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Perceived Barriers Preventing Successful Degree Completion among First Generation African American College Students

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Kimbry L. Jordan

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Perceived Barriers Preventing Successful Degree Completion among First Generation

African American College Students

by

Kimbry L. Jordan

MA, Norfolk State University, 2013

BS, Norfolk State University, 2010

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2022

Abstract

First generation African American students are less likely to enroll in a higher education institution after completing high school compared to other racial and ethnic groups. The problem of perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion was addressed in this study. First generation African American college students, who are a small percentage of students who do seek a college education, often encounter challenges while trying to obtain degree completion.

Unfortunately, the probability of attrition among first generation African American college students is higher than the current college-going population. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived barriers that prevent degree completion among first generation African American college students who attend the selected 4-year institution research site. The transition theory and Astin's theory of involvement were the theoretical frameworks used in this basic qualitative research study to explore the perception of eight students and five faculty members. Research questions related to the process of assisting first generation African American college students, information about resources, and barriers that prevent degree completion guided this qualitative research study. Data was analyzed by utilizing an open coding approach. Findings from the data collected with semi structured interviews indicated financial hardship, a lack of support, precollege awareness and high school preparation, transitional programming, and university faculty awareness as perceived barriers for retention. The resulting project contributes to positive social change by helping university administrators to address the needs of first generation African American college students to overcome barriers and navigate towards success.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project study to God, my family, and friends. Thank you all for your support. Without this support system, this accomplishment would not have been possible.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge a few individuals that assisted me through the duration of this project study. First, I would like to acknowledge God for allowing me to achieve this level of success. I would also like to thank Darnell Thomas, my two best friends, and my sorority sisters from the prestigious Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated. To my parents thank you! To my two nephews, I did this for you! I wanted to start a legacy for our family that would exemplify educational excellence. I also wanted to convey to you the importance of hard work, dedication, and resiliency. Dr. Stephanie Stubblefield, you have been both my mentor and mother. Thank you!

To my goddaughter Khalia, I met you at the beginning of this process. It is so important to me that you understand the importance of hard work and resiliency associated with becoming a successful African American female. Lastly, I would like to thank all the members of my committee.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Many first generation students dream of obtaining a college education. A specific subgroup of first generation students is African Americans, who comprise 40% of the first generation college-going population in the United States. This population is expected to grow in the next decade (Redford & Hoyer, 2017). Students who are considered first within their family to attend college are considered first generation college students (Nelson, 2019). First generation African American students may decide to seek a degree or postsecondary education for various reasons. Throughout the duration of their collegiate experience, first generation African American college students experience social/emotional distress (Redford & Hoyer, 2017). In most cases, first generation African American students may experience educational barriers prior to attending a 4-year college or university (Gibbons et al., 2019). Therefore, first generation African American college students may view seeking a degree as a solution to escape the continuation of experiencing said barriers. Researchers have identified a need for student advocacy that promotes academic success while attending college. Additional advocacy may increase first generation African American student retention rates (Froggé & Woods, 2018). Providing additional advocacy for first generation African American students would impact these students both academically and socially. Support and awareness will ultimately influence first generation African American college students as they complete their degrees.

Currently, both college retention and completion are strong focal points in education (Frogg  & Woods, 2018; Richards et al., 2017). The concern with these topics as they relate to first generation African American college students is significant. National statistical data demonstrate that the U.S. college graduation rate for African American college students is 42% (Richards et al., 2017). This rate is 20% below the national average of 62% for non-first generation European- American college students. Data also showed that only 24% of students who enrolled in college right after high school were first generation (Richards et al., 2017). Additionally, 27% of first generation college students come from households with an income of \$20,000 or less (Richards et al., 2017). Of this population, 14% were African American (Richards et al., 2017).

Researchers also found that retention among first generation African American college students varied by higher education institution. Some colleges/universities displayed graduation rates among first generation African American college students that were significantly higher than most (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016). However, others reported that two-thirds or more of first generation African American college students do not complete degrees (Snyder et al., 2018). Several barriers are perceived to be contributing factors in both retention and degree completion rates among first generation African American college students. Barriers that impact these students may originate prior to or while attending college resulting in academic and social insufficiencies. Prospective first generation African American college students have been known to

experience a lack of academic rigor, community resources, and college exposure (Covarrubias et al., 2018).

