

2021

## Perspectives of African American and Hispanic American Students on Academic Support Services

Cynthia McLain Shyne  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Cynthia Shyne

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

## Review Committee

Dr. Joanna Karet, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Olga Salnikova, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Nancy Williams, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost

Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University

2021

Abstract

Perspectives of African American and Hispanic American Students on Academic Support

Services

by

Cynthia McLain Shyne

MA, Grand Valley State University 2006

BS, Grace Christian University, 1975

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2021

## Abstract

A 2016 cultural diversity and inclusion study conducted at a local private college (LPC) in the Midwest United States revealed concern among faculty about the underutilization of academic support services for African American and Hispanic American (AAHA) students. A gap exists between the number of AAHA students who use academic support services at LPC, and the number of AAHA students recommended to the services. The research questions were, “How do AAHA students’ perceptions about support services influence their use of academic support services at the LPC?” and “What do AAHA students suggest that could increase their use of the support services at the LPC?” Tinto's theory of institutional departure from higher education was the conceptual framework for this study. The basic qualitative study data were collected through in-person, phone, and one written interview with nine enrolled AAHA students. The data were analyzed by coding for themes that addressed the research questions. The interview questions aligned with the research questions. The key findings included (a) knowledge of academic support resources; (b) lack of staff and faculty diversity; (c) feelings of discomfort, isolation, lack of belonging; and (d) inconsistent supportive academic support and accountability. Member checking was used to verify interview responses and establish credibility and trustworthiness for the study. A professional development seminar was designed to demonstrate findings for LPC’s personnel and stakeholders. Social change may occur from this study because the study provided LPC with the ability to improve AAHA student academic services, thereby increasing college completions.

Project Study Perspectives of African American and Hispanic American Students on

Academic Support Services

by

Cynthia McLain Shyne

MA, Grand Valley State University, 2006

BS, Grace Christian University, 1975

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2021

## Dedication

I dedicate this degree first to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who empowered me to fulfill a desire to accomplish a goal I only dreamed I could do. Second, my parents, George and Viola McLain, set high standards for my six siblings and me. Their high expectations encouraged us to excel though neither of them had an elementary or high school degree. My father created a business to support his family, and my mother earned a GED, studying with us at the kitchen table. I also dedicate this degree to my elementary and high school teachers at Pine Villa and Mays High School in South Dade, Florida; most of them are no longer alive, but their spirit for excellence in their students lives on. Finally, I am thankful to my children, Adanya and Shocka, Garrick, Rebekah, Gabriel and Tracie, and Michael. Each helped me persevere during this long journey. More than anyone, my cherished husband John supported me with quiet and gentle patience until his recent death.

## Acknowledgments

I want to express my gratitude to those who encouraged me on this journey. First, I acknowledge my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Special thanks to my chair, Dr. Linda Swanson, who guided me with patience and compassion, and the second chair, Dr. Olga Salnikova. Thanks also to Dr. Karet, who guided me after my chair retired. I am thankful for Dr. Scott Shaw. Although I always wanted to pursue a doctoral study, the dream was too big, and without his firm prompting and ongoing support, the dream would have laid dormant. Thank you to my other colleagues who kept me focused on my goals. I already dedicated this study to my husband John; I want to acknowledge his steadfast support throughout my doctoral journey without complaint and with love. Finally, my personal editor and daughter, Rebekah Shyne, sacrificed time from her educational journey to help me complete mine. Thank you.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	iii
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
The Local Problem.....	1
Rationale .....	6
Definition of Terms.....	9
Significance of the Study .....	10
Research Questions.....	11
Review of the Literature .....	11
Conceptual Framework.....	11
Review of the Broader Literature .....	14
AAHA Students in Higher Education.....	15
Implications.....	36
Summary .....	37
Section 2: The Methodology.....	39
Qualitative Research Design and Approach .....	39
Participants.....	40
Data Collection .....	41
Data Analysis .....	44
Data Analysis Results .....	47
Theme 1: Knowledge and Availability of Academic Resources .....	48
Theme 2: Lack of Diversity .....	52
Theme 3: Feelings of Discomfort, Isolation, and Lack of Belonging .....	55



Theme 4: Inconsistent Academic Support .....	61
Summary of Data Analysis .....	67
Section 3: The Project.....	72
Introduction.....	72
Rationale .....	73
Review of the Literature .....	74
Professional Development and Theoretical Foundations .....	75
Professional Development Need Assessment.....	78
Professional Development Designs .....	79
Project Description.....	85
Project Evaluation Plan.....	88
Project Implications .....	89
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	91
Project Strengths and Limitations.....	91
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches .....	94
Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change .....	95
Reflection on Importance of the Work .....	99
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research.....	100
Conclusion .....	103
References.....	105
Appendix A: The Project .....	126

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics of Participants ..... 44

Table 2. Research Themes ..... 48

## Section 1: The Problem

### **The Local Problem**

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2016)) reported that undergraduate college enrollment increased over 31% between 2000 and 2010 and is expected to grow from 17.3 million students to 19.8 million by 2025. However, college completion continues to be problematic for two of the largest minority groups, African Americans and Hispanic Americans (AAHA). Although college attendance for Hispanic American students doubled from 1.4 million to 3 million and African American attendance grew from 1.5 million to 2.4 million from 2000 to 2014, graduation rates were low when compared to White American students during this time (NCES, 2016). Among all Hispanic Americans ages 25 to 29 and African Americans in the same age group, only 15% and 22% respectively have a bachelor's degree or higher when compared to 41% of White Americans (PEW Research, 2016).

Many studies have examined the complexity and possible causes of low graduations rates among AAHAs (e.g., Biermeier, 2017; Bishop, 2018; Bond et al., 2015; Ciscell et al., 2016; Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016; Gonzalez, 2018; Lorenz, 2017). Some of the findings revealed that many AAHAs are first-generation college students whose parents graduated with a high school diploma or less and who are unable to prepare their children to navigate the collegiate lifestyle (Francis, 2019; Marcelino, 2018; Nashua, 2020). College life involves academic and social cultures where students must make independent decisions about their activities that may both hinder or increase their college engagement. Such choices may include managing their time, meeting with advisors, and

registering and selecting college courses (Kezar & Kitchen, 2019). For first-generation college students, a lack of understanding about the rigors of college life may account for one way in which they are underprepared for college.

According to Logue et al. (2017) and Proctor et al. (2016), AAHAs are often underprepared for college, which may be linked to poverty. The need for academic and remedial resources in college is high among students who live in poverty and attend schools that may not offer adequate college resources (Logue et al., 2017; Proctor et al., 2016). Twenty-four percent of African Americans and 21% of Hispanic Americans lived in poverty in 2015 (Proctor et al., 2016). A national study revealed that 41% of Hispanic Americans and 42% of African American low-income students required remediation services in college compared to 37% of all low-income students (Bautsch, 2013). Even so, less than 50% of all students who enrolled in remedial services completed them, and fewer than 25% who completed remedial services earned a degree or certificate in 8 years. AAHA students who fail to complete remedial courses are more likely to withdraw from college early or experience academic failure (Bautsch, 2013; Tinto, 2017).

Academic unpreparedness in AAHAs also stems from deficiencies and disparities in school systems (Broda et al., 2018; Gatlin, 2020). Schools in prevalent poverty areas are more likely to be understaffed with inexperienced teachers and counselors and offer fewer college preparatory courses for students (Bryant, 2015; Gatlin, 2020; Williams-Farrier, 2017). When students from these types of schools start college, their chances of having weak academic skills are high, and they often need support resources to achieve

educational parity (Broda et al., 2018; Gatlin, 2020; Nashua, 2020; Williams-Farrier, 2017).

Some colleges attempt to improve academic skills among students by providing support programs to equip students with the competencies they need; however, these services often tend to be underutilized (AlMazrua, 2016; Bond et al., 2015; Matthews, 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017; Waddington et al., 2016). Underutilization of academic services was the focus of a study conducted by Fittler (2016). Fittler explored the help-seeking behaviors among college students by dividing the behaviors into five constructs. The constructs, which referred to distinct aspects of help-seeking behavior, were labeled formal and informal help-seeking, help-seeking threat, help-seeking avoidance, and instrumental and executive help-seeking. Each of the constructs was interrelated. The study indicated that students with lower levels of GPAs were less likely to seek academic help. Fittler noted that a student's need to protect his/her image might override his or her need to seek academic assistance. Studies by Ciscell et al. (2016), Matthews (2016), and Ruppert and Meadows (2017) corroborated Fittler's findings that students may underutilize academic support services because they do not want others to see their need or may underestimate their need for support. Unreliable or inaccurate assessment of academic needs increases student vulnerability for low educational success. Confidentiality and privacy are other concerns for students who need assistance but are reluctant to seek them.

The current study was conducted at a local private college (LPC), located in a small, diverse community in Michigan. In AY 2016, LPC averaged a student population

of 1,012 of both onsite and distance learning students (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [IPEDS], 2017-2018). Twenty-seven percent of the population was African American, and 6% were Hispanic Americans during the 2016-2017 school year with 957 degree-seeking students. Although 74% of LPC's degrees have traditionally been related to Christian vocations, the college has partnered with two local colleges and one university to expand their curriculum. LPC now offers two master's degrees, several bachelor's degrees, and some online programs. Whereas in previous years the college had a predominately White student population, LPC has intentionally increased enrollment of students of color, and in 2016 the number of students of color grew to 45% of the student population (IPEDS, 2017-2018, Provost, personal communication, September 29, 2018). However, the graduation rate at LPC of 36% is the lowest compared to five other Christian colleges in the area in 2016 (College Results, n.d.; IPEDS, 2017-2018). For students of color, the graduation rates were 0% of African American and 50% of Hispanic American students who pursued bachelor's degrees at LPC and graduated within 6 years (IPEDS, 2017-2018). During the AY 2016 to 2017, eight African American and two Hispanic Americans graduated with bachelor's degrees compared to 55 non-AAHA students in the same year.

LPC's mission statements express the idea of preparing students to meet the needs of a diverse community and to be engaged in advanced training and life-long learning; hence LPC offers academic services to all students for a \$100 fee which may be included in the college tuition. Initially, the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) was a voluntary program, which provided faculty with testing alternatives. Gradually,

individual tutoring was added along with study and learning strategies. Before 2016 ACE was used primarily as a tool for students to make up missed tests and quizzes. Although tutoring was offered for writing and homework assignments, the services were rarely used (ACE Instructor, personal communication, May 5, 2017).

GE 099 was a course implemented as more formal academic support complementary to the ACE. The attendance and participation in GE 099 had slight adjustments each semester, albeit the basic requirements remained the same, which were to spend at least 1 hour in ACE with a tutor, attend at least three study skills workshops, and take a minimum of five self-assessments via computer to increase self-awareness of the student's learning style. According to the ACE facilitator, the design of the academic supports and student usage of the support services fluctuated over the past 2 years. There were changes in the program design and facilitator changes (Faculty Instructor, personal communication, August 15, 2018). The inconsistency in the program may have affected student participation. Between spring 2016 to spring 2018, an average of 49% of non-AAHA students who were required to take GE 099 attended the class. Comparatively, an average of just one-third of all AAHA students who were expected to take GE 099 attended the class during the same time frames (GE facilitator, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Thus, a gap existed between the number of AAHAs who used academic supports at LPC, and the number of AAHAs recommended to the services. I explored that gap from the perspectives of AAHA students at LPC.

## Rationale

AAHA students lag White students in obtaining their college degrees, resulting in adverse consequences throughout a lifetime (Gatlin, 2020; Henslin, 2017; Knaggs et al., 2015; Miller, 2018; PEW Research, 2016; Whitehouse Initiative, 2018). Educators, government officials, economists, and families are stakeholders in AAHA students' college successes or failures. College administrators may fear that low AAHA graduation rates may negatively reflect their institutions and their studies' quality. Prospective students also may perceive a college with low AAHA graduation rates as an institution that does not value or support AAHA students (Gajewski & Mather, 2015).

According to a United States Department of Commerce report (2012), people who have college degrees earn about \$20,000 more annually than those without a college degree. People without college degrees are less likely to have employment opportunities to increase personal and family resources to improve their lives (Bishop, 2018; Henslin, 2017). The United States Census (2012-2016) reported that in Michigan, 20% and 14.7% of the AAHA population, respectively, had bachelor level degrees compared to 33% of Michigan's White population. This imbalance of degreed status among the AAHA population propagates resource inequality and reduces their participation, not only in the economy but in community and political events (Henslin, 2017). From an employment perspective, PEW Research (2016) reported an increase in employment opportunities requiring educated workers. AAHA students who do not complete college are less qualified to meet the demands of highly skilled jobs, thus negatively impacting the economy.



Although both nationally and locally AAHA enrollment has increased, the low completion rates require that institutions explore ways to implement services that will increase college completions (LPC, 2018; NCES, 2016; Tinto et al., 1993). Caballero (2020) also reinforced the idea that once AAHA students feel academically successful, they are more likely to remain in college and graduate. An additional rationale, then, for my research is that the results may provide LPC with insights from the AAHA's perspective that could ultimately lead to enhanced use of academic supports that would facilitate increased college success for AAHAs.

Williams (2017) maintained that AAHA's perceptions and attitudes toward academic support might be as important as the provision of the support. Pedagogical materials and delivery of academic supports are two ingredients that colleges must evaluate to ensure they are appropriate for the needs of AAHA students (Matthews, 2017; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017). Program designs, types of services, and the materials used to help AAHA students in academic supports may not appeal to AAHA students if the supports are culturally insensitive and demeaning (Branch, 2017; Matthews, 2017; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017). Equally important is the relationship with the facilitator or instructor and the timing of the offer of academic support (Branch, 2017; Schmid et al., 2016). Facilitators must be skilled in cultural competence, and program designs must be compatible with the needs of AAHA students (Branch, 2017; Schmid et al., 2016; Caballero, 2020).

LPC recognized its need to improve cultural competence in providing supportive services at the local level, including academic supports for AAHA students. In 2016, a

study was authorized to evaluate the college's cultural and diversity atmosphere (Provost, personal communication, January 24, 2017). The center's vice president, who conducted the study, made several recommendations for the college to develop the existing diversity and inclusion policies. These recommendations included developing a strategic, comprehensive, and integrated plan for diversity with accountability and measurable outcomes for students, staff, faculty, and administrators. The report also noted the faculty's concern that support services were underutilized and recommended that services be customized to meet the needs of the increased student population. This report underscored the importance of my concern to understand why support services were underutilized. It also provided the impetus and the rationale for the study, which explored the students' perceptions regarding the use of support services at LPC.

LPC's provost sanctioned the study stating that the research was closely aligned with LPC's objectives to understand the needs of students of color, reduce barriers for all students, and become more culturally inclusive at LPC (Provost, personal communication, January 24, 2017). Students who encounter academic struggles are at risk of early withdrawals, academic probation, and academic failure unless they receive assistance (Tinto, 1993). The purpose of my research was to explore LPC's AAHA students' perspectives regarding (a) the underutilization of the college's academic supports and (b) their suggestions for what would increase their use of academic supports.

## Definition of Terms

*Academic integration:* Students' academic performance and interactions with faculty members and staff, measured by grade point average (Feliciano, 2018).

*Academic support:* Services, programs, or tools designed to improve academic performance and retention (Ruppert & Meadows, 2017).

*At-risk students:* Students who are less prepared for higher education and more likely to drop out of college before completing their education (Francis, 2019).

*Collaborative learning:* Students working together to acquire or construct knowledge (Loes et al., 2017).

*College attrition:* Rate at which students terminate college before degree completion (Feliciano, 2018).

*Learning communities:* A cohort of students who enroll together in linked courses (Wells, 2020).

*Member checking:* A process to determine the accuracy of the transcripts and qualitative findings by allowing the participants to review the final report or description to verify the documents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

*Peer debriefing:* A person who reviews the relationship of the research questions and the data, the interpretations and to enhance the validity of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

*Peer review:* The discussion of the researcher's interpretations and conclusions with the study participants and other members of the participant community for verification, insight, and deeper understanding (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

*Racial microaggressions:* Verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile derogatory or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color (Tao et al., 2017).

*Self-efficacy:* The belief that a student has in his/her ability to achieve a certain goal (Giddens, 2016).

*Supplemental instruction:* A higher-education academic support program, targets challenging college courses and uses peer-led review sessions to develop academic skills, improve grades, influence persistence, and ultimately increase student retention (Skoglund et al., 2018).

### **Significance of the Study**

My results of my study are important because it addressed LPC's administrators' concerns about using the academic supports (Provost, personal communication, January 24, 2017). A previous report stated that faculty and administrators believed that students underutilized academic supports. Studies have indicated that academic support programs are beneficial for underprepared AAHA students helping them pass college courses, thereby increasing graduation likelihood (Caballero, 2020; Frederick, 2016; Tinto, 2017; Williams, 2017). However, a critical factor for AAHA students is that they use the programs to get the assistance they need. Usage of the academic supports is contingent on what students think and feel about their accessibility and benefit of the programs. Students' perceptions about the academic support facilitators, program designs and curriculums, and the college environment influence academic support use (Branch, 2017; Brooms, 2018; Fittler, 2016; Giblin, 2016; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017; Tinto, 2017).

The increased diversity of students prompted LPC's administrators to provide services to assist students in reaching their educational goals by using academic supports. More recently, LPC's status changed from a college to a university. The need for academic supports increased for AAHA students. This study provided LPC's administrators with a better understanding of how AAHA students perceive the academic supports and suggested changes that may increase the use of the services.

### **Research Questions**

The Higher Learning Commission recently granted LPC university status, (Provost, personal communication, June 15, 2018). The increased status, along with the increased diversity in the student population, added emphasis to provide culturally appropriate academic services for AAHA students. In this study, I explored AAHA students' perceptions about those services at LPC.

RQ1: How do African American and Hispanic American students' perceptions about academic support services influence their use at LPC?

RQ2: What do African American and Hispanic American students suggest that could increase their use of the support services at LPC?

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Conceptual Framework**

Tinto (1987) presented a paper on college retention that included the themes of early college withdrawals, college preparations, campus adjustments, and institutional influences. Tinto proposed that effective retention of college students encompassed a variety of components institutions should assess when designing, planning, and

implementing resources to reduce college attrition. Tinto's continuing research in college retention has been the impetus for many theories and has been foundational in research studies that explore pathways to college persistence and completion (Biermeier, 2017; Branch, 2017; Lorenz, 2016; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017; Scherzberg, 2017; Tinto, 2017).

The conceptual framework for this study was based on the theory of institutional departure from higher education as proposed by Tinto (1987). This theory of institutional departure from higher education hypothesized that students leave college for reasons that are interrelated and complex, including dropping out of college or early withdrawals for inadequate academic preparation and social engagement (Alicea-Planas, 2017; Buttram, 2016; Capstick, et al., 2019; Francis, 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016; Knaggs et al., 2015; Lorenz, 2016; Matthews, 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017; Stone et al., 2016). Tinto (2017) further theorized that involvement in college communities may be contingent on a students' ability to intellectually interact, collaborate, and compete in the academic and social milieu of an institution.

Colleges can encourage students' educational persistence when they demonstrate a sincere commitment to students by providing academic and social support for students who need assistance (Francis, 2019; Nashua, 2020; Tinto et al., 1993; Tinto, 2006, 2010, 2017). Support services are critical for AAHA students who lack strong academic skills (Biermeier, 2017; Gatlin, 2020; Maree, 2015; Scherzberg, 2017). Even before arriving on college campuses, AAHA students may be disadvantaged. Sampson (2019) found that many AAHA students' educational gap begins before they enter elementary grades. Some African American males are as much as 3 years behind their peers (Sampson, 2019).

Educators can increase AAHA academic skills when they use culturally responsive methods (Sampson, 2019). Early identification of educational gaps may assist educators in planning appropriate strategies to prepare young learners.

Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph to balance out the use of information from the literature with your own analysis.

Student involvement in the academic life of a college and being recognized as academically competent enhances student persistence in an institution, thereby increasing the likelihood of college graduations (Tinto, 1993). Academic supports may offer students avenues to positive academic engagement. However, AAHA students' usage of the programs is contingent on their perceptions of the programs, which are influenced by several other factors. Such factors include program designs that are sensitive to AAHA students, inclusive and affirming campus environments, unbiased pedagogy, and culturally competent facilitators and administrators (Francis, 2019; Matthews, 2017; Nashua, 2020; Olson-McBride et al., 2016; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017; Sampson, 2019; Tinto et al., 1993).

However, as identified in the theory of institutional departure, academic supports, although vital in improving learning skills and acquiring course content, are only useful when students use the programs (Broda et al., 2019; Tinto, 1987, 1993, 2006, 2010, 2017; Williams, 2017). Tinto (2017) linked educational learning and college leaving as intricate factors in the institutional departure from higher education theory. Students who feel integrated with a college are motivated to use available services, including academic supports (Capstick et al., 2019; Tinto, 2017). An engaging holistic environment can

undergird supportive educational strategies when comprehensive plans meet a diverse student population's needs, which are unique in each institution (Tinto, 1993). Students who do not believe they are supported academically and socially are more likely to withdraw from institutions early (Capstick et al., 2019; Matthews, 2017; Tinto, 1993, 2017). Supportive academic and social environments are linked to early institutional departures.

The theorist of the institutional departure from higher education theory suggested that an institution may be better equipped to meet the academic needs of the students when they gain knowledge of students' impressions, thoughts, and feelings about the academic supports (Tinto, 1993). In my study, the research questions were designed to explore AAHA students' perspectives and allowed students to express their opinions of how the academic supports could be improved to increase usage of the programs. Responses to the questions were beneficial for LPC in developing academic supports that may be more relevant for AAHA students.

