technology has made it easier for you to manage your personal finance as you can now use software such as excel to prepare a fixed budget.
- **Save regularly:** Part of your budget should include a small allocation of funds to a saving account on a regular basis.
- **Focus on debt reduction:** It is necessary you focus on paying back all your debts as high debt balances can erode financial security.

Steps on how to save effectively

Saving should not be done haphazardly; establish a plan (Murphy, 2005).

Step 1: Write down all monthly income and expenses.

Step 2: Determine the amount of money you want to save.

Step 3: Divide your expenses into 4 categories and determine their upper limits.

- Cost of living (rent, food, and utilities)
- Social cost (tuition, transportation, insurance, ceremonial occasions)
- Entertainment (clothes, travel, eating out)
- Savings

Step 4: Transfer the determined amount every month to separated accounts.

Bad Credit (Credit Cards and Student Loans)

Credit score

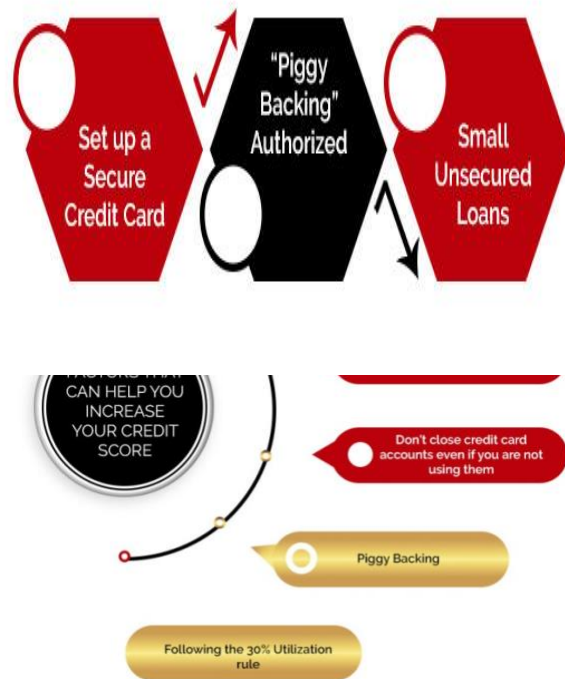
How to establish credit:

So, how is your credit score determined? There are several factors that are used to decide where you may rank on this chart.

- 10% Credit Mix (credit cards, retail, mortgages, student loan, car notes).
- 10% New Credit – New credit is when you receive a new credit card, by a new home, or sign a lease for a rental property.
- 15% Credit History – How long have you had the different forms of debt? Is it a new credit or has it been in your credit report for an extended period?
- 30% Credit Utilization – Utilization is the ratio of your outstanding credit card balances to your credit card limits. It measures the amount of credit limit you are using.
- 35% paying on Time – Paying on time shows creditors that you are responsible

There are several FACTORS THAT CAN HELP YOU INCREASE YOUR CREDIT SCORE:

- Pay your credit card bills on time – Late payments are frowned upon and will kill your credit score. Payment history accounts for 35% of your credit score, which is a big deal when it comes to your credit score.
- Pay your bills once it reports to the credit bureau - Do not make the mistake of paying your balance to \$0 before it reports to the credit bureau. If your statement always has a zero balance, it looks like you are never using the credit card, which will not increase your score.
- Do not max out your credit cards – Maxing out credit cards makes you look financially irresponsible and will decrease your credit score. Just because you have a \$1000 limit does not mean you should use it all.
- Do not close credit card accounts even if you are not using them – One of the factors reviewed when applying for credit is your credit history. If you close out a credit card that you have had for 10 years, then you just deleted ten years of credit history, and that is counterproductive.
- Piggy Backing – Piggy Backing is another term for becoming an “authorized user” on someone else’s credit card. If you are added as an “Authorized user” on a credit card that has a 10-year history in good standing then “like magic,” you now have a 10-year history and a great credit score. Make sure that “someone” has great credit and a long history of financial responsibility, or it could backfire! NOTE: This is also a good tactic to establish your children’s credit when the parents have good credit.
- Following the 30% Utilization rule – Only 30% max of your allowed credit limit. If you have a \$1000 credit limit, only use \$300 of that limit. This will have a great impact on the increase in your score. NOTE: The credit card company will never tell you this because they want you to use as much credit as possible because they get paid from the interest accrued.



Hayhoe, Leach, Turner, Bruin, and Lawrence (2000) suggested several ways to establish credit even though you are under the age of 18.

- Set up a Secure Credit Card - A secured credit card is a credit card that requires a security deposit. They are generally for individuals whose credit is damaged or who have no credit history at all.
- “Piggy Backing” Authorized User - A credit card holder adds another person as an authorized user on their credit card account. An authorized user is someone added to a credit card account and who can use the card to make purchases. The purchases and payment that the authorized user makes then appear on their credit report.
- Small Unsecured Loans - an unsecured loan is one given based on the word — and creditworthiness — of the borrower. Personal loans and credit cards are generally considered to be unsecured debts because the lender has no way of securing or guaranteeing that the debts will be paid. The interest rates on these tend to be higher because of the risk.

As you are building your credit, you should keep an eye on your credit score and credit report. By law, all the credit reporting bureaus are required to give you one credit report per year at your request. This is ideal to keep track of your payment history and to ensure no fraudulent activity is on your report. Another way to keep track of your credit score more often is by using an app such as Credit Karma. This app is free and allows you to check your credit score as often as you like. It also notifies you of any changes (positive or negative) that may occur on your credit report.

Ways to Increase & Monitor Credit

Effects of bad credit

A bad credit score can affect your finances negatively, so you need to do everything it takes to have a good credit score. Here are some of the effects of a bad credit score.