The selected research site for this study was a four-year public liberal arts institution in the Northeastern United States with a diverse makeup. The university offers certificate, associate, bachelor, and master's degree programs (Snyder et al., 2018). With 108 academic programs, this university has 3,859 students enrolled. First generation African American students make up 57.6% of the university's enrollment population (Snyder et al., 2018). Within the African American population enrolled, females make up 57.5% and the other 42.5% are males (Snyder et al., 2018).

Only 7% of incoming first generation African American college students enrolled at the selected research site achieved degree completion (Cataldi et al., 2018). The reasons for a lack of completion and perceived barriers have not been identified. Therefore, the problem that was the focus of the study was that perceived barriers to degree completion among first generation African American college students is unknown. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived barriers that prevent successful degree completion among first generation African American students who attend a traditional 4-year institution. Forming an understanding of the barriers could possibly help to increase the success of first generation African American students in one institution of higher education and provide information to help students at other institutions. The findings of this study have the potential to help the research site better

address the needs of first generation African American college students as they face and overcome barriers while navigating their way through college and toward life success.

Rationale

The number of students attending higher education institutions has substantially grown over time. In fact, the number of minorities has contributed to this increase in growth, specifically as it relates to first generation students (Wibrowski et al., 2017). In 2004, 34% of students attending a 4-year higher education institution were minorities (Castillo-Montoya & Ives, 2020). First generation minority students and their journey through college have been the target of continued research. Barriers can impact the success of any student, specifically first generation African American college students. These students may endure various unique difficulties throughout the college compared to the non-African American college student. Barriers experienced by these students may include both family and financial support matters (Castillo-Montoya & Ives, 2020). As a result of this, first generation African American college students may be viewed as displaying characteristics of resiliency.

However, within the last few years, there has been a 75% retention decrease in African American first generation college students due to a variety of experienced barriers (Connolly et al., 2017). Usually, this cohort of students does not return to college after the first-year experience due to academic failure (Connolly et al., 2017). The various barriers thought to be the reasons why first generation African American college students do not complete their degrees have included a lack of academic resources, advocacy, and

first-year experience programming (Connolly et al., 2017). Understanding what specific barriers exist among first generation African American college students at the selected research site is important to ensure successful degree completion. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived barriers that prevent successful degree completion among first generation African American students who attend the selected 4-year institution research site. The findings from this study have the potential to provide contributions towards future retention efforts (Wibrowski et al., 2017).

Definition of Terms

The following terms were utilized while researching perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from completing their degrees.

Academic persistence: Overcoming academic challenges (Azmitia et al., 2018).

Advocacy: Support given to assist students overcome barriers (DesJardins et al., 2017).

Barriers: Challenges or obstacles that prevent access (Stebbleton & Soria, 2013).

FAFSA: Free application for federal student aid (Bahr et al., 2018).

Financial aid: Aid used to assist with college expenses, whether considered a grant, loan, or scholarship from various sources (DesJardins et al., 2017).

First generation students: Students who are first in their family to attend a college/ university (Kinney, 2017).

Retention rate: The percentage of first-time, first-year undergraduate students who continue at a school into the next year (Azmitia et al., 2018).

Stakeholders: Individuals who exist to provide additional support for students who lack college preparation and resources (Petty, T., 2014).

Significance of the Study

In this study I explored the perceived barriers that prevent successful degree completion among first generation African American students who attend the selected 4-year institution research site. Barriers were identified to better suggest ways to assist this population as they proceed towards degree completion (Frogg  & Woods, 2018). I explored barriers and identified a potential way to assist first generation African American college students as they seek to overcome barriers (see Azmitia et al., 2018). Various studies have centered on first generation students (Atherton, 2014; Gibbons & Woodside, 2014). However, the studies have focused very little on African American first generation college students and their success. Therefore, the results from this study may assist colleges and universities in better supporting this specific group of students to cope with barriers throughout their college career (Sutter & Paulson, 2017). Students who overcome barriers and graduate with degrees are more likely to obtain gainful employment, thus contributing to the welfare of their immediate lives, as well as their communities, ultimately leading to positive social change (Means & Pyne, 2017).