### **Review of the Broader Literature**

To identify literature for this study the following databases were searched: ProQuest dissertations and theses, ProQuest Central, peer-reviewed articles and journals found in Eric, EBSCO books, and Education Source Combined, Sage Journals, and google alerts. Governmental websites were searched to gather statistical data on the complexity of AAHA students' use of academic resources on college and university campuses. Terms used in the search included *Tinto institutional departure theories*, *African Americans*, *Hispanic Americans*, *Black students*, *Hispanic students*, *low income*



*students, students of color, higher education learning, academic resources, academic supports, microaggression, underprepared students, student perceptions, faculty perceptions, academic advising, campus environment, belongingness in college campuses, college departure theories, school persistence, college retention, remedial support, at-risk students, barriers to college completion, adult learners, diversity on college campuses, college failures, college completion agenda, minority students, and minority stress.*

### **AAHA Students in Higher Education.**

AAHA students' participation in higher education has increased substantially in recent years. For example, statistics have indicated that enrollment in colleges increased 13.7% for African American students and 18.2% for Hispanic Americans in 2016 than in 2000 (NCES, Fast Facts, n.d.). However, the increase is reduced when considering the gap in graduation rates, which exists between AAHA students and White students (NCES, 2016). Additionally, studies have documented the complexity of issues associated with college completion for AAHA students. These issues include but not limited to unpreparedness, incongruence in campus environments, access to resources, financial responsibilities, family responsibilities, social and psychology adjustments and psychological issues, racial and gender biases, and internal and external perceptions and influences (e.g., AlMazrua, 2016; Broda et al., 2019; Branch, 2017; Brooms, 2018; Ciscell et al., 2016; Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016; Frederick, 2016; Giblin, 2016; Gonzalez, 2018; Matthews, 2017; Nashua, 2020; Pickett, 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017; Schmid

et al., 2016). Although myriad factors are interrelated to college failure, supportive services may be one avenue toward alleviating those issues.

Although, slavery ended many years ago, its influence continues to be pervasive in all areas of life for AAHA students, particularly in education. DeGruy (2017) argued that historical institutionalized slavery has continued to traumatize African Americans in ways that are still being revealed. Discriminatory practices that are embedded in most curriculums and practiced by faculty may hinder AAHA's education with subtle and overt acts. Bell, one of the researchers who theorized the idea as the critical race theory (CRT), maintained that racism is deeply ingrained in American society and its effects have produced inequalities in every facet of life, including education (Gillborn, 2018). These subtle often overlooked discriminatory behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, are called microaggressions (Gillborn, 2018). Microaggressions are ubiquitous, and yet remain unchallenged because they are viewed as innocuous by the dominant college population, remain unchallenged (Gillborn, 2018; Hesser & Gregory, 2016; Lac, 2017; Patton, 2016).

According to Tao et al. (2017), the number of antagonistic race-related events has increased on college campuses. Tao et al. described three types of microaggressions prevalent on college campuses: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Microassaults are deliberate discriminatory language or actions that are purposely used to cause harm, like the word *nigger* (Tao et al., 2017). Microinsults demean a person's race or identity (Ellis et al., 2018; Patton, 2016). An example is when a White student asks an AAHA student about their college admission, assuming they were admitted with less than

usual requirements. Microinvalidations are words that consciously or unconsciously minimize, ignore, and negate the emotional and social experiences of members of minority groups (Tao et al., 2017). Examples of microinvalidations are when White people maintain they do not see color, that all people are the same, or when college faculty, staff, or White students advise AAHA students they should forget the past and live in the present.

Microaggressions may be so common and acceptable that Ellis et al. (2018), Gillborn (2018), Lac (2017), and Tao et al. (2017) postulated that failure to recognize and address overt racial discriminations and microaggressions have inflicted limitations on AAHA students and that these discriminatory behaviors become even more powerful when they remain invisible to the recipient or the perpetrator. Such behaviors may be manifested when Whites assume AAHA students use profane language, are untrustworthy, or do not have managerial skills (Ellis et al., 2018; Napier, 2019;). White students and faculty may also stereotype AAHA students by assuming AAHA students are skilled in sports, gifted in music, and are talented dancers. (Ellis et al., 2018).

Perceived or experienced microaggressions create stressful emotions which may manifest differently for individual AAHA students (Ellis et al., 2018; Tao et al., 2017). Stress-related behavior is demonstrated in lack of confidence, feelings of inferiority, and reduced self-efficacy (AlMazrua, 2016;). Da Silva (2016) postulated that stress might reduce cognitive and academic performance resulting in depression and anxiety. In the study conducted by Branch (2017), students reported that academic-related pressure increased self-defeating behavior resulting in a cyclical effect. Anxiety-related to

unfinished assignments increased their feelings of inadequacy, which further hindered their ability to perform academically. For some students, the feelings of inferiority led to sleep deprivation and increased negative behavior such as substance abuse (Da Silva, 2016). Stress-related fear may traumatize students so that, unable to cope with their concerns, they are more likely to withdraw from college (Branch, 2017; Francis, 2019; Gonzalez, 2018; Nashua, 2020). Withdrawals, either voluntary or forced due to academic suspension, may prevent students from continuing their educational goals. Educationally related stress can impede students' desire for college completion and impair future academic success efforts. Withdrawals, either voluntary or forced through academic suspension, may have long-term consequences.

AAHA students may also experience stress from sources that should assist students in their education and yet may surreptitiously undermine the students' self-confidence. Ellis et al. (2018), Gillborn (2018) and Lac (2017) argued that educators who provide supportive services might consciously or unconsciously commit microaggressions and perpetuate prejudicial ideologies that are common in college literature and curriculums. A faculty member who ignores the overwhelming influence of the White race and its dominating influence in their curriculum creates a hostile environment which interferes with the learning process (Altman, 2018; Lac, 2017; Valentine-Cobb, 2017). Racial biases may occur when the roles of AAHA people are minimized or ignored in the selection of curriculum subjects and materials. Additionally, assumptions about an AAHA students' learning ability, learning style, or learning environment may negatively impact the student's academic progress (DeGruy, 2017;

Gonzalez, 2018; Tate & Page, 2018; Valentine-Cobb, 2017). Stereotypical assumptions about AAHA abilities and lifestyles on college campuses and prejudicial tolerance may influence AAHA students to believe they are inferior to White students and less capable of passing college courses. “Students encounter racial microaggressions at predominately White institutions in the form of racial stereotypes, negative assumptions of academic merit, social alienation, denial, and minimization of identity and racialized experiences in college” (Ellis et al., 2018, p. 4). AAHA students must maneuver many challenges although trying to maintain high academic standards.

Inadequate language skills may also contribute to a student’s reluctance to seek assistance. Students raised in communities where slang words are acceptable or unable to express themselves succinctly may resist exposing their inadequacy in seeking support (Brookfield, 2019; Tangwe, 2016; Valentine-Cobb, 2017). Students may also hesitate to ask for assistance when English is not their primary language (Brookfield, 2019; Gonzalez, 2018; Tangwe, 2016; Valentine-Cobb, 2017). AAHA students’ insufficient language skills combined with racial biases and stresses are only a few of the challenges and obstacles these students must overcome to be successful in college (Davis, 2017; Gillborn, 2018; Gonzalez, 2018; Hall, 2017; Haynes et al., 2016; Lac, 2017; Matthews, 2017; Valentine-Cobb, 2017). Each culture and race have language nuances resulting in communication barriers challenging to resolve in the learning environment. Additionally, words are associated with experiences and ideas that, even when shared, may have subtle differences resulting in misunderstanding and confusion. Stereotypes and assumptions create may create conditions precipitating negative feelings of alienation and isolation.

A lack of positive role models and faculty who are representative of the AAHA student population may be intimidating for AAHA students. Tinto (2017) stated that students' successes in college may be influenced by their instructor's attitude, which is conveyed in their knowledge and understanding of the student and the challenges AAHA students encounter. When faculty use course materials that marginalize AAHA students, it reflects an institution's lack of commitment to inclusivity of all people (Tinto, 2017). A faculty consisting of diverse professors is an indication of the value and commitment an institution places on creating a campus reflective of the student population (Schmid et al., 2016). This same commitment is reflected in the curriculums and the methods used by faculty in the classroom (Schmid et al., 2016). Without a sensitivity and understanding of how historical events continue to be evidenced in the lives of AAHA students, faculty may unconsciously perpetuate racial biases, thus impacting the likelihood of AAHA college completions (DeGruy, 2017; Tate & Page, 2018; Tinto, 2017; Valentine-Cobb, 2017). Teaching materials exclusive of cultural and racial distinctiveness or contributions engender feelings of insignificance and inferiority. Curriculums that are inclusive of other races demonstrate to AAHA students that their influences are equally important to faculty. Such curriculums also increase cultural intelligence, thereby reducing racial biases and encourage feelings of competence and promote academic participation.

For AAHA students, barriers to using college resources may include the lack of support from several directions. AAHA students who do not see representations of their race in faculty have a higher probability of feeling unsupported, which reduces the likelihood of engaging in college resources (Pickett, 2017; Schmid et al., 2016). Tinto

(2017) posited that for AAHA students to commit to the college fully, they need to envision themselves as part of that college community, strengthening persistence to reach their graduation goals. Faculty who are AAHA may be more successful in establishing a relationship with students and become immersed in the academic culture (DeGruy, 2017; Lopez, 2016; Pickett, 2017; Schmid et al., 2016; Tinto, 2017). Faculty who look and talk like the student population creates a feeling of belonging and comfort. Feeling valued and being integrated into the college culture may engender bonding and persistence at an institution.

Faculty are usually the first people to identify students who are struggling academically. Obtaining assistance for at-risk students creates dilemmas for faculty without previously defined pathways to recommend service. Some institutions use early warning systems to alert colleges to students who need academic support Waddington et al. (2016) explored one method of an early warning system (EWS) that identified academically at-risk students using the college's learning management system (LMS). The LMS collects types of data that indicate low students' GPAs. College advisors can use the information to discuss support options with students. Students also can assess their course progress and decide a response. Waddington et al. indicated a positive correlation between higher achieving students with those who regularly accessed the LMS. Waddington et al. observed that the LMS provided students and advisors with information to assess actionable interventions and often unused resources. Technological tools such as LMS affords faculty and staff objective data to offer academic support.

### ***Persistence Through Academic Engagement***

Student engagement is linked to a student's use of academic supports. College environments significantly influence both the comfort level of AAHA students and their decisions to participate in campus activities and services. AlMazrua (2016) noted that a supportive college environment contributes to a more confident identity that strengthens a student's feelings of competence to perform academically.

AAHA students who attend predominately White institutions may become more aware of their cultural differences as they encounter unwelcoming situations. Students may struggle with feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness (Da Silva, 2016). These feelings may result in a self-defeating behavior when their feelings are seemingly confirmed by subtle external messages of low expectations and accommodations espoused by White students and faculty (Alicino, 2017; Da Silva, 2016; Tinto, 2017). Tinto (2017) stated that institutions could enhance student engagement by ensuring that the makeup of faculty and staff is representative of the student population. AlMazrua (2016) suggested that connecting AAHA students with AAHA faculty who can mentor and provide safe places to express their thoughts would increase feelings of belongingness and safety.

Factors that are difficult to assess and define but that are essential to AAHA students' college completion are internalized, perceived deficiencies. DeGruy (2017) and Bouyer (2017) argued that many African American students expect to fail after experiencing years of being depicted as ineffectual and inferior. This internalized belief that has been passed down through generations may be an after effect of slavery



(DeGruy, 2017). African American students who believe they cannot succeed may make it a self-fulfilling reality and believe an educational degree is an unrealistic goal (DeGruy (2017).

Students reared in low socioeconomic households are less likely to have had experiences that promoted the development of efficacy and competency (Alicino, 2017; Davis, 2017; Hall, 2017; Williams, 2017). However, college readiness for AAHA students encompasses academic and non-academic reasons, such as self-efficacy, self-confidence, and the ability to manage the unanticipated difficulty, overlooked skills in college preparation (DeGruy, 2017; McCullagh, 2016; Valentine-Cobb, 2017; Williams, 2017; Williams-Farrier, 2017). Tinto (2017) maintained that without these qualities, AAHA students are less likely to obtain a college degree. Often, AAHA students who lack feelings of self-efficacy tend to act less responsibly than those with intense feelings of self-efficacy. According to Tinto (2017), students with positive feelings of self-efficacy are more likely to complete goals. Although feelings of adequacy may be specific to areas in a student's life, strengthening a student's academic skills may increase feelings of academic competency thereby assisting them to persevere and remain engaged when they encounter difficult tasks (Bishop, 2018; Tinto, 2017; Williams-Farrier, 2017). In higher education, faculty can contribute to students' feelings of positive self-efficacy when they intentionally use learning strategies that may result in positive outcomes for AAHA students. Giddens (2016) reported that academic support such as mentoring and tutoring programs increased the likelihood of building strong feelings of self-efficacy.

Additionally, increased faculty interactions outside the classroom tended to promote higher levels of self-efficacy in students (Giddens, 2016).

### ***College Adjustments***

Arriving on a college campus is only the beginning of a rigorous learning experience for all students and more so for AAHAS (AlMazrua, 2016; Tinto, 2017). The challenges of acclimating to college life may be difficult for AAHAs, especially for those who are first-generation college students who may have academic and social issues (Gonzalez, 2018; Kezar & Kitchen, 2020; Lopez, 2016; Mizell, 2019). Some students have feelings of ambivalence going from home to college, making the adjustment difficult because they are pulled in two directions. In many AAHA families, survival is valued more than education. AAHA students' desire to earn a college degree often conflicts with learned family values (AlMazrua, 2016; Nashua, 2020; Valentine-Cobb, 2017).

Among the complexity of issues AAHA students must navigate, financial difficulties may cause stress that distracts and impedes them from academic studies. Luna-Torres et al. (2017) stated that financial concerns might be roadblocks for students who do not have sufficient resources to pay for their educations. A complicated and cumbersome financial aid system may generate obstacles that dissuade students from their educational aspirations. Additionally, many AAHA students from low-income families and must apply for college loans and work to support their needs when financial aid is insufficient to cover their college expenses (Darolia, 2017; Luna-Torres et al., 2017). Financial burdens that create stress for AAHA students interfere with may also

deter them from social engagement on campus and peer-development and study collaboratives (Darolia, 2017; Luna-Torres et al., 2017). Additionally, employment schedules may interfere with the times when academic resources are available (Darolia, 2017; Luna-Torres et al., 2017).

Furthermore, students may try to maintain past friendships and relationships that interfere with establishing friends and routines that are essential to college engagement (Lopez, 2016). Each of these factors may be ameliorated when students feel they are a valuable part of a community as individuals (Tinto, 2017). Bonding is a critical factor in helping students feel connected to an institution. Tinto (2017) argued that bonding with college groups may increase a student's attachment to other students and the college, thereby increasing educational persistence.

### ***College Academic Supports***

Academic supports are critical for students to increase acquisition of college course content and may also promote AAHA students' persistence in college (Tinto, 2010). However, academic supports vary in educational institutions contingent of college budgets, students' needs, and student participation (Francis, 2019). A study conducted by Caballero (2020) confirmed that academic interventions may help AAHA students when colleges accurately assess their needs and link them to specific courses. The academic supports may include both pre-course and in-progress course content.

The study conducted by Mizell (2019) explored skill strengthening and preparatory classes as remedial support for students. One finding in the study suggested that remedial support, isolated from specific courses, was less beneficial for students than

course-related supports (Mizell, 2019). Marcellano (2017) also examined the efficacy of a required remediation program for underprepared and disadvantaged students. Effective programs were organized into small, personalized learning communities to strengthen academic skills by continuous engagement and focused course content (Mizell, 2019).

According to Valentine-Cobb (2017), variables such as family background and financial stability had a significant role in persistence. These variables reinforced the principles of persistence and retention, as proposed by Tinto (2017). However, Tinto (2017) included family obligations, intrinsic personal qualities, and employment as other factors that foster a student's persistence in college. Institutions may increase persistence when they include holistic programming to successfully equip students for college (Valentine-Cobb, 2017). Holistic programming includes supporting students with services in all areas of their lives. Compartmentalizing services may be overwhelming for some students creating stress and despondency.

Jackson and Thomas (2020) affirmed that a holistic approach to student support increased the likelihood of college completion. Often institutions implement academic success programs to assist student learning. However, Jackson and Thomas (2020) stressed that higher numbers of enrolled AAHA students from less affluent families require a more comprehensive range of services. Such services include social, emotional, and personal programming to assist students in adjusting to college life. Multilingual services and resources that support persistence, progression, and graduation are essential for college attainment (Jackson & Thomas, 2020). Students who recognize that college attainment is possible with supportive services may persistence in completing their

education. Jackson and Thomas (2020) affirmed that a holistic approach to student support increased the likelihood of college completion. Often institutions implement academic success programs to assist student learning. However, Jackson and Thomas (2020) stressed that higher numbers of enrolled AAHA students from less affluent families require a more comprehensive range of services. Such services include social, emotional, and personal programming to assist students in adjusting to college life. In addition, multilingual services and resources that support persistence, progression, and graduation are essential for college attainment (Jackson & Thomas, 2020). Students who recognize that college attainment is possible with culturally inclusive supportive services may demonstrate persistence in completing their education.

Wells (2020) explored a similar program as Valentine-Cobb (2017), integrating a writing program with a service-learning component. The study concluded that there was no academic significance in combining the two programs. However, the study identified positive qualities for faculty that enhanced the learning climate, such as knowledgeable, supportive, and interactive faculty. Other positive findings from Wells (2020) included the encouragement of critical thinking, personal interaction, and collaboration with peers. These factors are program planning considerations for AAHA students to increase academic engagement.

Mentoring and tutoring are frequently used academic supports in many institutions. However, the benefits for students are contingent on the application and implementation of the supports (AlMazrui, 2016). Mentoring may use several methods and formats depending on the institution and the facilitator (Biermeier, 2017; Bond et al.,

2015; Ciscell et al., 2016; Loes et al., 2017). For AAHA students, gender, race, and ethnicity may also influence the idea of being mentored or tutored. Some students may resist using these supports fearful of being intellectually marginalized or stigmatized (Ciscell et al., 2016; Tinto, 1993). Culturally inclusive campuses include diverse tutors and mentors who can create comfortable learning environments with whom students can identify.

Academic supports may include instructional strategies such as supplemental instruction, collaborative learning, and learning communities (Lindsay et al., 2017; Laux et al., 2016; Loes et al., 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017). Supplemental instruction (SI) uses a faculty appointed student who is proficient often in the high-risk course content subject (Lindsay et al., 2017). Collaborative learning (CL) may be peer-led, albeit overseen by a faculty member (Laux et al., 2016; Loes et al., 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017). This team-based learning method involves sharing knowledge whereby students learn from each other. LC employ supportive strategies that focus on first-year students, although not exclusively, who start college with low GPAs (Tinto, 2017; Kezar & Kitchen, 2019). Students placed in LC have concentrated learning and social support. People who nurture and encourage the students through the early years of college are selected to staff these communities (Kezar & Kitchen, 2019). Support programs include supplemental instruction, collaborative learning, and learning communities are group learning strategies like those at LPC.

### *Mentoring Services*

Several colleges have implemented programs to help underprepared AAHA students learn and maintain academic skills. The programs for students identified as at-risk for failure or early withdrawal from college were types of academic supports most often offered without cost. For example, AlMazrua (2016) conducted a study of college students at Generation Long River College in a program designed by a faculty member to assist students with their academic learning and reduce some of the complexity of college life. The program used peer mentors, pairing students with mentors who could provide academic support and serve as guides about campus life. Although the sample size was small, one noticeable outcome was that at-risk students needed awareness and sensitivity from the college faculty and staff (AlMazrua, 2016). Increased understanding of students' needs empowered faculty and staff with some knowledge on how they could improve services for at-risk students.

Serving as role models, faculty and staff mentoring can also help AAHA students enhance their learning skills. (Gatlin, 2020; Lopez (2016) argued that academic role models who understand some of the struggles associated with degree attainment can provide guidance and support for AAHA students. Bond et al. (2015) adapted Valverde and Rodriguez's institutional support model, which they named the adapted model for institutional support (AMIS) theory. This theory suggested that Hispanic American students often encountered institutional barriers such as the lack of financial and emotional support, technical support, and networking (Bond et al., 2015; Lopez, 2016). Lopez (2016) and Gatlin (2020) maintained that positive mentoring, peers, faculty, and

professionals were crucial components contributing to Hispanic American persistence in college completion. Each of these entities can provide positive structures for Hispanic American students which may increase the likelihood of graduation.

The augmented constructs for mentoring included both vertical and horizontal mentoring. Vertical mentoring involves relationships with established professionals who can identify with students culturally and socially, using a holistic approach (Andre et al., 2017; Bondet et al., 2015; Tran et al, 2016). Horizontal mentoring may include co-mentoring, group mentoring, and cascade mentoring, whereby a professor mentors a graduate or advanced student and they, in turn, mentor undergraduate students (Andre et al., 2017; Lopez, 2016). Hispanic American mentors who share similar cultural heritage as Hispanic American students have a higher likelihood of establishing a positive rapport (Lopez, 2016). The relationship also improved the mentor's ability to assist Hispanic American students with college adjustments (Lopez, 2016). Thus, faculty who are bilingual and familiar with the Hispanic American culture were more likely to increase students' engagement in college activities among Hispanic students (Lopez, 2016).

### ***Tutoring Services***

The diverse needs of AAHA students require support services that will accommodate the needs of a diverse student population (AlMazrua, 2016; Ciscell et al., 2016; Nashua, 2020; Hesser & Gregory, 2016; Tangwe, 2016). Tutoring is a standard service that is used frequently in colleges as a learning tool. Although some students like the idea of being tutored by other students, others do not. A study by Ciscell et al. (2016) explored the idea of the perceived negative stigma attached to peer tutoring. This



perception created a barrier for students who needed the service but refused to use it.

Ciscell et al. (2016) also noted that the perception of a negative stigma primarily impacted underrepresented AAHA students. Negative stigmas for AAHA students often perpetuates feelings of inferiority and may reduce students' academic performance.

Overall, stigmas undermine a student's confidence and may interfere with social and emotional well-being, in addition to the academic performance.

Ciscell et al. (2016) used student focus groups to substantiate the perceptions of stigma. Students affirmed that they felt stigmatized by tutors and fellow students when they used the academic services (Ciscell et al., 2016). Another theme that emerged in the study included making decisions between employment commitments and the support programs (Ciscell et al., 2016). Students also reported confusion about times and places for the programs, and some students were fearful of attending the programs alone. Systemic tutoring issues included the lack of trained tutors in certain subjects and the lack of information about the expectations of peer tutoring (Ciscell et al., 2016). One positive aspect of peer tutoring was that the students could negotiate various times and places to meet to improve the management of their schedules (Ciscell et al., 2016). Tutoring that accommodates students' schedules may assist students to excel in their assignments. However, mentors should be knowledgeable on the subjects they teach and trained in mentoring techniques.