- Getting approved for a loan can be difficult
- Higher rates and more restrictive terms on approved loans
- Trouble renting an apartment
- Trouble getting a job or security clearance
- Trouble getting a cell phone contract
- Higher insurance premiums
- Potential strain on personal relationships

Causes of bad credit

Instructor’s note:

- Present the video to get more understanding on how to improve your credit score.
- Video link: <https://clark.com/credit/5-sneaky-ways-to-increase-your-credit-score/>

Hayhoe et al. (2000) found the seven most common causes of a bad credit rating are the following:

- Failing to stick to the credit agreement
- Declaring bankruptcy
- Choosing the wrong credit card
- Being the subject of a county court judgement (CCJ)
- Only paying minimum each month
- Identity theft
- Having no credit history

Instructor's note:

- Present the video on ways of preparing for retirement
- Video Link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnyRHK8ZAXI>

Preparing for Retirement

The power of compound interest

Compounding is the process of generating more returns on an asset's reinvested earnings. To work, it requires two things: the reinvestment of profits and time. Compound interest can help your initial investment grow exponentially. For younger investors, it is the greatest investing tool possible, and the #1 argument for starting as early as possible. Below we give a couple of examples of compound interest.

Example #1: Apple stock

An investment of \$10,000 in the stock of Apple (AAPL) that was made on December 31, 1980, would have grown to \$2,709,248 as of the market's close on February 28, 2017, according to Morningstar's Advisor Workstation tool. This translates to an annual return of 16.75%, including the reinvestment of all dividends from the stock.

Apple started paying dividends in 2012. Even so, if those dividends had not been reinvested the ending balance of this investment would have been \$2,247,949 or 83% of the amount that you would have had by reinvesting.

Although Apple is one of the most successful companies, and their stock is a winner year-in and year-out, compound interest also works for index funds, which are managed to replicate the performance of a primary market index such as the S&P 500.

Example #2: Vanguard 500 Index

Another example of the benefits of compounding is the popular Vanguard 500 Index fund (VFINX) held for the 20 years ending February 28, 2017.

A \$10,000 investment into the fund made on February 28, 1997, would have grown to a value of \$42,650 at the end of the 20-year period. This assumes the reinvestment of all fund distributions for dividends, interest, or capital gains were put back into the fund.

Without reinvesting the distributions, the value of the initial \$10,000 investment would have grown to \$29,548 or 69% of the amount with reinvestment.

In this and the Apple example, current year taxes would have been due on any fund distributions or stock dividends if the investment was held in a taxable account, but for most investors, these earnings can grow tax-deferred in a retirement account such as an employer-sponsored 401(k).

Starting Early

Another way to look at the power of compounding is to compare how much less initial investment you need if you start early to reach the same goal.

A 25-year-old who wishes to accumulate \$1 million by age 60 would need to invest \$880.21 each month assuming a constant return of 5%.

A 35-year-old wishing to accumulate \$1 million by age 60 would need to invest \$1,679.23 each month using the same assumptions.

A 45-year-old would need to invest \$3,741.27 each month to accumulate the same \$1 million by age 60. That is almost 4 times the amount that the 25-year old needs. Starting early is especially helpful when saving for retirement; putting aside a little bit early in your career can reap great benefits.

Reference link: <https://www.investopedia.com>

Activity:

Write out your plans following the piggy bank theory; make they are clear and feasible.

Monitor and evaluate the results

Final Evaluation | Mentee for Mentor

MENTOR'S NAME	AGENCY	MENTEE'S NAME	DATE

AVAILABILITY

A. How frequently did you meet with your assigned mentor?

- Less than once a month
- Every three to four weeks
- Every two weeks
- Every week
- Daily

B. Did you meet with your mentor enough?

- Yes
- No

FEEDBACK RATING SCALE

Please consider the following definitions when using these ratings.

Poor – More often than not the required behavior was not there. The need was not met. The mentor's capability, behavior and/or knowledge level was relative to the mentoring process consistently unacceptable.

Fair – While the mentor occasionally met the needs of the situation and/or the relationship, there were more times than not that the needs were not met, or the optimal behavior was not evidenced.

Average – The mentor provided the needed information, knowledge level and/or behaviors that were helpful but was not viewed by the mentee as proactive. For the most part, the mentor was minimally responsive and took more of a reactive role versus being proactive and appropriately assertive in the relationship.

Good – More often than not, the mentor would extend themselves in ways that proved helpful. Their knowledge level provided helpful insight and some degree of advancement of the mentee's knowledge level.

Excellent – The mentor would anticipate needs consistently, was proactive in the learning and sharing process, was perceptive to anticipate issues, and was able to read situations accurately and ask helpful and insightful questions that proved to be beneficial to the mentoring experience and the mentoring relationship.

Mentee for Mentor Evaluation (cont.)

For each question please place a check mark in the column that most closely represents your mentorship experience.

	Questions	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
A	What level of knowledge did your mentor possess regarding agency and state policies?					
	Comment:					
B	To what degree did your mentor follow up on questions she/he could not initially answer?					
	Comment:					
C	How skilled was your mentor at teaching new concepts?					
	Comment:					
D	How skilled was your mentor at modeling professionalism?					
	Comment:					
E	How skilled was your mentor at providing a kind and thoughtful learning environment?					
	Comment:					
F	How accessible/available was your mentor?					
	Comment:					
G	How skilled was your mentor in regular and clear communication?					
	Comment:					
H	How skilled was your mentor at reinforcing the new concepts presented in this course?					
	Comment:					

3. Would you consider becoming a mentor in the future? Please explain your answer.

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