Research Questions

In order to explore the barriers to successful degree completion among first generation African American college students, the following research questions were the focus of the study:

RQ1: What barriers do first generation African American college students encounter prior to and throughout the duration of college at the selected institution research site?

RQ2: How can the selected institution research site assist first generation African American college students

RQ3: What potential resources can be provided from the university and faculty to support first generation African American college students?

Review of the Literature

This literature review consisted of research related to first generation and African American students. In addition, the review included information on the theoretical framework that the overall research. When conducting research about first generation African American college students, I used various databases. Databases included were ERIC, Oxford Bibliographies, ProQuest, Education Source, and PShdYC Info. Additionally, the search terms utilized in conducting this research were *first generation African American college students, degree retention, barriers, low-income, advocacy, and degree completion.*

This literature review includes three major sections. In the initial section I discuss the theoretical framework that was utilized to guide this research. The second section is a profile of a first generation African American college student. Finally, barriers to degree attainment are presented as the preface to identifying the perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion. Barriers described include finances, parental advocacy, insufficient resources, and maintaining academics.

Theoretical Framework

The selected frameworks of Schlossberg's (1981) theory related to transitions and Astin's (1984) theory of involvement both aligned with the research questions. When investigating the factors that prevented first generation African American students from attaining a degree, a lack of social engagement and extracurricular involvement were considered. Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory defines the word *transition* as an individual's event or nonevent that results in a relationship, routine, assumption, or role change. Schlossberg (1981) also defines specific transitions, which include anticipated transitions that appear periodically, unanticipated transitions, which are not scheduled or predicted, and nonevent transitions, which are expected to occur but never do. This theory offers four major factors that assist with the transition process (Patton et al., 2016). These factors include situation, self, support, and strategies (Patton et al., 2016). This theory provided a basis for understanding the transition experience of first generation African American students.

Astin's (1984) work described the importance of student involvement during college. Demographics, student environment, and outcomes are three elements or core concepts of the theory. In addition, Astin (1984) provided five basic assumptions regarding involvement. These assumptions include psychosocial, physical energy investment, continuous involvement, and the student's overall gain because of involvement (Astin, 1984). Moreover, Astin found that various forms of student involvement had a positive correlation to both retention and academics. Astin's theory provided a basis for understanding factors that contribute to student success. Integrating both theoretical frameworks provided information regarding the transition experience, as well as elements that assist in the success of first generation African American students.

Student involvement among first generation African American students can play a major role in the steps taken towards degree completion (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016). Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory assisted in providing a better understanding of the resources could be utilized to support first generation African American students during their transition into college. When first generation students transition to college there is often a lack of parental support and additional resources (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016). Both theoretical frameworks assisted in identifying how 4-year institutions could better assist first generation African American students.

Review of the Broader Problem

First Generation African American College Students

First generation students are those who are first in their families to attend a college or university. These students represent one-quarter of the college student population (Gibbons et al., 2019). They are also found to be less likely than non-first-generation college students to persist through college (Gibbons et al., 2016). Many questions surround first generation students and the factors that impact their degree completion (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016). These students often enroll in college immediately after graduating from high school and come from households that earn less than \$20,000 a year (Gibbons et al., 2019).

There are distinct characteristics that define the profile of a first generation African American college student. This unique group of students enroll in college with lower ACT/SAT scores and depends heavily on grants, scholarships, and loans to pay for college (Gibbons et al., 2019). First generation African American college students usually attend a college or university part-time while working a full-time job. In addition, they often seek to live with relatives rather than living on campus, and they experience higher attrition rates. First generation African American college students are expected to impact retention rates among various colleges/universities due to the barriers experienced while seeking a degree. The most critical time for these students are the first and second semester of freshman year. Additionally, these students are twice as likely to graduate from public institutions than private.

Specific barriers have been perceived to prevent first generation African American college students from completing their degrees. Challenges mentioned by researchers were family, resources, socioeconomic class, precollege exposure, finances, and a lack of social/curricular engagement while attending college (Wilbur & Rescuing, 2016). These barriers were referred to as inequalities in college completion (Wilbur & Rescuing, 2016). When these students consider seeking a college degree, the complexity of application process, the emotions of leaving home, and the foreseen or unforeseen financial burden can be overwhelming, often causing these students to not apply to or withdraw from a college or university (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016). Due to a lower socioeconomic status, first generation African American students can enter college at a disadvantage as they struggle to meet the same demands as their more advantaged peers (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016).