### ***Learning Communities (LC)***

First-year students often struggle with adjusting to college life. For AAHA students who enter college with low GPAs this adjustment was minimized when they are

placed in LC. Students live in closely supervised dormitories and take classes together where they are guided and academically supported by staff and their peers (Kezar & Kitchen, 2019; Tinto, 2017). Thus, LC may be defined as a cohort of students whose classes are linked together. Diverse student populations require that colleges use assorted designs, techniques, and formats in the types of support offered by colleges (Brookfield, 2019). Ruppert and Meadows (2017) and Tangwe (2016) described the necessity of clearly defined goals for LC so that students' needs are assessed, executed, and monitored. Defining the goals and the methods used to achieve them will equip faculty and staff with tangible tools to assist students with their studies.

Although LC has existed for many years, AAHAs increased college access has increased LC usage and popularity (Loes et al., 2017). One significance of this type of academic support is the enhanced involvement when students are linked to each other socially and educationally (Buttram, 2016; Johnson & Stage, 2018). Tinto (2017) promoted the idea of LC, stating that the shared knowledge developed by networking with each other aided students in keeping them engaged in the learning process. Kezar and Kitchen (2019) contributed to the benefits of LC in their study by observing that students who lived on campus in smaller units had an increased opportunity to experience academic validation through the engagement of a specialized community. The learning units included academic advising; supportive Colleges should consider their student community's composition when deciding how to appropriate resources for LC.

### ***Collaborative Learning***

Similar to LC is collaborative learning (CL). Loes et al. (2017) maintained that

CL is superior to other learning techniques, because it uses the diverse perspectives of learners to increase knowledge for those who are involved in the group (Laux et al., 2016; Loes et al., 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017). Learning occurs when new knowledge is introduced and assimilated from multiple students and diverse perspectives (Laux et al., 2016; Loes et al., 2017). Loes et al. (2017) suggested that students who learn collaboratively demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement, which may result in a more positive attitude toward the subject they study. Collaborative interactions also foster interpersonal and problem-solving skills as supportive networks are formed among learners (Johnson & Stage, 2018). Laux et al. (2016) surmised that collaborative learning is evident in many workplaces, and students may be motivated to invest more time and effort in their class studies. Shared alternative methods of understanding and absorbing course information are disseminated in the group (Loes et al., 2017). Loes et al. (2017) posited that active academic engagement is a strong predictor of educational persistence leading to college completion. Developing consistent and positive connections that can be shared with faculty can encourage and stimulate conversations that express concern and caring. Caring and concern are two elements that bond students to institutions and generate persistence.

Although the positive characteristics of CL are laudable, negative aspects must also be considered when developing CL groups. Loes et al. (2017) explored mediators which were confounding influences, such as race, gender, student backgrounds, academic ability, aspirations, and other college experiences that may increase or decrease the effectiveness of CL. Additionally, Loes et al. (2017) identified influences such as a

student's dependence on others, inability to complete assignments, disruptive group behavior, and unresolved group conflict were factors that could mitigate the effectiveness of CL. However, the study by Loes et al. (2017) also concluded that even with the influence of mediators and mitigating factors, CL had positive results for students who participated in the groups. The findings in my study indicated that CL was beneficial and increased the likelihood that students would remain in college to continue their education. CL was a significant tool that contributed to positive peer interactions that increased persistence in education (Loes et al., 2017). This learning strategy is a significant tool for AAHA students who have distinctive styles and would benefit from the diversity of learning styles and supports from peers in a CL group (Tinto et al., 1993). Educators recognize that knowledge is processed and internalized differently for students. Incorporating varied learning modalities and assessments enables students to learn more effectively.

### ***Supplemental Instruction***

Supplemental instruction (SI) is a strategy that is often peer-led to assist students in improving their skill, particularly in a challenging course, and is more course specific (Lindsay et al., 2017). Researchers Skoglund et al. (2018) described SI as a powerful learning tool, which has been a proven resource to improve students' grades and reduce attrition. In a study conducted by Lindsay et al. (2017), Hispanic American students were 40% as likely to succeed, and African American students were about one-third as likely to succeed when compared to White students (p. 208). SI shares many techniques with CL strategy in that they both require collaboration with others, develop cooperation

skills, and increase academic proficiency Whereas CLs may be guided by a faculty person, SIs are often led by student peer-leaders who are trained and paid by the college. The Skoglund et al. (2018) study was significant because results from the data confirmed the efficacy of SI as a course-specific learning strategy for colleges to use in academic development. This supportive strategy was effective for students at risk of failing in a specific course (Skoglund et al., 2018). Often AAHA students benefit from SI instruction. Some students learn and retain information from peers in a relaxed learning environment and similar communication styles.

The study conducted by Tangwe (2016) substantiated Skoglund et al. (2018) findings that SI was a useful resource. Tangwe (2016) contributed to SI, noting qualities which increased the efficacy of SI, such as the settings and interactions. Some participants declared that environments with open communications that invited ideas and welcomed discussions added to a positive, non-threatening setting. One participant valued one-on-one consultation, and another commented on receiving good grades when helped by the peer leader (Tangwe, 2016). Leaders who respected students and were invested and committed to their group's learning were other qualities that affirmed and supported learning (Tangwe, 2016). Participants in Tangwe's study commented on program and leadership characteristics that reduced the efficacy of the SI support. Some participants disliked meeting in places that were similar to a classroom setting. The scheduled meeting times were a disadvantage for some participants and closed during crucial times when they needed help like on weekends or during examinations. Other students commented that some peer-leaders had limited academic skills that should have

disqualified them from assisting students with assignments. Although others stated that some peer-leaders enabled students who were irresponsible in completing assignments which discouraged student engagement (Tangwe, 2016). Findings from this study concurred with Tinto's (2017) theory that students who are not both emotionally and academically supported are less likely to persist and increase their retention in an institution. Supportive faculty who assists AAHA students in completing assignments also increased their engagement in college (Tinto et al., 1993). The characteristics of effective SI include well-trained, respectful, and committed peer-leaders, comfortable environments, and attention to individual needs.

### **Implications**

This study's results have practicality for LPC in that it will inform the college about the concerns of AAHA students regarding academic support. Based on the results, the project that resulted from this study is a PD training to present the study's findings. The workshop will start with a historical overview of the problem regarding the academic support at LPC and the current programs. Tinto (2017) maintained that college completion is the goal of most students who start college. However, AAHA students may encounter interrelated and complex factors that influence their goal of college completion. Factors such as negative feelings of self-efficacy, underprepared academic skills, and poor academic integration are strong influences of college attrition for AAHA students (Broda et al., 2018; Francis, 2019; McCullagh, 2016; Tinto, 2017).

Academic supports assist AAHA students to persist in college by strengthening their academic skills when designed to meet the needs of the students (Laux et al., 2016;

Lindsay et al., 2017; Loes et al., 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017; Skoglund et al., 2018; Tangwe, 2016). Additionally, academic supports strengthen study skills, learning strategies, and knowledge retainment when offered in culturally sensitive and timely ways for students (Branch, 2017; Caballero, 2020; Matthews, 2017; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017). Themes gathered from the interviews provided faculty and administrators with representations of the students' perceptions of LPC's academic supports. A summary of the literature provided evidence of the educational impact of AAHA students' academic support needs. Faculty training included recommendations as suggested by the participants for changes in academic support and highlighted positive areas that are constructive for AAHA students in academic support.

Values and attitudes of faculty and administrators on college campuses may influence AAHA students' belief in their ability to succeed (Bishop, 2018; Sullivan, 2017; Tinto, 2017). AAHA students who are supported academically are likely to continue their education and be equipped with marketable employment skills for increased job opportunities (Bishop, 2018; Henslin, 2017). Furthermore, AAHA students who have college degrees are better prepared to engage in social issues and make positive changes to improve their communities (Bishop, 2018; Bouyer, 2017; Henslin, 2017).

### **Summary**

The gap in college completion is a pressing concern for educational institutions, communities, and students. College completion is a priority for LPC, a developing university with an increasingly diverse student population. Although the percentage of

AAHA students has increased enrollment in colleges, the completion rates are low compared to White students. LPC implemented academic supports to assist AAHA students in completing classes successfully. In a 2016 evaluation of cultural competence at LPC, the administration and faculty expressed concern about the efficacy of AAHA students' academic support. To address this concern, LPC's provost expressed her approval of the proposed study to explore the perceptions of the AAHA students and improve their understanding of their needs in using academic supports. AAHA students are often first-generation students who are underprepared for the rigors of college academics. These students were often from low-income families and depend on financial aid and employment to pay for college tuition and other expenses while simultaneously maintaining high GPAs. Additionally, multiple challenges and obstacles interfere with the goal of degree attainment for AAHA students. The study will assist administrators and faculty in accomplishing their ultimate mission of preparing students to meet the needs in their communities.



## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Qualitative Research Design and Approach**

The purpose of the study was to explore LPC's AAHA students' perspectives regarding (a) the underutilization of the college's academic supports and (b) their suggestions for what would increase their use of academic supports. Qualitative research focuses on resolving a problem or social phenomenon and finding ways to modify, change, and improve practice or process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), this type of research is interpretive and based on the belief that people construct knowledge as they make meaning of their experiences.

I considered various qualitative designs for this study, including narrative inquiry, phenomenology, ethnography, and basic qualitative research. The narrative inquiry involves retroactive storytelling about biographical interactions in life (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Since this design did not explore a specific phenomenon, I dismissed this type of format. I rejected the phenomenology design, because it involves interpreting shared experiences, rather than perceptions, as in a basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The ethnography design examines patterns of culture and requires observations and fieldwork (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)). I dismissed this design, because the problem in this study was to explore perceptions of AAHA students rather than the cultural standards in the ethnography design.

The basic qualitative design was best suited to explore and interpret the perceptions of AAHA students, which focused on a phenomenon, the academic supports at LPC. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the basic qualitative study is supported

through constructed knowledge by exploring the “meaning a phenomenon has for those involved” (p. 24). Merriam and Tisdell further explained that although there are similarities in most qualitative research, the basic qualitative design differs in that it explores how people interpret experiences, ascribe meaning to experiences, and construct their worlds. This design is a comprehensive exploration of a contemporary phenomenon that identifies patterns and examples to understand the phenomenon and focuses on constructing new knowledge (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

### **Participants**

Participants for the research were AAHA students enrolled at LPC. As an adjunct instructor at this institution, I excluded my current and former students to avoid bias and conflict of interest. Criteria for study participants were AAHA students 18 years or older. I used a nonrandom, purposeful, and small sample to explore the specific population and phenomenon, as recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), which in this study was the academic support at LPC. The smaller sample of nine participants allowed me to explore the complexity of the academic support system. After receiving approval from LPC’s and Walden’s institutional review boards (IRB), the provost allowed a staff person to email my participant invitation to AAHA students at LPC (Provost, personal communication, January 24, 2017).

Participant invitations were emailed to AAHA students by an assigned person at LPC. The invitations included information about the purpose of the research, the tentative time commitment, and a promise of a \$25 Amazon gift card for those who participated in the study. The invitation also included my contact information for those who wanted to

volunteer for the study. LPC's administrative staff emailed the participant invitation to AAHA students based on their racial identification. I had planned to use a computer-generated program to select participants from many volunteers. However, this was unnecessary because I only received six requests after a 2-week deadline had elapsed. A second emailed invitation did not generate more participants. I emailed the consent form to the six students who expressed an interest. When three students responded with their consent via email, I scheduled interviews. Two of the remaining students who expressed interest and returned their consent had interview scheduling conflicts, and we planned to conduct interviews after the mid-winter school break. One student did not return the consent form.

### **Data Collection**

The purpose of the study was to explore LPC's AAHA students' perspectives regarding (a) the underutilization of the college's academic supports and (b) their suggestions for what would increase their use of academic supports. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested a nonrandom, purposeful, and small sample as most appropriate when exploring a specific population and phenomenon, such as LPC's academic support services. A researcher should start with a smaller number of participants to provide an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon; a larger sample might have diminished the ability to delve into an event's complexity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended interviews as the most effective instrument to capture participants' thoughts and experiences to explore a specific phenomenon, and as such, I designed interview questions for this study. As a protective measure to reduce the risk of harm to

the participants and confidentiality, I used pseudonyms for their names, as Merriam and Tisdell proposed. Informed consent emailed to participants advised them of their rights, including the use of the research, discontinuance of their participation, and the time commitment involved with the study. Participants' responses were kept confidential by conducting the interviews in a secluded and safe environment. All participants' information was stored in a password protected computer, to which only I have access.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) proposed that the data collection protocol includes identifying the participants, acquiring permission for the study, collecting, and recording the data. LPC allowed me access to the college's facility after receiving permission consent from Walden University's IRB. I conducted the interviews considering ethical issues concerning subject matter that might have been stressful for some participants. I was also mindful of power imbalances because I was an adjunct at LPC, explaining that my role in this study was a researcher rather than an instructor. I developed ten open-ended probing questions to elicit the thoughts and opinions of the participants.

Data collection was originally planned as face-to-face interviews. With the onset of the COVID 19 virus, however, Walden University's IRB approved changes in the data collection formats, still allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perceptions. Within a few days after starting the in-person interviews, governmental officials-imposed contact restrictions to reduce the transmission of the virus. LPC's campus closed, and students were sent home. Classes transferred to asynchronous formats. I waited until students and faculty had acclimated to the required online learning format and requested that the administration resend the participant invitation. I also sent

emails to two students who initially indicated they would participate in the research and scheduled a phone interview with one, while the other participant decided to write her responses. At my request, the invitation was emailed a final time. Five volunteers responded and emailed their consent. I scheduled the interviews. There was a total of nine participants in the study. I used three different data collection formats: three in-person interviews before the virus restrictions, five phone interviews, and one written, emailed interview.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) advised that each interview should begin with an interview protocol that should be established before commencing the interview process. The protocol I designed included a reiteration of the purpose of the research, time commitment, and confidentiality, as recommended by Creswell and Creswell. I also assured participants that they could cease their involvement at any time without penalty or negative connotations. In-person and telephone conversations were conducted in private and secluded rooms free of distractions and established a comfortable rapport as recommended by Creswell and Creswell. Although I could not see facial expressions or body language in the phone interviews, our conversations were relaxed, mixed with occasional laughter and brief pauses for reflections. I recorded the interviews to preserve the data's authenticity and wrote notes during our conversations. The transcriptionist signed a confidentiality agreement. All transcribed and recorded conversations are stored in a password-protected computer. The demographics of the participants are listed below.

**Table 1***Demographics of participants*

	Male	Female	AA	HA	Full-time Student	Employed Part-time	Lives on Campus	Lives off Campus
1. Timothy	X		X		X		X	
2. Barry	X		X		X	X		X
3. Maggie		X	X		X	X		X
4. Mia		X	X		X		X	
5. Gina		X		X	X	X		X
6. Abby		X		X	X	X		X
7. Brianna		X		X	X	X		X
8. Elise		X		X	X	X		X
9. Anna		X	X		X		X	

**Data Analysis**

The preferred method of analysis for qualitative data is that it should occur simultaneously during data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The analysis requires the researcher to use inductive processes by gathering pieces of data to develop themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the point of saturation is achieved when no new information is forthcoming from the interviews.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated analysis involves organizing the data, coding the data, and constructing descriptions to develop themes. The process of synthesizing the themes by bracketing words and phrases into a

category and labeling them according to the main idea that they represent is essential to the findings' discussion. Coding required a repetitious review of the transcripts and notes to gain an accurate understanding of what the participant tried to communicate. Using direct words and phrases, along with the intended meaning assisted me in capturing thick descriptions of the participant's intent. Saldana (2016) described the elemental process as coding approaches for coding data. I used one of the methods in the elemental process: in vivo coding. In vivo coding identifies behaviors and practices that explain participants' views and actions and is appropriate for small-scale studies (Saldana, 2016). In the initial coding cycle, I created an overview of the data from the interviews by categorizing codes that represented common patterns. In the second cycle of coding, I analyzed the data by prioritizing those ideas that were most salient and then developed those ideas in the third cycle of coding. The convergence of repetitious ideas which generated the codes resulted in themes for the study.

Essential components of qualitative research include the concepts of interpretations, credibility, and trustworthiness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interpretations involved summarizing the findings and comparing them to current literature to explain the lessons I learned from the study. For a more thorough interpretation, I compared the findings with relevant literature and conducted a self-reflective review to reduce personal biases.

My data analysis was an ongoing process that was conducted simultaneously with the interviews. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) warned that researchers must focus their attention on data that will provide insight into the research questions and continuously

note repetitious ideas. To strengthen credibility of the study, I used peer debriefing requesting the assistance of a research professor employed by a local university to review the interview questions to ensure they were appropriate to answer the research questions and to check for any discriminatory language (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After I recorded the interviews, they were transcribed by a person who signed a letter of confidentiality. I used member checking to correct transcribed errors or misunderstandings during the interviews. Member checking is a process to determine the accuracy of the transcripts and qualitative findings by allowing the participants to review the final report or description to verify the documents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data analysis involved reviewing the transcribed interviews and personal notes for relevant data units that provided insight to the research questions. I reviewed the data, noting the frequent references to similar ideas. Johnson and Christensen (2017) described this initial stage as first-stage coding. I charted each participant's thoughts on a graph to help visualize my analysis, a process suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). I conducted the second-stage coding, as described by Johnson and Christensen, by comparing ideas and then grouping reoccurring thoughts. Initially I recorded verbatim language to guard against my biases. The convergence of words grouped with similar meanings eventually formed participants' views, which I displayed on a chart to provide an overview of the most prominent reoccurring responses. A third review of the data helped to ensure that I captured thoughts I may have missed in the first two reviews. I documented the frequency of respondents' concerns by the number of times they used the same wording during their interview. I began to recognize similar patterns and reached a



point of saturation as described by Merriam and Tisdell. I repeated the process until I did not recognize new patterns or themes. The data I collected were robust enough to respond to the research questions.

Discrepant cases in research are those cases that disconfirm the other patterns in the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) maintained that intentionally searching for discrepant cases compels the researcher to conduct a more in-depth critical assessment of the data. Although some of the participants had not used the academic support services, they expressed ideas for improving the services. I did not discover any discrepant cases in this study. Each participant voiced varied opinions about improvements for the academic support services.

### **Data Analysis Results**

Prompted by a 2016 cultural intelligence report that indicated AAHA students underutilized the academic support services, LPC administrators sanctioned this study to understand the low usage reasons. LPC implemented academic support services to strengthen academic skills. Tinto (1993) posited that insufficient academic skills were one reason for early withdrawals from college.

Four themes emerged from the data: Theme 1: Knowledge of academic support resources; Theme 2: Lack of diversity; Theme 3: Feelings of discomfort, isolation, and lack of belonging; and Theme 4: Inconsistent academic support and accountability. Even though there are distinctions among the themes, the lines are blurred, because they are codependent and interdependent.

**Table 2***Research themes, frequency of participants' responses*

Themes	Frequency (no. of times referenced)	Gender Male Participants 2 Female Participants 7
Theme 1, Knowledge of academic resources. Places to Study, 12 Advisors, 5 Commuters, 3	20	Males, 5 Females, 15
Theme 2, Lack of diversity. People of Color, 12 Diversity, 24 Minorities, 15	51	Males, 9 references Female, 42 references
Theme 3, Feelings of discomfort, isolation, and lack of belonging. Fear, Distrust, Left Out, Isolated, 28 Discomfort, 34	62	Males, 21 references Females, 41 references
Theme 4, Inconsistent academic support, and accountability. Help, 74 Support, 8	82	Males, 16 references Females, 66 references

**Theme 1: Knowledge and Availability of Academic Resources**

College enrollment has increased significantly for AAHA students in many colleges, and the same was true for LPC. The low completion rates for AAHA students compelled colleges to strengthen learning skills by providing academic support services. In 2016, LPC started an academic support class to assist students with study strategies and essential learning skills, called ACE. The college offered tutoring services, but according to the facilitator, students rarely used the service. ACE is a voluntary class for any student. However, at LPC, when faculty and academic advisors recognize students

are struggling academically, they are referred to the ACE class. Attendance was voluntary, and there were no penalties for non-attendance. Each year the ACE services changed to accommodate students' needs. In addition to tutoring and paper reviews, LPC implemented a formal class entitled GE 099 for newly enrolled and ongoing students with low GPAs. The weekly GE 099 class is a more intense curriculum and usually had an average enrollment of 20 students. Individual mentoring and study groups were added to ACE services. Paper reviews used a computerized service entitled Online Writing Lab and required appointments.

Theme 1, Knowledge and availability of academic resources emerged as significant for several research participants who reflected their use or understanding of the resources. One interview question asked participants to characterize their experiences with the academic supports. Their responses centered on timing, engagement, and kinds of available services. Brianna initially said, "I honestly do not know much about the resources." Later Brianna acknowledged she had a tutor, and added, "Well when it comes to certain um resources um I don't know there's a bit of there's a bit of it feels weird um just getting that from what I've seen all the people offer that are all white." Brianna further remarked,

I feel there is a handful students, or not a handful, but many students, the people that particularly live on campus. That do get a lot of those resources and like they get involved in the community, but for me as an off-campus student, I feel like the school could get more involved with us. And inform us also about the resources like doing um, I don't know send an email to the off-campus students or doing

like a chapel about it, because I feel like that didn't happen for us and when we were not um, obviously we're not there all the time, we don't get that interaction with the teacher that can inform us of all these other things. I was in the academic for success class we had um, in that class, they gave us a tutor and um they gave us just like an online reflection of how we were coming along, but we weren't given more information about resources we could use inside um LPC.

Maggie related that initially she was unaware of all the services, but eventually did learn more throughout the year. "Um I would say a lot of times, it definitely was a learning process as the year went on that I learned more and more what was available."

Melissa expressed her ideas about the support services from a different perspective. Melissa was aware of the services but declared they did not meet her needs.

Um, let's see. From what I, from what I used and from what I've seen, I think it's very, it's very systematic, if that makes sense. Everything works and it's almost like very scheduled, very timely. And the way that I have encountered I guess the people who work within the academic services. Um, it's almost a little bit too structured for me. I mean, I guess the way that I've grown up, whenever and I was also home schooled, so when I had an issue and I needed academic help, it was very, it was very, it wasn't very structured. It was very ok, what do you need? Um let's see, let's try to work this out you know. And it wasn't very like fast and try and get it done. It was very, it was very, just very slow and make sure that I feel like what I need is being done. And from what I seen, um the last time that I had um an academic issue that I need resolved. It was very almost it was almost very.

It was all treated through email. So, it felt like there was a protocol being followed and that um almost like I wasn't being seen. It was like ok well this could fix this, and this can fix this.

Gina responded to the interview question regarding involvement with the support services stating, "Right now, I can't say I have much involvement, because I'm a commuter." Gina's response implied living off campus interfered with utilizing the services.

Abby expressed similar thoughts about the academic services, "Well, since I'm a commuter, I don't, I don't really know. I wouldn't say I know all of the services that are offered by LPC."

Maggie also commented that involvement with the support services was limited because she did not live on campus.

She (E.) definitely helped me like create a schedule, um helped me just plan things out and when I did utilize it (academic services) it was actually great, which has stopped me from using a lot of stuff was not living on campus.

Two participants, Timothy and Mia, had positive comments about the support services. Timothy stated, "I will have to say that the library and even professors and study groups they can give out certain information that I did not know or can enhance with what I am learning." Although the library was not primarily an academic support, several participants referred to the library as a supportive service possibly because one of the librarians was also responsible for assigning mentors for academic support.

Mia remarked,

Other than the fact that I think they're better than some colleges, I think. I think we do a pretty good job at making people feel welcome enough to use them and we advertise the uh resources because we have orientation. So, at the beginning of orientation, you figure out where all the resources are early that is involved in, who comes in and talk about them, where you can find them online, if you're an online student.

Participant's comments regarding academics revealed that although they were aware of some of the academic resources, there were resources about which they were unaware. According to Ciscell et al. (2016), the lack of knowledge about resources is a barrier that obstructs the use of a service or support. For AAHA students who have experienced educational difficulties, the lack of knowledge about a resource may be a barrier that adds to the complexity of obtaining academic assistance. AAHA students overwhelmed by multiple decisions and who are less self-regulated, may choose to ignore the services rather than manage yet another choice (Broda et al., 2018; Tinto, 2017).

## **Theme 2: Lack of Diversity**

Perceptions are paired with emotional responses which guide behavior (Ciscell et al., 2016). Many AAHA students often learn early in their education how to negotiate classes where they are the single person or one of a few people of color in the room. Ellis et al. (2018) reported that although White students' dominance in the classroom is often expected among some AAHA students, it may create a sense of vulnerability and stress. Other AAHA students raised in low-income communities may have attended less integrated schools. Although AAHA students may become accustomed to situations

where they are in the minority in a classroom, the situation is quite different in college where AAHA students must manage a variety of new scenarios on a campus. Whereas in the primary grades, students return to familiar settings at the end of the day, college life is different (Ellis et al., 2016). Research participants were asked to identify barriers that might prevent them from accessing the services. Barry stated, “Like me, I went to all Black schools my whole life, I was comfortable, but now that I’m here [with] mostly predominately White people it’s like they make me uncomfortable.” Later Barry commented,

Like we can have like more diverse, more diverse like approaching stuff. Like I got a sociology class. Like the way we approach things is cautious they don’t want to step on anybody toes, make them uncomfortable. But I feel like we need to open up more be more inviting to making them comfortable. I know I’m a minority most of the time, but the way I was raised is around all the Black people, so it’s like never the minority in them situations, but now it’s a whole different situation, total 360.”

Anna stated,

So, we have like Black resources, like I said, and they would kind of shy away from using them because they don’t want people to look at them like, Oh, she’s going to go tell and like the Black lady is going to fix it and da-da-da-da-da. Do that make sense?”

AAHA students may feel insecure without the presence of authority figures with whom they can identify. Jones (2020) stated that the prevalence of White dominated

faculty and staff promotes feelings of inferiority and perpetuates stereotypical ideas of inadequacy for African American students. Such feelings and ideas influence and may dissuade students from seeking assistance. Diversity among staff and faculty may increase AAHA student engagement and learning in educational institutions as they interact with people with whom they can relate. (Schmid et al., 2016; Tinto, 1993).

Gina wrote,

We need more cultural diversity in our faculty, professors, foreign languages courses, female coaches to women's sports, local community women speakers in ministry, or business, etc. I don't think it's enough yet. I mean, it could get better if they invest in hiring diversity, still waiting for a Hispanic female professor.”

Timothy noted,

Uh, something to improve the service, I'll say more bilingual, like for the Hispanics more bilingual of staff members so people can just relate one on one with them and even uh for African Americans have more people of color to be there for comfort and moral support and they can help say things in a different way how a normal White American would say.

Barry's thoughts about improving the academic support service aligned with the theory proposed by Tinto (1993). Barry commented,

Mainly diversity. Like most of the teachers here are White. So, like I know we got one Mexican, but we got like, well we got one Mexican advisor. Like teachers, we got one Black teacher, but it's like if you put the people in them positions, that like I know this school ain't got as much diversity, but as we've



grown in diversity you should like adjust and have everybody come together as one. Like no matter how you like it, like Black people, or White people, they won't mix well, or Mexican, they won't mix as well as if they're with their own race, they want what is comfortable, so diversity big time.

Timothy commented,

I also think you should have been if possible, for us to get a full-time professor that is of color. I personally think that we do need more professors of color. I know I've had a total of one throughout my years of college and I believe that there needs to be more besides the staff members, IT members.

Mia remarked, "From an African American perspective, I wish there were classes about different cultures, which we're working on. I am on a council that is working on that." Sanctioning of this study demonstrated LPC's commitment to improve diversity and become culturally competent. However, currently, there is only one full time faculty of color.

### **Theme 3: Feelings of Discomfort, Isolation, and Lack of Belonging**

Studies have determined that a student's sense of belonging is essential in fostering student engagement and learning (Alicino, 2017; Bishop, 2018; Tinto, 2017). Belonging engenders a feeling of comfort in one's environment, resulting in reduced stress and a sense of wellbeing. Although engendering a sense of belonging in students is not solely the responsibility of an institution, Tinto (2017) maintained that strategically planning to generate the sense of belonging is significant to consider when encouraging

the use of academic resources. Participants in the study made repeated references to their lack of comfort at LPC.

Abby reflected, “So, if there was maybe different tutors available for the same thing, um then that would, that would make me feel a bit more comfortable reaching out to a tutor of my choice, where I feel I could really do more.”

Barry passionately responded to the question about barriers that could prevent him from using academic resources,

Just like the comfortability thing. Like it’s like a big barrier. Most people is not comfortable with doing stuff that way or being around something you’re not used to being. Like me, I went to all Black schools my whole life, I was comfortable, but now that I’m here in a mostly predominately White people so it’s like do I want to go to that get that help and be involved in that. So, that’s a big barrier.

Barry elaborated on suggestions for improvements at LPC,

I would probably push for like more diversity so like, we got chapel it’ll be like the music. You can switch the music around and make everybody enjoy or like just like events, it’s Black History Month, we haven’t had a Black History Event, yet. So, something like that. We can have paintings where they can put up a Martin Luther King picture up or just like have a dedicated at least one class where 30 minutes of a class period just to like telling people about things or know you know like Hispanics, like just mix it up for everybody let them have their own thing. Or have like a Spanish music at chapel. Just make everybody feel comfortable you got to understand their music or enjoy you got to understand

where other people are from. I feel like, yea I feel like we need somebody that um everybody can be comfortable with. So, like say for instance you're like a girl, and all that academic advisors are who you go to are a man, they probably can't go to with their feminine problems to them and get help. A man who probably don't want to talk to another man because he might feel weak or not masculine or whatever. So, you gotta make sure everybody got somebody they can go to.

Tinto's corpora support Barry's suggestions and observations to enhance college engagement and feelings of inclusion. Faculty and staff who mirror the student population promote levels of comfort, which encourage students to engage in college activities, including academic resources. Lorenz (2016) affirmed that faculty interactions with students impact academic activities. Faculty who possess a shared culture with students increase feelings of inclusion that may influence participation in academic resources (Branch, 2017; Caballero, 2020; Matthews, 2017; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017).

Gina stated, "There is a lack of trust on campus, that I don't have much of people-trust with my life, or if anyone would help to protect me." Trust is closely related to comfort and open environments that foster social and academic supportive networks and that encourage institutional engagement (Jackson & Thomas, 2020).

Abby noted,

Well, when it comes to certain um resources um I don't know there's a bit of there's a bit of it feels weird um just getting that from what I've seen all the people offer that are all White. That's not saying something, that's not saying

something against White people. But it's also saying um, I'm just brought up in a different environment and I understand things differently than they do.

AAHA students who feel uncomfortable and associate the feeling with the belief that their culture is not valued on an educational campus may be ambivalent using campus resources (Tinto, 1997).

Perceptions of belonging are impacted by pre- and post-educational experiences (Tinto, 2017). Although colleges may not influence pre-institutional experiences, they can be mindful of the totality of interactions at an institution from the application process to faculty relationships to activities on campus (Bishop, 2018; Tinto, 1993; 2017).

Perceptions about acceptance will impact the learning environment (Biermeier, 2017; Coburn, 2017; Lopez, 2016; Tinto, 2017). Without planned interventions or strategies, students who live on campus may have minimal engagement at the college (Tinto, 1993) and may be even more extreme for those who live at home. Participants' responses to the question which asked what would encourage or discourage them from seeking academic support, were varied.

Brianna commented,

Um like a friend, not a friendship, but like a like if I knew my professors more if I got to know them more, I would feel a lot more comfortable asking them for help. Rather than just you know meeting them through the classroom and not really getting more interaction um that would discourage me of not getting to talk to them more, um so And also not feeling a part of the community like I can just walk around the campus and talk to somebody I walk by and ask them about, or

yea like not feeling a part of the community, that would discourage me because if I was a part of the community and I felt like I was and I was more involved and they involved us more I feel like I could um have a easier time talking to anybody and asking them also for help like students in my um like classmates or something like that, yea.

Timothy stated, “Hmmm, I feel that’s all in the mental state, but um, I know for a fact that I have to push out and get the best academic support I can maybe through a local tutor or maybe through um other classmates.”

Many AAHA students are first-generation college students who must navigate the college environment without previous familial experiences to guide or support them (Knaggs et al., 2015; Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015). First-generation AAHA college students are often the only person of color in their class. Tinto (2017) maintained that students who feel they do not belong might be less motivated to engage in the learning process.

Tinto (2017) maintained that engagement and participation alone do not engender a sense of belonging. Perceptions derived from engagement and participation create a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging may anchor a student to an institution and enhance persistence in college, including academic services (Tinto, 2017). Gina elaborated on the interview question regarding barriers that interfere with usage of the academic resource. Gina stated,

Some say they are there for you, but because there’s a lot of students, they can’t invest a lot of time for each student. There is not enough faculty. Since the last

couple semesters, I have tried to distance myself from building up relationships at (LPC) I only have couple professors I go to if I have any problems. In the beginning of going to (LPC) was wonderful and lovely, and I was so excited to go to school every day but now, I sense something has changed. Unsafe, could be another word of my expression.

For Gina, emotional support and trust are essential factors that contribute to engagement at the college. Williams and Raney (2020) stated relational authenticity is vital to establishing trust and comfort and fostering learning. Concomitant with trust is comfort and caring. Sullivan (2017) posited that care-related services support students' needs and increase engagement in activities that engender college completion.

Maggie expressed concern when asked what would encourage her to ask for assistance. She stated,

I think um definitely that type of environment and um people that you're around that kind of discourages me. Um, what I would say encourages me for support um is just people who actually go out of their way to reach out, or people who um really put a lot of effort into creating um very open environments for you to come to for help. Yea, what would encourage me was if I had a like a relationship.

Maggie responded to the question of what would enhance her educational experience, stating,

I also feel like we do need that support um because it was very hard for me to connect with certain um staff members because you know like I grew up different than probably how they grew up. So, we're looking at the world in two different

perspectives. Where I might struggle with something versus um how they might look at it. So, I feel like um that support group would help, especially with Blacks at the school and most of the Blacks who are um are all in athletics and so to juggle your academics plus athletics and most of us work as well is a lot. So, I think um just having that advocate in there, um to keep everybody on track and to remind us like we're here to get our education and that's what's important. So, I really feel like a support um in that area with somebody who can actually connect with us.

Barry spoke about a class where students were reluctant to discuss racially divisive issues. A learning climate is compromised when students do not feel comfortable seeking answers to ethically sensitive questions (Tinto, 2017). Institutions that successfully enhance college completion have focused on developing diversity, cultural awareness, and inclusive environments (Tinto, 1993). Conversely, ignoring such factors may stymie engagement in learning resources.

#### **Theme 4: Inconsistent Academic Support**

According to Tinto (2017), colleges and universities can proactively assist students to obtain their educational goals. Many students enter college with high academic expectations. Without previous college experiences students may not anticipate academic difficulties. Advisors can preemptively prepare students for and provide them with supportive resources. Lorenz (2016) found that support systems were essential for students and contributed to their persistence in education. Even students who had high GPAs in high school are likely to need support in college, more so for

students who struggled academically (Lorenz, 2016). Support systems are important for student persistence in college (Tinto, 2017). The word 'help' was noted 100 times during the interviews.

Tinto (2017) noted that the timing of support is equally important. Support offered late in a semester when academic failure is evident, may be too late. Sullivan (2017) maintained that academic and care-related support be available consistently throughout a student's education. Such programming demonstrates an institution's commitment to nurture student learning.

Participants commented on supportive environments at LPC referencing both informal study groups and formal academic resources interchangeably.

Maggie remarked,

Just having people um who are very understanding in those environments. Um and when I mean understanding I know that I don't, I just don't want to be looked at as incapable because I need help. Um (laugh) So, I think just having people in those environments who are willing to really push and hold them accountable um outside of just being at like on campus. Uh I think that that definitely would improve a lot of things for the minority students.

Anna remarked,

They could promote like services better. Like promoting, I mean just like um getting it out there to like our so like how we have our sports pages and things like that and post like oh there's a game this day a game that day. We can do like



there's a study group tonight. But not just post it on a smaller (LPC) site, we can post it so that all students can see.

Gina elaborated the lack of consistent academic support,

Not enough support members to go to. Some say they are there for you, but because there's a lot of students, they can't invest a lot of time for each student.

There is not enough faculty. Again, it goes about the investors, most have influences how to run the private college.

Another interview question focused on recommendations to enhance LPC's educational supports for AAHA students. Participant Maggie's reflections centered on assistance for academic accountability.

Maggie suggested,

So, I think um just having that advocate in there um to keep everybody on track and to remind us like we're here to get our education and that's what's important.

So, I really feel like a support um in that area with somebody who can actually connect with us.

Sullivan (2017) concurred with Tinto (2017) who maintained that students who feel supported with academic accountability may bond with an institution, adds to a sense of belonging. The combination of feeling supported and belonging contribute to positive influences that encourage use of a college's services, including academic support.

Most participants' comments about the academic support services at LPC were positive. However, none of the participants was aware of any specific services for AAHA students. Two students, Maggie and Anna, who lived off-campus, reported that it was not

easy to know when impromptu study sessions occurred in the evening hours. Lorenz (2016) wrote that continued assessment of students' needs for academic support, which varies with each person, is vital to promote student persistence.

Barry's comment on accountability support were positive,

I'll say it's good. We got like a lot of support systems like put in place where you can go study, or you can like keep up with your grades. We got like academic advisors they help, I got one I say I got a relationship with them that they keep you on top of things. So, if I'm falling off, like for instance, I had my injury and I missed school for a couple weeks they kept me on top of things, I didn't miss no work or anything.

Maggie's comments about her experiences were similar, "as far as faculty and staff, um we feel like they want you to succeed um so even without me asking for help, help was given to me or help was appointed to me." Maggie used a tutor's assistance to complete a class.

Mia said that the academic resources were good, but she did not know all the available resources, and thought the college could improve student awareness about the resources and study groups. She further stated,

They can probably be more advertised, just because the students don't know until halfway through the semester that the study group was there. Uh just getting more involved on campus. If you're involved, then people are going to see you in your class and say, hey we're having a study hall tonight rather than if you just go to class and leave then you're not going to make the connections with the students.

The academic advisor was a common factor that four participants discussed. LPC has one primary academic advisor who guides students in planning their schedules. Faculty members may also guide students in selecting courses. However, it is the academic advisor's responsibility to resolve scheduling conflicts. The advisor works to ensure students have required courses for graduation. Some research participants described the advisor as demonstrating care and concern when she talked with students about their schedules.

With regard to supportive course planning, Elise stated, "Well, I have never really had any problems, so I never really had to get any help from anybody besides my academic advisor would be the only thing, the only person I've ever gone to for anything."

Abby responded to the same question with this: "So, I really only go to any academic advisor or any faculty or staff member when I need something that I know I cannot get done myself."

Gina's response to the question regarding the academic support for AAHA students was broader and more passionate. She stated,

I have sense there are only two staff, who would fight for me, one is Black and female and the other is White and male. Dr. S, is the White and male, but is down to earth and he understands the struggles we go through, but my number one support staff is Mrs. S.J. She's Black and female, and she fully understands the struggle color people go through. She tries her best to support my academic, but there is one more person in the advisor staff, Mrs. L. She has been helping me

with my career degree plan since the beginning. She has shown her care and support.

Maggie remarked,

I really feel as if having other Black faculty um and staff members minority support groups for minorities or without um making it a segregation thing where we're um divided, if that makes sense, but I also feel like we do need that support um because it was very hard for me to connect with certain um staff members because you know like I grew up different than probably how they grew up. So, we're looking at the world in two different perspectives.

Sullivan (2017) discussed the importance of administrative responsibility to monitor faculty and staff interactions with students. Conscientious assessment of the campus environment and classroom learning may enable administrative leaders to make recommendations that will enhance services for a holistic approach for students.

Brianna noted,

I wasn't very involved in the class because the services that were provided like tutoring, and um like the meetings that we would have one on one with the professor. They were very helpful, and I felt that they um, I felt that they um very they were helping me, and they were intentionally doing it.

All research participants expressed ideas regarding, albeit some ideas were more forceful than others. There were no discrepant cases that disconfirmed the participants' thoughts; each person contributed to thoughts for improvements. Although some of the participants had not used the academic support services, each person had at least a partial

knowledge about the services, and each person contributed both positive and negative reflections regarding the services.

### **Summary of Data Analysis**

A summary of the data analysis provided insight into the research questions.

RQ1: How do African American and Hispanic American students' perceptions influence their use of academic support services at LPC?

RQ2: What do African American and Hispanic American students suggest that could increase their use of the support services at LPC?

Four themes emerged from the data: Theme 1, Knowledge academic support resources, Theme 2, Lack of diversity, Theme 3, Feelings of discomfort, isolation, and lack of belonging, and Theme 4, Inconsistent supportive academic services. Each of the themes was supported by Tinto's (1993; 2017) corpus on student persistence and early withdrawals from college. Moreover, each theme was supported by the recommendations suggested by the research participants.

Theme 1, Knowledge of academic support resources included knowing the available resources and how to access them. Student orientations include information about academic supports. Participants expressed confusion about the variety of academic supports and how to access them. The lack of clarity, consistency, and availability of the programs reduced the likelihood of participant usage. Clear descriptions of the programs, consistency in what programs offer, and multi-media communication about the availability may enhance the programs' usage.

Theme 2, Lack of diversity among faculty and staff was a significant concern for participants in this research. Some participants described negative emotions about being a minority in a White college. Students who feel at odds with the dominant culture in an institution are less likely to be involved in the programs (Tinto, 1993). A diverse staff and faculty could assist AAHA students' integration into the collegiate setting at LPC and demonstrate the college's commitment to AAHA inclusion. Diversity in staff and faculty will create an environment that reflects the student population and create a climate that embraces other cultures and respects each race and ethnicity's unique abilities.

Theme 3, Feelings of discomfort, isolation, and lack of belonging were important emotions that stymied some of the participants' resource involvement. According to Tinto (1987, 1998), minimal faculty of color implies a college does not have a high priority for its diverse student population. The lack of faculty of color in colleges with a diverse student population may create a suboptimal learning environment. Tinto (1993) maintained that it is an institution's responsibility to ensure that everyone on a college campus finds people with whom they relate socially and intellectually. The research data affirmed the theory proposed by Tinto which asserted that positive relationships are essential in creating comfortable environments that will increase feelings of belonging and bonding to an institution. LPC can encourage comfortability by including AAHA staff and faculty who can identify with AAHA students' experiences and diverse activities. With planning and commitment, each interaction with employees at LPC could engender feelings of comfort and belonging. Two participants who lived off-campus felt ignored or distanced from students who lived on-campus. LPC could provide an on-

campus room where off-campus students may rest, study, and engage with fellow students. Planned informal meetings with faculty could assist AAHA off-campus students with opportunities to develop a rapport with faculty.

Theme 4, Inconsistent academic support, and accountability was identified by several students as needing improvement. The inconsistency in academic support was on two levels, the first connecting with faculty and the second lack of consistent accountability. Building positive rapport with faculty beyond the classroom could increase opportunities to talk informally about matters that concern the student. Secondly, consistent accountability using mentors, staff, and faculty could encourage AAHA students to access needed academic support services. Specific academic support designed for AAHA students whose past educational experiences could impact usage. Academic supports require culturally skilled staff and mentors who are sensitive to AAHA students' needs.

Tinto (2017) posited that colleges and universities need to understand how perceptions shape behavior in education. This study's conceptual foundation was the theory of institutional departure from institutions of higher education as proposed by Tinto (1987, 1993). The theory posited that students drop out of college for a variety of personal and institutionally related reasons. The totality of college interactions influences decisions about educational goal attainment. This study evidenced some of those reasons:

- Relational connections
- Diversity in college faculty and staff
- Welcoming and embracive college environments

- Supportive services
- Knowledge of available services

For many AAHA students, previous educational experiences may have imprinted negative imageries and emotions that influence their college life engagement. However, institutions can implant new empowering impressions with strategic planning and commitment from each college member. One salient aspect of the study was the need for each person's responsibility to inclusivity for AAHA students in all campus settings. Usage of academic resources may increase with planning and the intentionality to a diverse faculty and staff who can foster positive rapport with AAHA students.

The themes generated from this study also affirmed the larger body of research which validated institutional characteristics, and social and academic campus communities, and familial characteristics as influential factors that contributed to AAHA student engagement and retention (e.g., Biermeier, 2017; Caballero, 2016; Capstick et al., 2019; Gatlin, 2020; Maree, 2015; Scherzberg, 2017; Tinto, 1987, 1993). The literature also supported the themes of belonging, feelings of discomfort, inclusivity, and faculty diversity (e.g., Gonzalez, 2018; Kezar & Kitchen, 2020; Lopez, 2016; Mizell, 2019). Indirectly low income was an additional factor, supported by the literature, that influenced AAHA students' use of the support services. Often, low-income students are employed and commute to college to save money. In doing so, students may be unable to participate in prompt study groups, meet with mentors, or attend late-night study sessions. The applicability of the theory of institutional departure from higher education institutions contributed to a gap in research relating to only AAHA students. Although



the results were unique to LPC and cannot be generalized, the informational may be beneficial to other institutions.

The findings in this study were supported by current literature and adhered to research guidelines described by Creswell and Creswell (2018), Merriam and Tisdell (2016), and Saldana (2016), as well as the standards required by Walden University. This study provided valuable information to administrators and staff at LPC to improve the academic support services after analyzing the data that generated the themes. Compliance with participants' protections reduced harm and provided confidentiality for the volunteers. A conference with the research committee determined professional development was the most appropriate dissemination of the findings.

### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

The increase of AAHA students in colleges and universities has accentuated the need for faculty and staff skilled in cultural diversity and competency. My study explored the perspectives of students and their use of academic resources. The literature review revealed multiple factors that influence student learning and how students' perceptions influenced their use of academic resources.

Section 3 describes the professional development (PD) project to demonstrate the research findings. This section also includes the rationale and goals of the project. Day 1 goals include an overview of the problem on a national and the local level at LPC and the conceptual framework foundational to the study. Day 2 goals align the research with LPC's mission and a review of the literature supporting the study. The final goal for Day 2 is a discussion of the data themes generated by research participants' interviews. On Day 3, attendees review the research participants' recommendations and consider potential action steps for LPC implementation. Singleton, the founder of Courageous Conversations, is the afternoon guest speaker.

Throughout the PD, I use a variety of learning tools. These tools include large and small group discussions, reflections on the learning, and processing future personal and institutional changes for LPC. Guest speakers provide contemporary and firsthand insights about AAHA students in education with practical application of the findings.

The literature review about PD training provides researched characteristics of PD's best practices as a foundation for the project to report the findings. An evaluation

will assess each day's PD goals. Finally, Section 3 includes implications for social change at LPC. Although the study results may not be generalized for use in other colleges, the outcomes may contribute to the broader research regarding factors that contribute to students' perceptions and use of academic support services.

### **Rationale**

The purpose of the study was to explore LPC's AAHA students' perspectives regarding (a) the underutilization of the college's academic supports and (b) their suggestions for what would increase their use of academic supports. Dissemination of the findings was considered as a position paper, an evaluation report, and PD. A position paper, also known as a white paper, was an ineffective way to disseminate the research results. A white paper details an organization's needs, including the historical background of policy conflicts and a literature review of the problem with recommendations for policy changes (Adkins, 2019). Since the research was a qualitative design that captured students' thoughts and emotions rather than a more cerebrally focused impact on policy change, I rejected the white paper.

An evaluation of the academic resource program at LPC was a second consideration for the findings project. Program evaluations are designed from the perspective of an objective person or persons whose purpose is to assess the effectiveness of an existing program (Masehela & Mabika, 2017; Webber et al., 2019). Program evaluations measure established outcomes and goals and may include cost-effective use of funds for a program. Although a program evaluation of LPC's academic support services may be needed in the future; this type of project was rejected. The study

explored subjective reactions, opinions, and considerations that would not be the program evaluations' goal.

The third project consideration was to do a PD training. A PD disseminates information to interested and invested participants with new knowledge, encouraging changes in conduct or program delivery (Canaran & Mirici, 2020). PD training was the most appropriate way to present the findings in this research. This format allowed AAHA students a way to express their perceptions which was not possible in other formats. The study's research findings revealed previously unknown AAHA students' perceptions of LPCs' academic resources. The findings addressed the gap in understanding students' perspectives and may impact the usage of the academic resources at LPC. A PD will disseminate research findings to stakeholders, administrators, faculty, and staff. Throughout the PD, I will discuss the use of the academic support services. Using the themes generated from the research interviews, I will guide the discussions on perceptions and how they influence usage of the support services. The final session on Day 3 includes action steps to increase awareness and recommendations for changes at LPC.

### **Review of the Literature**

The literature review was comprised of scholarly journal articles using ERIC, Walden University Library, Google Search, and Databases, including EBSCO, ProQuest Central, Sage online, and Educational Dissertations. Search terms included *PD, best practices for PD, teacher assessments, skill development, faculty development, diversity in PD, student success and PD, effective PD formats, faculty development for students of*

*color, and institutional requirements for PD, PD and cultural development, PD and cultural competency, PD, and cultural proficiency.*

### **Professional Development and Theoretical Foundations**

AAHA young people are less likely to complete a college education than White youth. PEW (2020) research reported that fewer than half of all young adults attend college. Low college completion rates among AAHA students concerned educators at LPC for a myriad of reasons. Ultimately, AAHA students without college degrees have fewer employment opportunities. The demand for skilled, technologically competent laborers has outpaced available workers (PEW, 2017). Equally important are social service skills requiring degreed persons with managerial and analytical acumen (PEW Research, 2020). The ramifications of incomplete college education among AAHA students impact all aspects of life. To encourage college completions, LPC designed academic support services to improve the skills of all students. However, the faculty observed that AAHA students infrequently used the services. I explored the perceptions of AAHAs' use of academic support services with suggestions to improve the academic support services. A PD was the most appropriate method to disseminate the findings with administrators, stakeholders, faculty, and staff at LPC.

The goal of PD in education serves two primary purposes, first to introduce new knowledge and skills and second to refresh, relearn, and enhance existing knowledge or skills. The format used to achieve these goals vary, but the implementation of PD will determine the degree to which its purposes were successful (Bozkuş & Bayrak, 2019; Uslu, 2017). Sampson (2019) used PD to educate teachers who needed to become

culturally proficient working with AAHA students. AAHA students who have poor academic skills require culturally competent teachers to understand and meet their needs. Sampson (2019) used a theoretical framework of cultural competence in designing a study to explore cultural proficiency among teachers. One of the essential building blocks used to develop cultural proficiency, was PD to instruct teachers on the various aspects of communicating and interacting with AAHA students (Sampson, 2019).

Culturally inclusive curriculums may be challenging for instructors unskilled in multicultural education. One significant aspect of planning inclusive curriculums is to identify biases in curriculums. Altman (2018) used PD as an action-based strategy that helped teachers explore and identify their instructional materials' biases. The PD's foundational theory, dyconscious racism, is the mindset among Whites who fail to consider how White dominance influences decisions and accepts White dominance as part of a valid lifestyle (Altman, 2018). The PD challenged teachers to reflect on their role as teachers and the impact of bias teaching on students. The action-based PD allowed teachers to make practical and immediate application of their learning to their curriculums.

The application of knowledge is foundational in the theory of constructivism learning. Using the constructivist approach, Zimmerman et al. (2017) designed a PD to equip instructors with student-centered learning skills instead of teacher-centered to comply with school administrators' new policies. The mandate required a transformation in teaching philosophy as well as changes in attitudes. Zimmerman reported the learning process as fluid, continuously updating as interaction with knowledge is processed and

internalized. PD and teaching modification efficacy resulted in a positive evaluation when teachers designed instructional lessons that demonstrated their competency in student-centered instruction (Zimmerman et al., 2017).

Academic success for AAHA students heavily dependent on several interrelated factors, including educational persistence demonstrated in the first year of college (Johnson & Stage, 2018). Instructors may contribute to student persistence using various learning strategies. Carner-Wylie (2020) created an action-oriented PD using the communities of practice theory and social learning theory to develop ways to prepare instructors with culturally inclusive learning techniques. Both foundational theories used in the PD supported the idea that learning occurs when people with a common interest share their concerns and plan solutions. Carner-Wylie used educators' teams to design a series of actions to increase cultural competency in a local school. Some students of color who attended the school were low achievers and complained of being oppressed. Carner-Wylie noted that AAHA students had the highest educational achievement gaps compared to White students. PD training was multifaceted with several interrelated factors. Among these factors discussed within the teams were ineffective policies, practices, and individual behaviors (Carner-Wylie, 2020). The action steps developed in the PD resulted in culturally responsive training strategies used as a guide for other school personnel staff (Carner-Wylie, 2020). Minimizing the educational gap for AAHA students must be intentional with methods that are proven to be effective. PD is essential to inculcate teachers with strategies to improve student learning, thereby decreasing the educational gap.

## **Professional Development Need Assessment**

Identification and awareness of needs are initial steps in preparing PD (Bozkuş & Bayrak, 2019). The awareness occurs on two levels. First is identifying a problem on a systemic organizational level (Bozkuş & Bayrak, 2019). LPC's current research identified a lack of diversity at LPC at the administrative and individual faculty levels as a concern for AAHA students. According to Lorenz (2016), the institutional environment is indicative of its commitment to diversity and inclusion. The PD training will inform the administration and faculty of the influences that data demonstrated that influenced AAHA students' use of academic services.

Educational institutions require ongoing revisions to maintain educational acumen and competitiveness. However, no two institutions are the same. Each one must assess the population's needs based on the student body and faculty (Adkins, 2019; Sullivan, 2017). When an institution recognizes or becomes aware of problems, concerns, or needs, it will often be the impetus to acquire new knowledge or skills that require PD among faculty (Bozkuş & Bayrak, 2019; Ippoliti, 2019; Meissel et al., 2016).

A second level is that individual needs of faculty, and staff may be identified through observations, self-reflection, and assessments (Adkins, 2019; Bozkuş & Bayrak, 2019; Canaran & Mirici, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al. 2017; Girvan, 2016). Assessments can identify specific needs and assist trainers in designing activities that will meet PD goals. Clearly outlined PD expectations inform attendees about the type of training they will receive. Likewise, pre- and posttests and evaluations can create objective measures of known, learned, and obtained objectives (Uslu, 2017).



Some organizational cultures may exhibit a low tolerance for diversity, as demonstrated in our current societal conflicts. Individual staff and faculty may unconsciously or even consciously mimic this culture without reflecting on students' effects or the college institution (Jackson & Thomas, 2020). PD can support AAHA student learning using innovative techniques and variations on content delivery in coursework. As the access to educational opportunities increased for AAHA students, so have challenges for colleges to equip faculty and staff to meet diverse populations' needs. PD is essential in providing staff with tools to meet the shift from instructor directed learning to student-directed learning and the student population (Jackson & Thomas, 2020). Two challenges faculty encounter are skill development to respond to AAHA students' needs and the assurance that pedagogical skills and content are inclusive of diverse learners. Additionally, faculty duties have expanded to include time-intensive relational bonding to support student learning both inside and outside the classroom (Jackson & Thomas, 2020). PD training may provide faculty with the techniques, skills, and tools to equip faculty on multilevels, including understanding each person's cultural foundation and how it impacts their learning preferences (Jackson & Thomas, 2020).

### **Professional Development Designs**

Professional training was often in the format of a long tiresome day with one trainer using materials that were irrelevant to the trainees (Jacob et al. 2019). The ineffective format has transitioned to a variety of designs focused on delivering applicable content that will enhance and strengthen skills and produce positive change (Jacob et al., 2019; Kimbrel, 2018; Mohr & Shelton, 2017). Koonce et al. (2019)

proposed the three following components for effective PD: (a) an intense focus on student-directed learning; (b) precise evaluation tools to measure learning; and (c) people and practiced centered, not program centered, training. Hollywood et al. (2016) warned that change in educational communities require strength-based, aggressive leadership who do not sacrifice long range goals for short range achievements.

Fostering AAHA student success for students underprepared in college academics requires faculty to learn new instructional skills and techniques. Effective PD can provide such skills with intentional and targeted planning. Jackson and Thomas (2020) suggested that faculty assume the dual roles as a leader and attendee at different PDs to gain new perspectives. This method of exchanging roles can help faculty assess the training from different vantage points resulting in training applicable to various learning styles (Kalinowski et al., 2020; Tino & Frison, 2018). Concomitant with the inclusion of learning style modalities in PD, Kalinowski et al. (2020) recommended that PD demonstrate and teach methods for embedding two objectives in their curriculums, learning skills with academic content. The support design is simultaneous and purposeful to assist AAHA student learning for those who may feel marginalized and embarrassed when they struggle to complete assignments (Pelletier, 2019). Girvan (2016) stressed the inclusion of practice and activity on the information taught in PD to ensure PD attendees can implement new techniques.

The technique of purposeful learning may not be new for some faculty; however, the intentionality of skill-building and simultaneously teaching strategy may present unique challenges. Pelletier (2019) discussed the importance of PD that encourages

faculty sharing ideas about the two-fold learning process. One method of communicating ideas is collaborative or team learning (CTL). Teaching CTL is a PD technique that encourages attendees to problem-solve collectively rather than in isolation (Canaran & Mirici, 2020). CTL fosters shared responsibility in finding solutions to problems. The combined skills and knowledge of two or more teachers require planning and accountability (Canaran & Mirici, 2020; Macià & García, 2016) to structure PD training in a format that elicits involvement and enthusiasm. Although the CTL may have advantages, there are also barriers. Researched data must guide collaborative PD training to support new knowledge. Often new ideas generate resistance. Institutions that employ less diverse faculty may understand problems through their culture's perspective with limited awareness of their biases and institutional impact.

Faculty are often overwhelmed with demands to revise their teaching acumen. Mandated curriculum changes for cultural diversity created anxiety for faculty (Pollock et al., 2016). Some seasoned instructors resisted change, comfortable with teaching techniques they learned early in their careers (Mohr & Sheldon, 2017). Disturbing also for faculty are changes that appeared to be politically motivated and, therefore, transient. Instructors may avoid examining biased beliefs reflected in curriculums when their teaching methods had been sufficient for most students who were White (Pollock et al., 2016).

Furthermore, new faculty may have concerns preparing curriculums for students of color who may be underprepared academically. Novice instructors are frequently assigned to new students who may be developing their skills and curriculums when told

to integrate diverse content (Pollock et al., 2016). Although some faculty welcome new ideas and change, however positive or negative, there is always some degree of stress (Jacob et al., 2019; Meng & Wang, 2018). PD facilitators can reduce stress during workshops when attendees know they can freely express their ideas, albeit too many negative discussions may hinder constructive conversations (Coles-Ritchie & Smith, 2017). Providing safe and comfortable climates to communicate thoughts to understand how culture shapes behaviors can stimulate meaningful learning opportunities (Furco & Lockhart, 2018). Although there are many structures for teacher development, PDs are a primary source for teacher instruction. Learning in any is most productive in settings that invite hands-on engagement and open dialogs.

During PD racial disparities in education may ignite emotions that polarize faculty who believe their curriculums are culturally diverse. PD facilitators should be aware of White faculty who deny inequalities in the educational system and use skill to direct and guide the dialogues using evidence-based knowledge (Singleton, 2018). Singleton (2018) emphasized that skilled PD facilitators must maintain focus on managing conversations toward productive thought with potential for practical and constructive actions. Singleton (2018) noted that leaders must portray the attitudes and change they want to see in their employees. Kruse et al. (2018) emphasized that PD can cultivate and promote faculty commitment to embrace change and new challenges using inspirational discussions to recognize and support an institution's mission.

Effective PD that meet the needs of educational communities to demonstrate inclusivity by preparing staff and faculty to engage in courageous conversations and

practices. Hollywood et al. (2016) reported that some teachers know what to do but not how to do the work. Hollywood et al. (2016) described courageous conversations involved assisting White faculty in teaching students of color using language and syntax common to both student and teacher. Although some staff may believe they are culturally sensitive, unexamined ethnocentric thoughts may impair their ability to be culturally competent or lack cultural awareness of student concerns (Hollywood et al., 2016). Singleton (2018), the creator of the Center of Courageous conversations, defines the process as a strategy for educating faculty with tools to engage in interracial discussions about racial injustices. However, awareness and conversations alone may not create opportunities for action. Well-developed PD builds faculty self-efficacy and confidence and combats teacher-isolation feelings (Macià & García, 2016). Nurturing faculty, through participation in PD, provides a mechanism to share knowledge with other fellow workers. Ideas and knowledge gained from the engagement, support creating better classrooms that will strengthen student learning (Macià & García, 2016; Wright & de Costa, 2016). Napier (2019) maintained that PDs should include knowledgeable speakers who can share positive outcomes in their programs and institutions that increase cultural inclusivity.

Mentoring and coaching are techniques included in PD to encourage positive change in thinking and job performance resulting in personal and career development (Hollywood et al., 2016; Jackson & Thomas, 2020). Although mentoring among faculty and staff is an empowering and learned skill, it is often overlooked and ignored. Jackson and Thomas (2020) indicated that mentoring, once learned, using PD as an instructional

guide, faculty can mentor their students with academic and social development. Staff and faculty who feel competent in their work feel capable of promoting others and are more likely to seek solutions to problems (Hollywood et al., 2016). However, racial biases that interfere with teaching ultimately disrupt the learning process (Colbert, 2016). PD can incorporate student success techniques to help faculty reduce racial imbalances and empower faculty to have culturally intelligent conversations with their students (Altman, 2018).

Mission statements embody the ideal purpose of an institution. Koch (2019) discussed how the inclusion and review of a mission statement are essential to PD attendees. Reminding attendees of the institution's purpose inspires them to work towards goal accomplishment by understanding how each person's behavior contributes to the mission, and each program and activity contribute to the institutional mission and image. Doing so demonstrates a shared responsibility to support each other and the students they serve (Kruse et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2019). Institutions that require PD understand the investment of time and finances to benefit both employees and the institution. The training conveys the institution's interest in personal and career advancement for each individual, providing them social and academic connections for development (Macià & García, 2016).

PD may be informal and spontaneous or formal and well planned. However, Macià and García (2016) stress the inclusion of active engagement, shared reflections, and building networks. A skilled and knowledgeable communicator is essential as an effective facilitator with a diverse population in PD training (Macià & García, 2016).

The PD process and its effect on teacher-on-student achievement has been the theme of research by some scholars. Herrmann et al. (2019) described how revised teaching techniques acquired in a PD equipped faculty and staff with confidence in supporting students' academic needs. PD-trained faculty used the knowledge they gained and improved their teaching strategies. The improvement increased positive outcomes in the classroom with a positive reflection on the institution (Herrmann et al., 2019). Positive classroom and institutional outcomes resulted in improved student achievements (Herrmann et al., 2019). Ultimately the positive achievement began with a well-developed and implemented PD.

### **Project Description**

The project deliverable is a PD entitled Perspectives of AAHA students on Academic Support Services at LPC. Dissemination of the findings will include an invitation to stakeholders, administrators, staff, and faculty to an in-depth look at the research's purpose and process, followed by a review of participants' recommendations. The PD will conclude with tentative implementation suggestions from the recommendations (Appendix A).

LPC sanctioned the study's idea because of the increased student diversity and underutilization of the academic support services. The PD is a 3-day, 8-hour training, commencing at 8 am with a continental breakfast, a 1-hour lunchtime, and concluding the day at 4 pm. Appendix A describes the timetable for each day and the activities used to engage attendees in the learning process.

Goals established for each day of the training will ensure that the PD will focus on the comprehensive objective of disseminating the research findings. As the PD moderator, I will ensure that the goals are met for each day. The overall objective is to share the findings generated by the data. The themes are 1) Knowledge academic support resources, 2) Lack of diversity, 3) Feelings of discomfort, isolation, and lack of belonging, and 4) Inconsistent supportive academic services. The PD will describe the problem, process and findings of the research (Appendix A). Day 1 goals include a review the research process, discussion of AAHA students' problems in education on both a national and local level, and review of the research's conceptual framework. Day 2 goals align the research with LPC's mission and a review of the literature supporting the study. The final goal for Day 2 is a discussion of the themes generated by research participants' interviews (Appendix A). For Day 3, the goals include a review the research participants' recommendations and discussion of possible action steps LPC may consider for implementation (Appendix A).

I use several methods of collaboration in the PD. Attendees work in large and small groups to discuss and reflect on each day's topics. To stimulate engagement, attendees reflect on personal and educational experiences and compare them with AAHA students. Discussions on the research participants' comments enable attendees to gain insight into how perceptions influence resource usage and subsequently impact educational goals.

The most salient support for the PD is LPC, who expressed an interest in the research. LPC's facility can accommodate the PD with minimal cost. Resources include a



large conference room to accommodate up to 50 stakeholders, administrators, and staff. Adjacent rooms for small break-out sessions are available. Web access and video allow for remote teleconferencing using Google Meet for those who desire attendance using the internet. As the moderator, I will prepare written and digital copies of handouts, worksheets, and evaluations for the sessions (Appendix A). The 8-hour training begins with a continental breakfast and later noon lunches. Refreshments, also supplied by LPC, of snacks and beverages will contribute to a comfortable atmosphere, inviting engagement and interaction. A brief publicly posted YouTube video clip of Dr. Vincent Tinto's talk on institutional departure theory and Dr. Joy DeGruy, speaking on post-traumatic slave disorder, are included at varied times during the PD (Appendix A). Additionally, I will ask President and Founder Glen Singleton of the Courageous Conversations Center to present the center's work using either live or recorded conversation (Singleton, 2018) (Appendix A). Technical support is needed to prepare and monitor the video clips and the remote access presentations. As the presenter, I will prepare the handouts and video clips. However, I will ask for staff assistance to distribute and collect handouts and evaluations. I will also request technical support to supervise the computer essentials.

Inherent with PD are implementation barriers, of which financial support and staff engagement are significant concerns. Staff and technical assistance for a 3 day, 8-hour training is costly. The LPC expressed interest in underwriting the majority of the cost. LPCs administrators must also consider compensation to personnel who must maintain regular work duties in addition to the PD attendance. Food cost and extra custodial services

are other budget items for the PD. One final implementation concern is the challenge of staff and faculty resistance to the ongoing requirement of PD. Resistance may be due to scheduling and time constraints that interfere with faculty and staff duties. Other stakeholders also may have difficulty committing to a 3-day training. I will ask permission to share the importance of the PD at a staff meeting before the PD is scheduled. I will also email notices about the event to those who cannot attend onsite or prefer to participate in the PD remotely.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

The goal of the PD is to disseminate the study's findings, which are the perceptions that influence the use of LPC's academic support services. Evaluations primarily reflect the achievement of goals and objectives (Merchie et al., 2018). Additionally, evaluations assess the effectiveness of components, activities, knowledge learned, and changes in attitudes (Merchie et al., 2018). Formative and summative evaluations will be used to assess the PD (Appendix A). I prepared a Likert Scale (Appendix A) as a formative evaluation of each day's goals and objectives. A summative assessment (Appendix A) will determine the achievement of the objectives and measure the attitudinal change of attendees. The assessment will demonstrate the PD's efficacy as a training tool and my skills as the PD organizer and moderator (Bozkuş & Bayrak, 2019; Uslu, 2017). I will share the results with the stakeholders, administrators initially, then with staff and faculty with permission from LPC.

LPC administrators, staff, and faculty would benefit most from the PD because of their daily contact with AAHA students. However, stakeholders which includes board

members, administrators, employees, and invested community members, will be invited to attend the PD. I will record the PD for stakeholder's who are unable to attend due to time constraints and will prepare a summary report for interested stakeholders.

### **Project Implications**

The PD will present the research findings and will inform the stakeholders, administrators, staff, and faculty about the concerns, thoughts, and opinions of AAHA students regarding academic supports. On the local level, engaging the attendees in learning activities will assist them in strategizing ways to improve the services and become mindful of how individuals contribute to the image of a supportive and culturally embrative college environment. The enlightenment about AAHA students' perceptions may encourage each college team member to be proactive in establishing a rapport with AAHA students. Recognizing the need for positive interactions with AAHA students and increasing diversity in staff and faculty will empower LPC with practical approaches to encourage use of the academic support services at LPC. Supported by Tinto's (1993, 2017) researched theories and the results of this study, LPC has evidence-based knowledge to support change. Tinto (1997) described educational institutions as communities equipped to influence a student's success or failure in college completion through its programming and campus environment. The totality of services, curriculums, and events contribute to the learning environment and reflect an institution's commitment to students. This study equips LPC with knowledge about the academic services from the perspective of AAHA students. Knowledge gained from this study will increase LPC's faculty and staff's understanding of the influence of AAHA perceptions of how issues of

diversity, feelings of comfort and belonging, and support systems influence a student's use of the academic support services.

In a larger context, providing resources to encourage usage of the academic support services will help AAHA students complete courses with improved GPAs. The high cost of education compels students to complete their education as efficiently as possible to avoid excessive debt while equipping themselves to compete in the rapidly changing job market (Whistle, 2019). Positive college completion rates at LPC may ultimately determine the viability and sustainability of the college. Black (2018) predicted that universities are undergoing major changes as societies redefine education's importance and educational content delivery. Black (2018) stated, "Many non-elite four-year universities that do not possess a compelling value proposition, along with evidence to support their claims, will be highly vulnerable during this time of creative destruction" (p. 15). Empowering LPC students with skills to maintain high graduation rates enables the college to be a contender for potential students and thus continue as an institution.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

The project deliverable has several strengths. The most notable one is that LPC administrators sanctioned the research before I started the study. The changing demographics at LPC's location underscored needed changes in the campus environment and curriculums with the enrollment of increased numbers of AAHA students. A 2016 diversity and inclusion climate assessment noted that the faculty's observation about the low usage of the academic services. However, recognizing the problem and responding to the issue required more than speculation. Administrators wanted data-supported information to understand what influenced AAHA students' use of the academic support services. The PD's findings responded to the following research questions:

RQ1: How do African American and Hispanic American students' perceptions about support services influence their use of academic supports at LPC?

RQ2: What do African American and Hispanic American students suggest that could increase their use of the support services at LPC?

A second strength of the project was the relevancy of the knowledge to meet AAHA students' needs and the needs of the faculty and staff at LPC. The PD presented attendees with researched data with varied reasons why some AAHA are academically underprepared for college. These reasons include inadequate language skills, fewer academic resources during formative years, inadequate self-efficacy skills, and feelings of racial injustices (Alicino, 2017; AlMazrua, 2016; Bond et al., 2015; Brookfield, 2019; DeGruy, 2017; Hall, 2017; Matthews, 2017; McCullagh, 2016; Ruppert & Meadows,

2017; Tangwe, 2016; Valentine-Cobb, 2017; Waddington et al., 2016; Williams, 2017).

Equipped with an understanding of educational barriers for AAHA students, LPC administrators can strategize academic programs to strengthen learning skills.

The third strength of the PD is the use of accommodations and technology at LPC. Technology offers recordings or even distant video chat discussions to increase PD's efficacy (Alekseeva et al., 2017; Bozkuş & Bayrak, 2019; Canaran & Mirici, 2020; Ippoliti, 2019; Napier, 2019). The PD will include recordings from Tinto (1987, 1993, 2017), whose educational departure theory was the conceptual foundation for the research. Tinto's discussions also align with LPC's mission that student retention and success are commitments that each college employee and college program should exemplify.

There are limitations for the PD. The number of Hispanic American students attending the college are considerably smaller than African American students. While this population of students has some similar educational experiences, there are also many differences. Hispanic American students may be more diverse in cultural and ethnic practices because of the varied family origins and ancestries (Schaefer, 2018). The different backgrounds may impact perceptions even though the students may have lived their entire lives in the United States (Schaefer, 2018). The PD did not address ideas of African American and Hispanic American students separately, only as a group. A future study and PD could separate the two populations of students for a more in-depth exploration of their perceptions.

Additionally, the PD did not explore the perceptions of the ages or classes of the AAHA freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and senior students separately. Each class may have varied feelings about the academic supports as they have matured and had more engagement each year. Perceptions change with perspectives and as academic skill levels either increase or decrease.

From a financial standpoint, administrators must consider budget resources and employee time that must be allocated for the training. A 3-day training requires employees to readjust their schedules and be compensated for working overtime. Although the investment expresses importance to employees (Macià & García, 2016), the college may consider alternative options for content delivery of the PD.

A second limitation for the PD is employee resistance to the training, both for the time demands and discussions about racial concerns. Administrators may encounter faculty and staff opposition to mandatory training when it involves racial issues (Mohr & Sheldon, 2017; Pollock et al., 2016). The introduction of race related information may engender cultural awareness and sensitivity to ethnic concerns. Napier (2019) stated cultural awareness is worth the time and emotional investment when considering positive social change as the outcome of the PD investments.

Finally, the time required for a 3-day PD must consider the impact on the daily functions at the college. Therefore, the PD must be conducted during the spring or summer when there are flexible schedules. Although there are less rigorous scheduling demands, spring and summer are usually vacation times. For unwilling faculty and staff, mandated training may increase their opposition. Overall, the PD's purpose will be

defeated when the staff becomes intransigent to explore how AAHA students perceive LPC services.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

There were several alternative approaches for this study's results. One option involved a different focus on the problem of AAHA underutilization of the academic support. This focus could have explored the low graduation rates for AAHA students at LPC using the CRT. The CRT is defined as the belief that systemic racism underlies and contributes to discriminatory acts in the culture. However, racial inequalities are minimized and ignored (Schaefer, 2018). People of color often live with the pervasive belief that they are intellectually and physically inadequate when compared to Whites (Napier, 2019). The alternate approach is adopted from the PD literature review; it involves creating small group workshops using curriculum from *Courageous Conversations* by Singleton (2018). Singleton created protocols for ways to engage conversations about racism. Hollywood et al. (2018) stated that faculty could increase their understanding of cultural competence and understanding of students' concerns. Recommendations discussed in the workshops can make positive changes at LPC. Some staff may resist talking about racial issues, a deeply systemic and often ignored issue. Administrators may require mandatory participation for staff and faculty who resist the discussions.

AAHA students often do not know or understand the effects of racial inequities and prejudices in their lives (DeGruy, 2017). Others only see the outcomes or behavior. Fittler (2016) explored low college completion rates from the perspective of the help-



seeking experience. Students of color often resist asking for academic assistance, risking academic failure. One alternative for the study results is to appoint a facilitator for a series of small group seminars for AAHA students to share their experiences and discuss how they impact their behavior. At times, the workshops will be open to LPC employees and, at other times, closed. Each LPC employees must attend at least two available seminars during a semester. The AAHA seminars will be closed to non-AAHA students to encourage voluntary disclosure, and when open, to increase employee understanding. With permission from the AAHA students, the facilitator will share challenges and recommendations with administrators at faculty meetings.

A third option in examining the problem of low graduation rates using the CRT is to involve LPC in campus discussions about racism using discriminatory scenarios that could be experienced by any student. The discussions then are used to generate problem-solving ideas and resolutions that may be different for AAHA students who encounter barriers of which White students are unaware. This experience should be a regular dialogue and eventually the scenarios become valuable experiences for LPC faculty, staff, and students. People who can identify with an experience may understand how barriers are often more prohibitive for AAHA students resulting in increased negative consequences.

### **Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change**

I earned my Master's degree in Criminal Justice after I retired from the Department of Corrections. When I asked the local retired police chief, who was then the criminal justice department chairman at the local college about teaching, he invited me

in, told me to complete an application and showed me a classroom, all in the same day. I was overwhelmed and overjoyed! I was a college instructor. But the excitement was all short-lived.

The students were bored with my lectures. I was skilled as an officer of the court, but not as an instructor. When a professor challenged me to seek a doctorate, I laughed at the idea, but the thought gained momentum in my mind culminating with my enrollment at Walden University. The next 6 years were the most difficult years but have strengthened me in ways that would never have occurred otherwise. My father died. I struggled with breast cancer. And my husband, after suffering from the debilitating disease of dementia during these years, died recently. Nevertheless, my persistence empowered me to understand better how life-circumstances can interfere with educational goals. It also reiterated the necessity of supportive family, friends, mentors, and advisors who were essential to my success. The significance of their involvement was not only illuminating as I worked on my research but was corroborated by Tinto's theories. I continue to gain knowledge that enables me to be a capable educator and a compassionate and creative professor.

Most important were the support systems from family, friends, and other educators. The results allow me a proverbial seat in decision-making positions, with knowledgeable and educational understanding that I lacked. I am more understanding and knowledgeable about matters that will help AAHA students complete their academic goals. As an African American educator, I am a mentor and role model for those pursuing educational degrees. The role model started in my home with a daughter who recently

graduated with a Master's degree in mental health counseling and a son who initially mocked my return to school and is currently enrolled in a dual Master's program.

The PD project designed to disseminate the findings for this study was challenging. I used the constructivism learning theory, which asserts that new knowledge is created when information is introduced, experienced, and internalized as the foundation for planning the PD (see Zimmerman et al., 2019). Using themes generated from the data, I combined auditory learning, visual handouts, and kinesthetic worksheets to integrate new information with what attendees already know. To begin the training, I presented an overview of how AAHA's problems in education on a national level manifested itself on the local level and LPC. Although LPC implemented support services to strengthen learning skills, faculty observed that the services were underutilized by AAHA students. I will use PowerPoint slides (Appendix A) to display factors that are recommended to improve the services.

Whenever training involves various genres of people, capturing and maintaining their attention requires several different skill sets. A moderator's communication skills are essential to convey PD content to a mixed audience of attendees (Kalinowski et al., 2020; Tino & Frison, 2018). Clearly defined concepts at the beginning of the training will alleviate confusion and misconceptions of terms. Discussion groups and activities are strategies that capture attendees' attention and generate physical and emotional involvement. However, impressing the educational gap's significance and its long and short-range consequences are not easily understood. Activities that require empathetic participation and critical thinking, as I included in the PD (Appendix A), encourage

identification with the problem of low graduation rates. Discussions, although practical, are more efficient using pre-trained leaders to guide and focus the conversations. However, discussion leaders, unless they are volunteers, require preparation time. Paid leaders are more reliable than volunteers but are also cost prohibitive without an accommodating budget. Finally, end-of-the-day evaluations are beneficial; however, in-the-moment feedback help guide conversations and clarify misconceptions. This type of feedback is desirable but challenging to maintain timeliness to the PD schedule.

Analyzing the PD from various perspectives improves my ability to plan other training for staff and faculty development to understand the educational concerns of AAHA students. As a scholar, it is essential to be knowledgeable of current research to respond to questions with accuracy and provide direction to appropriate resources for further explanations during PD. Although AAHA students share some experiences, each person has lived in unique situations that may require a different response from college advisors and faculty. Recognizing these variables will assist in planning PD.

My involvement with AAHA students as a practitioner is always in transition because of college students' transitory nature. Current events and environmental and global changes influence each generation. As such, I must understand their needs and encourage resolutions to perceived barriers that require that I remain vigilant to a transient society. Communication modalities and progressive technologies will also affect my interactions with AAHA students. My vocabulary and computer skills must be consistent with those of the students.

Furthermore, current students are the future parents of students who may attend LPC. Ensuring my skills as a practitioner are updated and current with the times is essential in supporting AAHA students' educational goals. Awareness of the factors involving students most, will likely impact faculty who attend the PD.

Developing PD requires skill sets in many areas. As a course curriculum designer, the focus on PD goals must remain essential to the training. Using various learning tools will connect with attendees learning preferences, thereby increasing the likelihood of retaining and internalizing it. Allowing opportunities to interact with the research findings through discussions and activities will impress attendees with the necessity to improve LPC academic resources. The summative and cumulative evaluations will provide detailed reactions and responses to the PD, which I will share with LPC administrators. The feedback will guide me in future PD planning.

My degree recognizes my commitment to the discipline and intense study of education and learning theories and methods to enhance student learning. I will have the opportunity to participate in LPC's planning and implementation for AAHA classes and programs. The degree also allows me to be involved in educational planning at other learning institutions and, most importantly, serve as an opportunity to guide learners from a committed lifelong learner concerned for AAHA academic success.

### **Reflection on Importance of the Work**

During my early years as an instructor, I taught classes where several AAHA students struggled academically. I always referred these students to the free academic supports, but to my knowledge, fewer than three Hispanic American students and only

two African American students ever used the services. When I asked their reasons for not using the service, students would say, 'I want to do it myself,' or 'I don't have time.' Most often, these students failed or dropped the class. I saw their excitement about being a college student from my conversations with the students, but they could not do the coursework.

The findings from the study provided data-supported reasons for AAHA usage or lack thereof, in the academic supports. The results may facilitate program designs and budget allotments that will allow changes that will attract and engage students by strengthening academic skills and help them complete educational goals. The reasons for high dropout rates are complex. However, incremental strategies, such as support services, will reduce class failures. AAHA students who graduate from college have better employment opportunities to provide better incomes and resources for their families (Bishop, 2018; Henslin, 2017; Maree, 2015). AAHA students who have college degrees are better prepared to engage in social issues and make positive changes to improve their communities (Bishop, 2018; Bouyer, 2017; Henslin, 2017; Maree, 2015). Additionally, AAHA students who are college graduates are better prepared as problem-solvers in their communities and are more knowledgeable to engage in the political process to effect positive changes.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

AAHA students rarely have occasions to share their thoughts on how the college programs impact their education. This study allowed AAHA students to express their perceptions about academic services and recommend ways to improve the services.

Students expressed concern about diversity, knowledge about the academic services, lack of comfort and belonging, and lack of academic accountability. Each was a theme that emerged from the data. Implementation of the suggested changes from research participants could improve the services at LPC. In doing so, AAHA students may feel valued and more integrated with the college. Integration in the college is a significant variable that bonds students to a college and strengthens persistence to complete educational goals (Tinto, 1987, 1997, 2017).

The potential impact for positive social change resulting from this study is varied and compelling. This study did not quantify the number of students that may use the support services if there are changes. However, usage of the service could increase positive course completions leading toward college graduation. Whistle (2019) predicted that increased college completions would boost society's wealth, starting with individual incomes, which translates to long-term benefits for the family and improved communities. Students with college degrees are prepared for more sophisticated employment levels, reducing the need for governmental assistance and lower levels of poverty (Whistle, 2019). Higher incomes provide more resources to build strong families and healthy communities (Whistle, 2019).

This study had theoretical implications, because it validated theories posited by Tinto (1987, 1993). AAHA participants identified characteristics like those theorized by Tinto (1993), such as faculty rapport, college integration, and academic support, as factors essential for engaging in all services at the college. The unique findings in this study addressed a gap in research by exploring the perspectives of AAHA students.

Although the current study is applicable only for LPC, it provided the college with practical applications to strategize future academic support programs (Tinto, 2017).

The methodological process in this study appropriately used interviews to elicit data to address the research questions. As the researcher, I established a positive, nonjudgmental rapport with AAHA participants, enabling them to share positive and negative thoughts. The participants shared their opinions about specific academic support services and auxiliary influences that impacted the support services' usage. Assurance of confidentiality, data safeguards, and recorded transcript, which participants reviewed for accuracy, contributed to free disclosure about the support services and suggested recommendations.

The implications for this research may guide application and delivery of academic support services. Verbal and written orientation about the academic supports explaining facets of the services, including access information, would provide dual formats for the services. Multilingual pamphlets can assist Hispanic American students who are not fluent with the English language.

Another implication is to employ more robust, and consistent academic accountability supports for AAHA students who are academically fragile. The application of the research may increase awareness about factors that influence perceptions about academic supports. Factors such as increased staff diversity representative of AAHA students and expanded communication formats and languages for support services encourage AAHA usage. Additionally, inclusivity in curriculums and increased feelings



of acceptance and engagement on campus will foster feelings of belonging and ultimately persistence toward college completion.

Tinto's corpus focused on student educational persistence and retention, there was a gap in research from AAHA students' viewpoint. This study provided evidence-based factors to equip LPC with the knowledge to improve support services for AAHA students leading to college completions. Other qualitative research could examine each of the study's themes individually for additional insight to facilitate supportive environments for AAHA college completion.

### **Conclusion**

AAHA students start college with many experiences that impact their decisions to use academic support services. This research identified some of the concerns that influenced that decision. The study also described institutional characteristics confirmed in Tinto's (1993) research that may encourage college service and program engagement. Several significant factors could change how AAHA students perceive the academic supports. The study culminated in a PD training designed to disseminate the research findings and provide LPC with practical tools to understand AAHA students' perspectives that guided their decisions to use the academic support services. The research will guide administrators and staff as they consider which strategies will increase usage of the services. Faculty also may become more competent in recognizing how their actions may increase or deter the use of the academic services by being responsive to the needs of AAHA. All stakeholders may gain a better knowledge of how each person reflects an

institution's image of support and acceptance that may encourage AAHA students to fully partake of the services that assist them in completing their educational goals.

## References

- Adkins, V. N. (2019). *Wounded warriors and their transition to the community college classroom* (Order No. 13426164). [Doctoral study, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Alekseeva, I. V., Barsukova, N. I., Pallotta, V. I., & Skovorodnikova, N. A. (2017). The innovation blaze method of development professional thinking designers in the modern higher education. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 6(4), 615–626.
- Alicea-Planas, J. (2017). Shifting our focus to support the educational journey of underrepresented students. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 56(3), 159-163.  
<https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20170222-07>
- Alicino, N. F. (2017). *Belongingness, internalized racism and its impact on academic achievement among Black American undergraduate students* (Order No. 10257257) [Doctoral study, Fordham University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- AlMazrua, D. (2016). *Assessment of first-generation student's success strategies at Long River College*. Education Student Publications. Paper 15.  
[https://scholarworks.merrimack.edu/soe\\_studentpub](https://scholarworks.merrimack.edu/soe_studentpub)
- Altman, D. (2018). *Action to awareness: Surfacing dysconscious racism through focused professional development* (Order No. 10826138). [Doctoral Dissertation, Duquesne University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

- Andre, C., Deerin, J., & Leykum, L. (2017). Students helping students: vertical peer mentoring to enhance the medical school experience. *BMC Research Notes*, *10*, 1–7. <https://doi-org/10.1186/s13104-017-2498-8>
- Bautsch, B. (2013). *Reforming remedial education*. National Conference of State Legislators. [www.ncsl.org/](http://www.ncsl.org/)
- Biermeier, C. (2017). *Retention of minority students in a bridge program: Student perceptions on their successes and challenges* (Order No. 10266949) [Doctoral Study, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Bishop, A. J. (2018). *Exploring student persistence factors among undergraduate college students: Student intent and departure* (Order No. 10749764) [Doctoral Study, University of West Florida, College of Education and Professional Studies]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Black, J. (2018). *Managing the student enrollment obsession: A revolutionary perspective on the college student enrollment imperative*. SEM Works.
- Bond, M. L., Cason, C., & Baxley, S. M. (2015). Institutional support for diverse populations: Perceptions of Hispanic and African American students and program faculty. *Nurse Educator* *4*, 134-138. <http://ovidsp.tx.ovid.com>
- Bond, M. L., Cason, C. L., & Gray, J. R. (2015). The adapted model of institutional support for Hispanic student degree completion: Revisions and recommendations. *Hispanic Health Care International: The Official Journal of The National Association of Hispanic Nurses*, *13*(1), 38-45. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1540-4153.13.1.38>

- Bouyer, A. L. (2017). *African American males' ideas about school success: A research study* (Order No. 10678539) [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toledo]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Bozkuş, K. & Bayrak, C. (2019). The application of the dynamic teacher professional development through experimental action research. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 11(4), 335–352. <https://doi-org.ezp./10.26822/iejee.2019450792>
- Branch, J. (2017). *A case study of perceptions and experiences among African-American males regarding college dropout rates in a community college* (Order No. 10282388) [Doctoral Study, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Broda, M., Yun, J., Schneider, B., Yeager, D. S., Walton, G. M., & Diemer, M. (2018). Reducing inequality in academic success for incoming college students: a randomized trial of growth mindset and belonging interventions. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 11(3), 317–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2018.1429037>
- Brookfield, S. D. (2019). *Teaching race: How to help students unmask and challenge racism*. Jossey-Bass.
- Brooms, D. (2018). Exploring Black male initiative programs: Potential and possibilities for supporting Black male success in college. *Journal of Negro Education*, 87(1), 59-72.

- Bryant, R. T. (2015). *College preparation for African American students: Gaps in the high school educational experience* [Paper presentation]. Center for Law and Social Policy, Inc (CLASP), Annual International Colloquium on Black Males in Education. Washington, DC, United States.
- Buttram, S. (2016). Beginning a learning community: Pilot fall 2006. *Journal for Developmental Education*, 40(1), 29-31.
- Caballero, B.F. (2020). Higher education: Factors and strategies for student retention. *HETS Online Journal*, 10, 91–116.
- Canaran, O & Mirici, İ. (2020). A new model of team teaching for teacher professional development: A case study of in-service of English teachers. *Education & Science / Egitim ve Bilim*, 45(201), 247–271. <https://doi-org.ezp.10.15390/EB.2020.8430>
- Capstick, M. K., Harrell-Williams, L., Cockrum, C., & West, S. (2019). Exploring the effectiveness of academic coaching for academically at-risk college students. *Innovative Higher Education*, 44, 219-331. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-019-9459-1>
- Carner-Wylie, A. (2020). *Creating a program to increase educator cultural competency through a professional learning community environment* (Order No. 28000048) [Doctoral Study, University of Georgia]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Ciscell, G., Foley, L., Luther, K., Howe, R., & Gjsedal, T. (2016). Barriers to accessing tutoring services among students who received a mid-semester warning *Learning Assistance Review (TLAR)*, 21(2), 39-54.

- Colbert, K. (2016). Where discipline and racial equity intersect. *American Educator*, 39(4), 26–28.
- Coles-Ritchie, M. & Smith, R. R. (2017). Taking the risk to engage in race talk: Professional development in elementary schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21(2), 172-186.
- Coburn, U. B. (2017). *African American males' identification of factors that contributed to their community college persistence* (Order No. 10642634) [Doctoral study, Mississippi State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research and design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Sage Publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L. Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). Effective teacher professional development. *Learning Policy Institute*.  
<http://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-prof-dev>
- Darolia, R. (2017). Assessing the college financial aid work penalty. *Journal of Higher Education*, 8(3), 350–375. <https://doi-org.10.1080/00221546.2016.1271696>
- Davis, K. M. (2017). *Multicultural psychosocial education and malleability of epistemic essentialist entitativity processes* (Order No. 10279793) [Doctoral study, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- DeGruy, J. L. (2017). *Post traumatic slave syndrome: America's legacy of enduring injury and healing*. DeGruy

- Da Silva, J. (2016). *Predictors of stress among Caribbean community college students* (Order No. 10109472) [Doctoral study, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Drotos, S. M. & Cilesiz, S. (2016). Shoes, dues, and other barriers to college. *Attainment. Education & Urban Society*, 48(3), 221-244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124514533793>
- Ellis, J. M., Powell, C. S., Demetriou, C. P., Huerta-Bapat, C., & Panter, A. T. (2018). Examining first-generation college student lived experiences with microaggressions and microaffirmations at a predominately White public research university. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 25(2), 266–279. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000198>
- Feliciano, N. E. (2018). *The impact of a developmental course and academic integration on first-year student retention* (Order No. 10748673) Doctoral study, Northeastern University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Fittler, P. (2016). *Academic help seeking constructs and group differences: An examination of first-year university students*. (Order No. 10126086) [Doctoral study, University of Nevada]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Francis, V. D. (2019). *Mentoring and retention of first year college students at brown community college* (Order No. 13895314) [Doctoral study, Walden University]. [ProQuest](#) Dissertations & Theses Global.



- Frederick, L. M. (2016). *Hispanic and Black student educational attainment in Texas career colleges: A multiyear statewide analysis* (Order No. 10307658) [Doctoral study, Sam Houston State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Furco, K & Lockhart, N. (2018). Building a university-wide agenda for intercultural competence and understanding: Learned at the University of Minnesota. *Metropolitan Universities, 29*(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.18060/22171>
- Gajewski, A. & Mather, M. (2015). Remediation strategies for learners at risk of failure: A course-based retention model. *College Quarterly [serial online]*18(1), 1-11.
- Gatlin, M. D. (2020). *How under-represented students understand their early college high school experience* (Order No. 27741849) [Doctoral study, Capella University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Giblin, J. (2016). *Factors influencing the selection of academic help sources, STEM and professional studies*. Old Dominion University. <https://DOI: 10.25777/4s31-qj29>
- Giddens, N. (2016). *Perceptions on interventions impacting the self- efficacy of at-risk students* (Order No. 10144250) [Doctoral study, Walden University]. [ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global](https://doi.org/10.10144250).
- Gillborn, D. (2018). Heads I win, tails you lose: Anti-Black racism as fluid, relentless, individual and systemic. *Peabody Journal of Education, 93*(1), 66-77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2017.1403178>
- Girvan, C., Conneely, C., & Tangney, B. (2016). Extending experiential learning in teacher professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 58*, 129-139. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.04.009>

- Gonzalez, J. D. (2018). *Moving forward: An exploration of first-generation Latino/a college students' experiences in higher education* (Order No. 10788254). [Doctoral study, Mills College]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Hall, J. (2017). Developing teaching best practice—pedagogy, preferences, and professional development. *International Information & Library Review*, 49, 59–64. <https://doi-org/10.1080/10572317.2017.1270692>
- Haynes, C., Stewart, S., & Allen, E. (2016). Three paths, one struggle: Black women and girls battling invisibility in U.S. classrooms. *Journal of Negro Education*, 85(3), 380–391.
- Henslin, J. (2017). *Sociology, a down to earth approach* (13<sup>th</sup> ed). Pearson Publishing.
- Herrmann, M., Clark, M., James-Burdumy, S., Tuttle, C., Kautz, T., Knechtel, V., Dotter, D., Wulsin, C. S., Deke, J., & National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (ED). (2019). The effects of a principal professional development program focused on instructional leadership. NCEE 2020-0002. <https://ies.ed.gov/>
- Hesser, T. L. & Gregory, J. L. (2016). Instructional support sessions in chemistry: Alternative to remediation. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 39(3), 22-28.
- Hollywood, K. G., Blaess, D. A., Santin, C., & Bloom, L. (2016). Holistic mentoring and coaching to sustain organizational change and innovation. *Creighton Journal of Interdisciplinary Leadership*, 2(1), 32–46.

- Huber, L & Solorzano, D. (2015). Racial microaggressions as a tool for critical race research, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 18(3), 297-320.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2014.994173>
- Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data Center (IPEDS). (2017-2018).  
<https://nces.ed.gov>
- Ippoliti, C. (2019). Digital faculty development. *Information Technology & Libraries*, 38(2), 5–7. <https://doi-org.ezp.10.6017/ital.v38i2.11091>
- Jacob, J.W., Xiong, W., Ye, H., Wang, S., & Wang, X. (2019). Strategic best practices of flagship university professional development centers. *Professional Development in Education*, (45)5, 801-813, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2018.1543722>
- Jackson, K. & Thomas, C. (2020). Fostering frameworks for success: Building student support networks through professional development badging. *Practitioner to Practitioner*, 10(4), 14-1.
- Johnson, R. B. & Christensen, L. (2017). *Educational research*. Sage Publications.
- Johnson, S. R. & Stage, F. K. (2018). Academic engagement and student success: Do high impact practices mean higher graduation rates? *The Journal of Higher Education* (89) 5, 753-781. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2018.1441107>
- Jones, A. D., Jr. (2020). *Getting free in college: An action research study shifting the narrative from success to liberation among Black students at a dominantly White public Hispanic-serving institution* (Order No. 27671737). [Doctoral study, Azusa Pacific University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

- Kalinowski, E., Egert, F., Gronostai, A., & Vock, M. (2020). Professional development on fostering students' academic language proficiency across the curriculum: A meta-analysis of its impact on teachers' cognition and teaching practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 88, 24-25.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102971>
- Kezar, A. & Kitchen, J. (2019). Supporting first generation low-income and underrepresented student' transitions to college through comprehensive and integrated programs. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 64(3) 223–229.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219869397>
- Khalifa, B., Nasser, R., Ikhlef, I., Walker, J., & Amali, S. (2016). A qualitative study of student attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, outlook, and context in Qatar: Persistence in higher education. *Near and Middle Eastern Journal of Research in Education*, 1(2), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.5339/nmejre.2016.2>
- Kimbrel, L. A. (2018). High quality professional development in charter schools: Barriers and impact. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, (13)1, 64-81.
- Knaggs, C. M., Sondergeld, T. A., & Schardt, B. (2015). Overcoming barriers to college enrollment, persistence, and perceptions for urban high school students in a college preparatory program. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 9, 7-30.
- Koonce, M., Pijanowski, J. C., Bengtson, E., & Lasater, K. (2019). Principal engagement in the professional development process. *NASSP Bulletin*, 103(3), 229–252.

- Kruse, S. D., Rakha, S., & Calderone, S. (2018). Developing cultural competency in higher education: an agenda for practice. *Teaching in Higher Education, 23*(6), 733–750. <https://doi-org.ezp.org/10.1080/13562517.2017.1414790>
- Lac, V. (2017). In real time: From theory to practice in a critical race pedagogy classroom. *I.E., Inquiry in Education, 9*(1), 1-21.
- Laux, D., Luse, A., & Mennecke, B. E. (2016). Collaboration, connectedness, and community: An examination of the factors influencing student persistence in virtual communities. *Computers in Human Behavior, 57*, 452-464. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.12.046>
- Lindsay, K., Carlsen-Landy, B., Boaz, C., & Marshall, D. (2017). Predictors of student success in supplemental instruction courses at a medium sized women's university. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science, 3*(1), 208-217.
- Loes, C. N., An, B. P., Saichaie, K., & Pascarella, E. T. (2017). Does collaborative learning influence persistence to the second year of college? *Journal of Higher Education, 88*(1), 62-84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2016.1243942>
- Logue, A. W., Watanabe-Rose, M., & Douglas, D. (2017). Reforming remediation. *Education Next, 17*(2), 78–84.
- Lopez, K. (2016). *Identifying best practices to increase Latino student enrollment and retention at nonHispanic serving institutions*. Doctoral study, Merrimack College Merrimack Scholar Works Education Student Publications Education. <https://scholarworks.merrimack.edu/>

- Lorenz, C. (2017). *The impact of institutional community college policies and programs on student retention: A multiple case study* (Order No. 10600197). [Doctoral study, Manhattanville College]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Luna-Torres, M., Leafgreen, M., & McKinney, L. (2017). Leveraging guided pathways to improve financial aid design and delivery. *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, 47(2), 101–110.
- Macià, M. & García, I. (2016). Informal online communities and networks as a source of teacher professional development: A review. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 55, 291–307. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.01.021>
- Marcelino, L. A. (2018). *Factors predicting academic achievement among hispanic community college students* (Order No. 10745395). [Doctoral study, Walden University]. Dissertations & Theses
- Maree, J. G. (2015). Barriers to access to and success in higher education: Intervention guidelines. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 29(1), 390-41.
- Masehela, L. M. & Mabika, M. (2017). An assessment of the impact of the mentoring programme on student performance. *Journal of Student Affairs*, (5)2 163-182. <https://doi.org/10.24085/jsaa.v5i2.2707>
- Matthews, M. L. (2017). *Using constructivist grounded theory to understand how Black males graduate from predominantly White four-year institutions* (Order No. 10633177). [Doctoral study, University of Memphis]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

- McCullagh, J. (2016). *Racial microaggressions, college self-efficacy, and the persistence of students of color in predominantly White, 4-year institutions of higher education* (Order No. 10172414) [Doctoral study, University of North Dakota ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global].
- Meissel, K. Parr, S., & Timperley, H. (2016). Can professional development of teachers reduce disparity in student achievement? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *58*, 163-173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.05.013>
- Meng, Q. & Wang G. (2018). A research on sources of university faculty occupational stress: A Chinese case study. *Psychology Research and Behavioral Management*, *1*, 597-605. <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S187295>
- Merriam, S. & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative design: A guide to design and implementation* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.): Jossey Wiley.
- Miller, B. (2018). The good and bad news in college attainment trends. *The Center for American Progress*. <https://www.americanprogress.org>
- Miller, M. D., Laurie Dickson, K., & Koch, R. L. (2019). Empowering faculty to support academic persistence through a blended, scholarship-based faculty professional development program: The persistence scholars program. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning*, *19*, 96–116.
- Mizell, J. M. (2019). *The effects of small learning communities on college and career ready performance index* (Order No. 13861613) [Doctoral study, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

- Mohr, S. C. & Shelton, K. (2017). Best practices framework for online faculty professional development: *A Delphi study*. *Online Learning Journal*, 21(4), 123–140. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24059/olj.v21i4.1273>
- Napier, E. (2019). *Issues that prevent students of color from majoring in teacher education*. (Order No. 13903430) [Doctoral study, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Nashua, L. C. (2020). *Cultural social capital impact for male Latino students at the community college* (Order No. 27958044). [Doctoral study, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2016). Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups 2016. US Dept. of Education. <http://nces.ed.gov/pub>
- National Center for Educational Statistics (2002). Nontraditional undergraduates. <https://nces.ed.gov>
- National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.). Fast facts. <https://nces.ed.gov>
- Olson-McBride, L., Hassemer, H., & Hoepner, J. (2016). Broadening participation: Engaging academically at-risk freshmen in undergraduate research. *Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly*, 37(1), 4-10.
- Patton, L. D. (2016). Disrupting postsecondary prose: Toward a critical race theory of higher education. *Urban Education*, 51(3), 315–342. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085915602542>
- Pelletier, K. (2019). Student success: 3 big questions. *Educause Review*. <https://er.educause.edu/>



PEW Research. (2016). 5 facts about Latinos and education.

<http://www.pewresearch.org>

PEW Research Center. (2017). *The future of jobs and jobs training*.

<https://www.pewresearch.org>

PEW Research Center. (2020). *Women's lead in skills and education is helping narrow the gender wage gap*. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org>

Pickett, C. W. S. (2017). *Institutional support mechanisms for African American males at community colleges: A mixed methods study on the perceptions of support mechanisms for academic success at community colleges* (Order No. 10666725). [Doctoral study, University of Pittsburgh]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Pollock, M., Bocala, C., Deckman, S. L., & Dickstein-Staub, S. (2016). Caricature and hyperbole in preservice teacher professional development for diversity. *Urban Education, 51*(6), 629–658. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085915581714>

Proctor, B., Semega, J., & Kollar, M. (2016). Income and poverty in the United States: 2015. <https://www.census.gov>

Ragoonaden, K. & Mueller, L. (2017). Culturally responsive pedagogy: Indigenizing curriculum. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 47*(2), 22-46.

Ruppert, J. H. & Meadows, E. E. (2017). *Academic supports preferred by academically struggling African American students at a predominantly White university* (Order No. 10607406). [Doctoral study, University of Missouri]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

- Saldana, J. (2016). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Sage Publications, Ltd.
- Sampson, C. R. (2019). *A mixed-methods study of culturally responsive teaching: Secondary English language arts teachers' perceptions of using strategies and practices to support the academic engagement of African American male students* (Order No. 27670868). [Doctoral study, Concordia University Texas]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Schaefer, R. T. (2018). *Racial and ethnic groups* (15<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson Publications.
- Scherzberg, M. M. (2017). *Predicting student persistence of community college transfer students to a large, urban, transfer destination four-year institution* (Order No. 10598957). [Doctoral study, Iowa State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Schmid, M. E., Gillian-Daniel, D. L., Kraemer, S., & Kueppers, M. (2016). Promoting student academic achievement through faculty development about inclusive teaching. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 48(5), 16-25.
- Singleton, G. (2018). Beyond random acts of equity: Courageous conversational about transforming systemic culture. *Learning Professional*, 39(5), 28–33.
- Skoglund, K., Wall, T., & Kiene, D. (2018). Impact of supplemental instruction participation on college freshman retention. *Learning Assistance Review*, 23(1), 115-135.
- Stone, M., Walton, T., Clark, C., & Ligertwood, L. (2016). The influence of support and development programs and services on the success of university students from

- low socioeconomic status backgrounds. *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association*, 48, 25-38.
- Sullivan, S. M. (2017). *The consequences of student retention strategies: A case study at metropolitan college* (Order No. 10689163). [Doctoral study, Northeastern University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Tangwe, M. N. (2016). Student's insights on the implementation of peer academic support programs at one university in South Africa. *Dirasat: Educational Sciences*, 43(3), 2163–2177.
- Tao, K. W., Owen, J., & Drinane, J. M. (2017). Was that racist? an experimental study of microaggression ambiguity and emotional reactions for racial–ethnic minority and White individuals. *Race and Social Problems*, 9(4), 262-271.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-017-9210-4>
- Tate, S. A. & Page, D. (2018). Whiteness and institutional racism: hiding behind (un)conscious bias. *Ethics and Education*, 131, 141-155.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2018.1428718>
- Tino, C. & Frison, D. (2018). *Fostering transformative professional development: The process of a training perspectives questionnaire development*. Commission for International Adult Education, Semantic Scholar, 207-214.
- Tinto, V. (1987). *The principles of effective retention*. <http://eric.ed.gov>
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

- Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 68, 599–623.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2959965>
- Tinto, V. (1998). Colleges as communities: Taking research on student persistence seriously. *Review of Higher Education*, 21, 167–177.
- Tinto, V. (2006). Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice*, 8(1), 1-140.
- Tinto V. (2010). From theory to action: Exploring the institutional conditions for student retention. In Smart J. (Eds.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, 25, pp. 51-89, Springer Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-8598-6>
- Tinto, V. (2017). Through the eyes of the student. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 19(3), 254-269.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025115621917>
- Tinto, V., Goodsell-Love, A., & Russo, P. (1993). Building community. *Liberal Education*, 79(4), 16–21.
- Tran, N. A., Jean-Marie, G., Powers, K., Bell, S., & Sanders, K. (2016). Using institutional resources and agency to support graduate students' success at a Hispanic serving institution. *Education Sciences*, 6, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci6030028>.
- United States Census (2012-2016). American Fact Finder. <https://factfinder.census.gov>

- United States Department of Commerce. (2012). Educational Attainment in the United States: 2009. <https://www.census.gov>
- Uslu, Ö. (2017). Evaluating the professional development program aimed technology integration at the era of curriculum change. *Educational Sciences, Theory & Practice*, 17(6), 2031–2055. <https://doi.org/10.12738/estp.2017.6.0116>
- Valentine-Cobb, L. (2017). *African American male college students' personal experience of college preparation* (Order No. 10635669) [Doctoral study, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Vasquez-Salgado, Y., Greenfield, P. M., & Burgos-Cienfuegos, R. (2015). Exploring home school value conflicts: Implications for academic achievement and well-being among Latino first-generation college students. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 30(3), 271-305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558414561297>
- Waddington, R. J., Nam, N., Lonn, S., Teasley, S. D. (2016). Improving early warning systems with categorized course resource usage. *Journal of Learning Analytics*, 3(3), p. 263-290. <https://doi.org/10.18608/jla.2016.33.13>
- Webber, A., Rui, N., Garrison-Mogren, R., Olsen, R. B., Gutmann, B., National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (ED), & Westat, I. (2019). Evaluation of the DC opportunity scholarship program: Impacts three years after students applied. Technical Appendix. NCEE 2019-4006. In *National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance*. National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

- Wells, K. (2020). *Learning communities and service learning: The effects of combining two high-impact learning practices on first-year, full-time community college students enrolled in first-year writing* (Order No. 27960449). [Doctoral study, Kisha University of St. Francis]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Whistle, W. (2019). Ripple effect: The cost of the college dropout rate. *Third Way*. <http://thirdway.imgix.net/pdfs/ripple-effect-the-cost-of-the-college-dropout-rate.pdf>
- Whitehouse initiative for excellence in education. (2018). <https://sites.ed.gov>
- Williams, S. R. (2017). *Factors for academic success among African American men: A phenomenological study* (Order No. 10644149). [Doctoral study, Louisiana Tech University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Williams, T. R. & Raney, S. (2020). Relational cultural supervision enhances the professional development of postdoctoral residents of color in health service psychology. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 30(1), 140–146. <https://doi-org.ezp.10.1037/int0000169>
- Williams-Farrier, B. J. (2017). Talkin' bout good & bad pedagogies: Codeswitching vs. comparative rhetorical approaches. *College Composition and Communication*, 69(2), 230-259. <https://www.researchgate.net/>
- Wright, L. & da Costa, J. (2016). Rethinking professional development for school leaders: Possibilities and tensions. *EAF Journal*, 25(1), 29–47.
- Zimmerman, W. A., Knight, S. L., Favre, D. E., & Ikhlef, A. (2017). Effect of professional development on teaching behaviors and efficacy in Qatari

educational reforms. *Teacher Development*, 21(2), 324–345.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2016.1243571>

# Professional Development

## Perspectives of African American and Hispanic Americans on Academic Support

Cynthia M. Shyne

**WALDEN UNIVERSITY**  
*A higher degree. A higher purpose.*



***Resources for Day 1***

- Overhead Projector Day One Agenda and PowerPoint Slides
- Internet for remote access, 3-day, Google Meet Video Conferencing
- Handout/Notes Packet, (Paper, PDF and Digital for Internet attendees), Definition of Terms, Themes, Research interview comments and response, Action step.
- Trainer Notes – Research Design and Problems of AAHA in Education
- Slide Instructions for Small Group Discussion, Lunch and Large Group Reassembly
- Trainer Notes for Conceptual Framework – Tinto’s Institutional Departure from Higher Education, Video, Vincent Tinto
- Day One Evaluation

***Resources for Day 2.***

- Overhead Projector for Day 2 Agenda & PowerPoint Slides
- Presenter Notes for Discussion of Literature Review
- Small/Large Group -Discussion of Participant’s interviews –Research Participant Interviews
- Handout - Themes Generated from the Data (Handout packet)
- Day 2 Evaluation

***Resources for Day 3.***

- Handout/Worksheet - Research Participant Recommendations
- Presenter Notes: Glen Singleton – Courageous Conversations
- Handout - Action Worksheet (Handout packet)
- PD Evaluation (Handout packet)

## Welcome to Day One

### Goals for the Day

- #1—Problem of AAHA Students in Education
- #2—Problem & Impact of AAHA Students at the LPC
- #3—Present Conceptual Framework, Vincent Tinto & Research Format

- 8:30—Meet & Greet, Continental Breakfast
- 9:00—9:30 am—Overview of the PD Format
- 9:30-10:30 am—Review of the Problem of AAHA Students in Education; Problem of AAHA Students at the LPC
- 10:15—10:30 am —Break
- 10:30—12 noon—Small Group Discussion; Experiences and Influences of Attendees College Experiences, Compare with AAHA Students
- 12:00 noon—1:00 pm Lunch
- 1:00 pm 2:15 pm —Conclude Small Group Discussion & Report to Large Assembly
- 2:15—2:30 pm
- 2:30 pm—3:45 pm—Research Design; Conceptual Framework for Research, Vincent Tinto, Research Questions, General Format for Research
- 3:45 pm - 4:00 pm—Reflections, Day 1 Evaluation

## PURPOSE OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*The purpose of this Professional Development is to share with the stakeholders of the LPC, including board members, administrators, staff, faculty, and interested community persons, the research conducted with AAHA students at the LPC , identify the perspectives of AAHA students and their use of the use of academic support services and increase the use of those services and increase the awareness of influences.*

# Definition of Terms

## Participant Handout

*Academic integration:* Students' academic performance and interactions with faculty members and staff, measured by grade point average (Feliciano, 2018).

*Academic support:* Services, programs, or tools designed to improve academic performance and retention (Ruppert & Meadows, 2017).

*At-risk students:* Students who are less prepared for higher education and more likely to drop out of college before completing their education (Francis, 2019).

*Collaborative learning:* Students working together to acquire or construct knowledge (Loes et al., 2017).

*College attrition:* Rate at which students terminate college before degree completion (Feliciano, 2018).

*Learning communities:* A cohort of students who enroll together in linked courses (Wells, 2020).

*Member checking:* A process to determine the accuracy of the transcripts and qualitative findings by allowing the participants to review the final report or description to verify the documents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

*Peer debriefing:* A person who reviews the relationship of the research questions and the data, the interpretations and to enhance the validity of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

*Peer review:* The discussion of the researcher's interpretations and conclusions with the study participants and other members of the participant community for verification, insight, and deeper understanding (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

*Racial microaggressions:* Verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile derogatory or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color (Tao et al., 2017).

*Self-efficacy:* The belief that a student has in his/her ability to achieve a certain goal (Giddens, 2016).

*Supplemental instruction:* A higher-education academic support program, targets challenging college courses and uses peer-led review sessions to develop academic skills, improve grades, influence persistence, and ultimately increase student retention (Skoglund et al., 2018).

## THE PROBLEM OF AAHA STUDENTS IN EDUCATION

9:30—10:30 AM

According to Logue, et al., (2017) and Proctor, et al., (2016) AAHAs are often underprepared for college for varied reasons including,

Underpreparedness

Economic Disadvantages

Lack of Family Support

Lack of Self Efficacy

Negative Educational Experiences



10:30 am - 12 noon **Small Group Discussion**

Describe how your early college experiences shaped your successful college completion.

Identify factors that influenced your education, i.e...family, economics, resources, academic skills, social, feelings of self-efficacy.

12 noon—1:00 pm



1:15 - 2 pm **Report Responses to Large Group Discussion**

Reflect how your experiences could have been different if you were a person of color

# Conceptual Framework

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeMUkdkKVKU>

## Research Questions

Slide



RQ1: How do African American and Hispanic American students' perceptions about support services influence their use of academic supports at the LPC?

RQ2: What do African American and Hispanic American students suggest that could increase their use of the support services at the LPC?

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study is based on theory of institutional departure from higher education as proposed by Tinto (1987). This theory of institutional departure from higher education hypothesized that students leave college for reasons that are interrelated and complex, including dropping out of college or early withdrawals for inadequate academic preparation and social engagement (Alicea- Planas, 2017; Buttram, 2016; Khalifa et al., 2016; Knaggs et al., 2015; Lorenz, 2016; Matthews, 2017; Ruppert & Meadows, 2017; Stone et al., 2016). Tinto (2017) further theorized that involvement in college communities may be contingent on a student's ability to intellectually interact, collaborate, and compete in the academic and social milieu of an institution.



## Why Qualitative Research?



## Research Design – Presenter Notes

The basic qualitative design was best suited to explore and interpret the proposed perceptions of AAHA students, which focused on a phenomenon, the academic supports at the LPC. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the basic qualitative study is supported through constructed knowledge by exploring the “meaning a phenomenon has for those involved” (p. 24). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) further explained that while there are similarities in most qualitative research, the basic qualitative design differs in that it explores how people interpret experiences, ascribe meaning to experiences, and construct their worlds (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This design is a comprehensive exploration of a contemporary phenomenon that identifies patterns and examples to understand the phenomenon and focuses on constructing new knowledge (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2017)

3:45—4:00 pm Evaluation

Day 1

Evaluation: Survey Day 1	Highly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Highly Disagree	No Comment	Totals
1. The presenter explained the goals for Day One training.						
2. The presenter explained the problem of AAHA students in education.						
3. The presenter engaged the attendees with discussions and activity.						
4. The presenter clearly explained the conceptual framework for the research.						
5. The presenter clearly established a need for the training at the LPC.						
6. I understood the need the PD training.						
7. I gained an understanding about the problem of AAHA students at the LPC.						
8. I gained knowledge about some of the issues that influence AAHA students in completing their education.						
9. The PD training was well organized.						
10. The PD training stimulated my desire to learn more about the research.						

Name (a photo real)



## Welcome to Day 2

### *Goals for the Day*

- #1—Alignment of LPC Mission with the Research*
- #2—Review of the Literature*
- #3—Discussion of the Research Results and Findings*

8:00—Continental Breakfast

8:30 am – 8:45 am—Reflect & Review of Day One

8:45 am—9:00 am—Review of the LPC Mission & WIG

9:00 am –10:00 am—Discussion of Research Design and Literature Review,

10:00 am—10:15 Break

10:15 am—12 noon— 20 min Video, Dr. De Gruy, Discussion

12:00—Lunch

1:00 pm 2:15 —Breakout session

Discussion of the Participant Sample, Research Coding, Themes, Results & Findings

2:15-2:30 pm —Break

2:30—3:30 pm—Small Groups: Review Participant Responses

3:30– 3:45– Regroup, Respond, Record in Large Group

3:45 pm - 4:00 pm—Reflections & Day 2 Evaluation

*Wildly Important  
Goal* (slide)

The LPC determines goals, entitled Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) each year.

Discussion

One of the WIGs for 2020-2021 is  
**Passionately serving without bias at the LPC family for their growth and total wellbeing social, emotional, physical, and spiritual.**

Although this WIG is for the current year it aligns with and supports the research and with the ongoing vision which is the LPC will be a safe and healthy learning community growing with new technologies to serve the LPC family.  
Why is the alignment important to the research?

## Review of the Literature, Day 2

**AHA in Higher Education:** Although slavery ended many years ago, its influence continues to be pervasive in all areas of life for AAHA students, particularly in education. DeGruy (2017) argued that historical institutionalized slavery has continued to traumatize African Americans in ways that are still being revealed. Discriminatory practices that are embedded in most curriculums and practiced by faculty may hinder AAHAs' education with subtle and overt acts. Bell, one of the men who theorized the idea as the critical race theory (CRT), argued that racism is deeply ingrained in American society and its effects have produced inequalities in every facet of life, including education (Gillborn, 2018). These subtle often overlooked discriminatory behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, are called microaggressions (Gillborn, 2018).

Ellis et., (2018), Gillborn (2018) and Lac (2017) argued that educators who provide supportive services might consciously or unconsciously commit microaggressions and perpetuate prejudicial ideologies that are common in college literature and curriculums. A faculty member who ignores the overwhelming influence of the Caucasian race and its dominating influence in their curriculum creates a hostile environment which interferes with the learning process (Lac, 2017; Valentine-Cobb, 2017). Racial biases may occur when the roles of AAHA people are minimized or ignored in the selection of curriculum subjects and materials

## Literature Review Continued

**Persistence Through Academic Social Engagement.** Student engagement is linked to a student's use of academic supports. College environments significantly influence both the comfort level of AAHA students and their decisions to participate in campus activities and services. Jackson (2014) noted that a supportive college environment "promotes positive identity development" (p. 132) that strengthens a student's feelings of competence to perform academically.

**Language Skills.** Inadequate language skills may also contribute to a student's reluctance to seek assistance. Students raised in communities where slang words are acceptable or who are unable to express themselves succinctly may resist exposing their inadequacy in seeking support (Brookfield, 2016; Tangwe, 2016; Valentine-Cobb, 2017).

**Positive Role Models Among Faculty.** A lack of positive role models and faculty who are representative of the AAHA student population may be intimidating for AAHA students. Tinto (2017) stated that students' successes in college may be influenced by their instructor's attitude, which is conveyed in their knowledge and understanding of the student and the challenges AAHA students encounter.

**Unrecognized Barriers of Perceived Lack of Academic Support.** For AAHA students, barriers to using college resources may include the lack of support from several directions. AAHA students who do not see representations of their race in faculty have a higher probability of feeling unsupported, which reduces the likelihood of engaging in college resources (Pickett, 2017; Schmid et al., 2016). Academic supports are critical for students to increase acquisition of college course content and may also promote AAHA students' persistence in college (Tinto, 2010).

## Literature Review Continued

**Language Skills.** Inadequate language skills may also contribute to a student's reluctance to seek assistance. Students raised in communities where slang words are acceptable or who are unable to express themselves succinctly may resist exposing their inadequacy in seeking support (Brookfield, 2016; Tangwe, 2016; Valentine-Cobb, 2017).

**Positive Role Models Among Faculty.** A lack of positive role models and faculty who are representative of the AAHA student population may be intimidating for AAHA students. Tinto (2017) stated that students' successes in college may be influenced by their instructor's attitude, which is conveyed in their knowledge and understanding of the student and the challenges AAHA students encounter.

**Unrecognized Barriers of Perceived Lack of Academic Support.** For AAHA students, barriers to using college resources may include the lack of support from several directions. AAHA students who do not see representations of their race in faculty have a higher probability of feeling unsupported, which reduces the likelihood of engaging in college resources (Pickett, 2017; Schmid et al., 2016). Academic supports are critical for students to increase acquisition of college course content and may also promote AAHA students' persistence in college (Tinto, 2010).

**Reduced Pre-College Development.** Students reared in low socioeconomic households are less likely to have had experiences that promoted the development of efficacy and competency (Alicino, 2017; Davis, 2017; Hall, 2017; Williams, 2017).

**College Adjustments.** Arriving on a college campus is only the beginning of a rigorous learning experience for all students and more so for AAHAS (AlMazrua, 2016; Tinto, 2017).

**Financial Concerns.** Among the complexity of issues AAHA students must navigate, financial difficulties may cause stress that distracts and impedes them from academic studies (Luna-Torres et al., 2017).





**Presenter Notes: Brief Video**

Slide

Dr. Joy DeGruy—Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNh4FTYZQ2U> (video clip, 10 minutes)

Through lectures, workshops, seminars and special guest appearances, Dr. Joy has light on the critical issues affecting society. Those who have experienced Dr. Joy in person, can tell you that have been “stimulated, enlightened and inspired.” Dr. Joy’s seminars have been lauded as the most dynamic and currently being presented on the topics of culture, race relations and contemporary social issues.:

- .Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome – Effects of Slavery and Institutionalized Racism
  - .Diversity Training
  - .Healing Workshops
  - .Culture Specific Models
  - .Community Building
  - .Violence and Gang Prevention



## Morning: Large Group Discussion

WIGs

Research Design

Interview Protocols

Literature Review

12 noon—1:00 pm



**Afternoon:** Discussion of the Participant  
Sample, Research Coding, Themes, Results &  
Findings

Small Groups: Review Participant Responses  
Regroup, Respond, Record in Large Group

## Interview Protocols



143

Nine AAHA students enrolled at the LPC  
Participants' identity and responses were confidential and stored in  
a password protected computer  
Participants over 18 years old  
Questions aligned with the research problem.  
Transcribed interviews were member checked with participants and  
members of the participant's community for verification.

### **Location:**

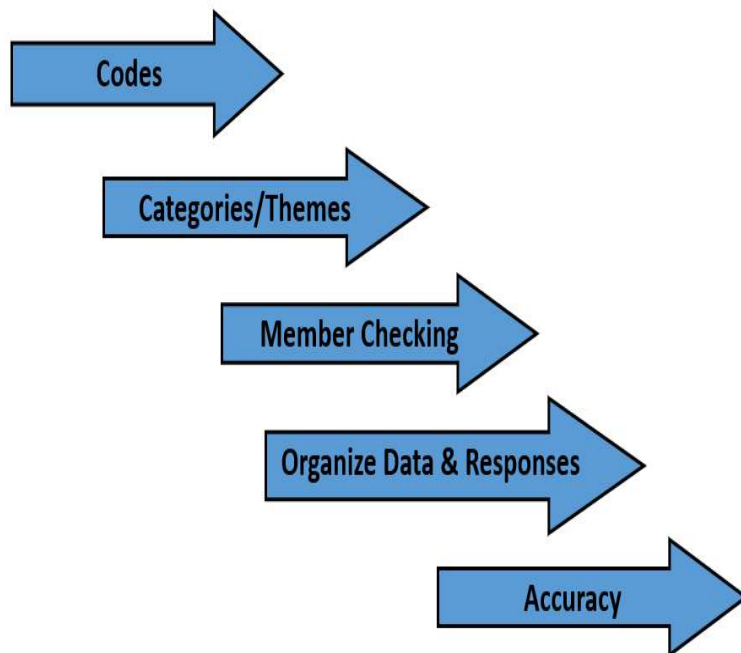
**Interviews conducted in a private room at the LPC.  
Private phone interviews, one written interview.**

## Participant Sample & Demographics

144

Name	Male	Female	AA	HA	Full-time student	Employed – Part time	Lives on Campus	Lives off Campus
1 Timothy	X		X		X		X	
2 Barry	X		X		X	X		X
3 Maggie		X	X		X	X		X
4 Mia		X	X		X		X	
5 Gina		X		X	X	X		X
6 Abby		X		X	X	X		X
7 Brianna		X		X	X	X		X
8 Elise		X		X	X	X		X
9 Anna		X	X		X		X	

## Data Analysis



*Hand Out for Day 2*  
*Themes Generated from the Data*  
*Slide*

Themes	Frequency (no. of times referenced)	Gender Male Participants 2 Female Participants 7
<b>Theme 1 Knowledge of Academic Resources</b> Places to Study 12 Advisor 5 Commuters 3	20	Males 3 references Females 14 references
<b>Theme 2 Lack of Diversity</b> People of color 12 Diversity 24 Minorities 15	51	Males - 9 references Female - 42 references
<b>Theme 3 Feelings of Discomfort, isolation and Lack of Belonging</b> Fear, distrust, left out, isolated 28 Discomfort 34	62	Males - 21 references Females - 41 references
<b>Theme 4 Inconsistent Academic Support and Accountability</b> Help 91 Support 17	108	Males - 14 references Females - 77 references

Small group breakout session, Day 2 Participant Responses

Using the Tinto's Conceptual Framework use the participant's responses to identify concerns or positives that would influence AAHA use of the academic resources. Record your responses on the sheet below. Be prepared to share your thoughts with the large group. (Participants will divide into 10 groups to review the participants comments and record your thoughts. The interview comments are included in the Handout package. A sample is included below.

**Q 1** With the regard to the academic support services at the LPC, how would you characterize your experiences.

Let's see. From what I, from what I used and from what I've seen, I think it's very, it's very systematic, if that makes sense? Everything works and it's almost like very scheduled, very timely. And the way that I have encountered I guess the people who work within the academic services.

I definitely believe that I could have um used it more um to my advantage uh, but before I kind of felt like I'm not going to say that I felt as if the resources didn't accommodate me. m because I feel that's bit of a long stretch, but um I don't want to minimize my feelings because at that time that is how I felt. But I started to just try to experience it more, I tried to come in contact with more people that I felt comfortable with or I felt um can understand where I was at for that help to assist me.

Well, I would characterize my experiences I guess in a good manner because um, I, I love this campus because of the fact we can go one-on-one with the professors and even go in certain study groups to get help and do homework outside of class hours.

Some are kind, nice, willing to serve, and are there for students. I have also seen students whose parents are part of the administration, office, business department, professors, that get more grace than other students. I'm not sure because their kids are students there, but you can see extra grace, and the students whom parents work their act if their crap don't stink. I should be honest, with these questions. Since the last couple semesters, I have tried to distance myself from building up relationships at Grace. I only have couple professors I go to if I have any problems. In the beginning of going to Grace was wonderful and lovely, and I was so excited to go to school every day but now, I sense something has changed. Unsafe, could be another word of my expression, why unsafe? There is a lack of trust on campus, that I don't have much of people I trust with my life, or if anyone would help to protect me.

## Group Responses

#1

#2

#3

#4

Final thoughts:



*3:45—4:00 pm Evaluation  
Day 2*

Evaluation: Survey Day 2	Highly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Highly Disagree	No Comment	
1. The presenter explained the goals for Day One training.						
2. The presenter explained the alignment of the LPC mission with the research.						
3. The presenter engaged the attendees with discussions and activity.						
4. The presenter explained and discussed the review of the literature for the research.						
5. The presenter engaged attendees in discussion of educational barriers.						
6. I understood how the literature review contributed to the research.						
7. I gained knowledge about some of the factors that contributed to AAHA college completion.						
8. I gained knowledge about programs that may assist AAHA students strengthen their learning skills.						
9. The PD training was well organized.						
10. The PD training stimulated my desire to take action in reducing educational barriers.						

## Welcome to: Day Three Schedule

### *Goals for the Day*

*#1—Recommendations from Research  
Participants, Discussion on what works*

*#2—Guest Speaker -*

*#3- Action Steps*

8:00—Greet and Sign-In, Continental Breakfast  
 8:30– 9:00—Reflect & Review of Day 2  
 9:30—10:30 —Discussion of Research Findings (Conclusion)  
 10:30—10:45—Break  
 10:45 –11:30 am— Discussion Small Group Recommendations  
 from Research Participants  
 What Works!  
 11:30—12 noon—Re-gather, Re-group Report, Record  
 12:00 noon— 1:00 pm Lunch  
 1:00—2:15 pm Guest Speaker, Glen Singleton, Founder of  
 Courageous Conversations  
 2:15 pm—2:30 pm Break  
 2:30 pm - 3:30 pm —Small Group Action Steps  
 3:30 pm—3:45 pm—Re-gather, Re-group Report, Record  
 3:45 pm - 4:00 pm—Closing Remarks, Reflections & Day 3  
 Evaluation



10:30 am - 12 noon **Small Group Discussion**

Using your knowledge of AAHA concerns and institutional characteristics as described in the interview, discuss what works and what does not work  
Slide.

12 noon—1:00 pm



1:00 pm—2:15 pm—Guest Speaker Glen Singleton

2:15—2:30 pm—Break

2:30—3:45 pm

Small Groups and Large Group

Action Steps

## Research Participants'

152

- Recommendations
- Slides/Presenter Notes
- Clear descriptions of the academic programs
  - Consistency in what programs offer
  - Multi-media language communication
- Availability of programs posted in several mediums
- Diverse staff/faculty in gender, race and ethnicity
- Knowledgeable staff/faculty in varied subjects
  - Comfortable learning environment
- Meeting places to accommodate off-campus students
  - Activities engaging for AAHA students
  - Accountability supports
  - Diverse mentors
  - Diverse tutors
- Positive Faculty and Student Rapport



*Action Steps*

*Handout*




### Presenter Notes: Introduction

#### Online video (youtube or online chat)

**Glenn Eric Singleton** hails from Baltimore, Maryland. A product of public elementary and independent secondary school, Singleton earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and his master's degree from the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University. Singleton began his career as an Ivy League admissions director. In 1992, he founded Pacific Educational Group, Inc. (PEG) to support families in their transitions within and between K-12 and higher education. His company rapidly grew into a vehicle for addressing systemic educational inequity by providing a framework, guidance, and support to K-12 systems and institutions of higher education focused on meeting the needs of under-served students of color. He is now its president and chief executive officer.

Singleton and his associates at PEG design and deliver individualized, comprehensive professional development for educators in the form of training, coaching, and consulting. Working at all levels, from beginning teachers to superintendents at local, state, and national levels, PEG helps educators focus on heightening their awareness of institutional racism and implementing effective strategies for eliminating racial achievement disparities in schools. In 1995, Singleton developed *Beyond Diversity*, a widely recognized seminar aimed at helping administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community stakeholders identify and examine the intersection of race and schooling. The *Beyond Diversity* seminar is the foundation for the PEG Systemic Racial Equity Framework and its theory of transformation, which focuses on leadership development, teacher action-research, and family/community empowerment. Today, participants around the world use Singleton's *Courageous Conversations Agreements, Conditions and Compass*, introduced to them in *Beyond Diversity*, as they strive to usher in culturally proficient curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Over its 20-year history, PEG's scope of work has expanded to include online professional learning, independent school partnerships, and international efforts in Canada and Australia that focus on educational equity for indigenous populations. PEG hosts an annual Summit for Courageous Conversation, in which scholars, educators, community members, and other stakeholders convene to identify strategies and best practices for creating high-level, equitable learning environments for all students.

Singleton currently resides in San Francisco, California. He is the founder of the Foundation for a College Education (FCE) and currently serves on the FCE Advisory Board.

**Comments**  
**Questions**  
**Next Steps**



Evaluation: Survey Day 3	Highly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Highly Disagree	No Comment
1. The presenter explained the goals for Day Three training.					
2. The presenter discussed research findings.					
3. The presenter engaged the attendees large and small group discussion in best practices					
4. Speaker Glen Singleton was engaging and informative.					
5. The PD was well-planned and organized.					
6. The PD used a variety of learning tools.					
7. My knowledge of factors that impact AAHA use of academic support services.					
8. I gained knowledge about programs that AAHA strengthen learning skills.					
9. The PD encouraged me to explore ways I can engage AAHA students in culturally affirming conversations.					
10. The PD training stimulated my desire to take action in reducing educational barriers.					
<p>Thank you for participating in this PD. I invite your comments, observations, and suggestions. I can be reached at <a href="mailto:Cynthia.shyne@waldenu.edu">Cynthia.shyne@waldenu.edu</a></p>					
<p>31 <span style="float: right;">WALDEN UNIVERSITY <i>A higher degree. A higher purpose.</i></span></p>					