Financial Barriers

First generation African American students gain college awareness through exposure to those other than their family members (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2016). Upon being exposed to postsecondary options, most first generation African American students immediately see college as one of many ways to overcome generational barriers and gain long-term success. However, the universities' tuition costs, room and board expenses, and miscellaneous fees are often overlooked (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2016). Expenditures such as these can hinder first generation African American students from attending college (Adams et al., 2016). Most financial barriers start as early as the senior year of

high school. Unfortunately, during the college application process, many students have difficulty paying for various fees (DesJardins et al., 2017). In most cases, fee waivers are provided for students to ensure the completion of the college application process.

Financial barriers are rated one of the highest contributors that prevent African American first generation college students from completing a degree (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2016).

In fact, 55% of first generation African American college students stated that they withdrew from college because they could no longer afford to continue (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2016). The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also referred to as FAFSA, is a resource used to provide additional financial assistance while attending college (DesJardins et al., 2017). However, if students do not complete this free application, the risk of higher tuition cost will most likely become the reality (Bahr et al., 2018) This universal application is used nationwide to determine student eligibility. All eligibility will vary per university and student. However, many first generation African American students and families lack the basic knowledge and understanding to complete the FAFSA application (DesJardins et al., 2017).

More than half of the college-going students in the United States depend on financial aid to finance their education. As previously mentioned, first generation students depend on grants, scholarships, and loans to finance school and borrow larger amounts of aid as non-first-generation students (DesJardins et al., 2017). First generation students and their families depend on federal funding to assist in the college financial process (DesJardins et al., 2017) Stress can weigh on both the student and their parents as

they ponder how much federal aid to borrow. (DesJardins et al., 2017) As a result, these students are more likely to endure financial barriers both prior to and while attending college (Baker et al., 2019).

Parental Advocacy

First generation African American college students seek to obtain a college degree to ultimately improve their lives and possibly assist their families (Ndiaye & Wolfe, 2016). However, these students often lack support systems while attending college. The most prevalent issue discussed was the lack of family support. These students lack support from their families due to being the first in their family to seek a college degree. The lack of support can start as early as the college application process (Armstrong, 2018). During this time, families might not fully understand the student's desire to attend college due to a lack of exposure (Ndiaye & Wolfe, 2016). Unfortunately, many first generation African American college students choose not to attend college due to a lack of family support (Armstrong, 2018).

Prior to and during the attendance of college, first generation African American college students often lack support systems (Armstrong, 2018). Moreover, environmental surroundings or community influences can affect first generation African American students greatly. Transitioning from high school into a college or university warrants family support for this unique cohort of students (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016). In most cases, first generation African American families are unable to provide adequate support due to a lack of understanding (Ndiaye & Wolfe, 2016). As a result, many first generation

African American college students endure various psychological struggles and experience guilt while attending college (Adams et al., 2016), causing anxiety. Anxiety may surface as the student reflects on the family they have left behind. First generation African American college students may also experience some identity inconsistencies (Aruguete, 2017). For example, the student may present themselves one-way while at school and another when in the company of their family (Adams et al., 2016). Students who have parents who did not obtain a 4-year college degree earn lower grades and ultimately encounter more barriers towards success (Gibbons et al., 2016). In one study, participants mentioned that during the college seeking and application process, they felt unsupported (Gibbons et al., 2016). Many students associated the term *unsupported* with a lack of parental support (Brown, 2018). Students discussed how their parents were not involved in their education, how older siblings had dropped out of school, and how the opportunity of meeting others in the educational field encouraged the idea of success (Rubio et al., 2017). Families of first generation African American students are often opposed to students leaving home to attend college (Garza & Fullerton, 2017). Parents expressed difficulty in letting their child move away from home resulting in the student's inability to effectively transition into college (Garza & Fullerton, 2017). Parents of first generation African American students may lack the ability to properly understand the transition process into college (Gibbons et al., 2016). Students mentioned how they felt about being stuck within the decision-making process surrounding staying at school versus visiting family occasionally. In some cases, students mentioned how they viewed

their family as both an advantage and barrier at the same time (Gibbons et al., 2016). Students also discussed issues around discussing college experiences with their noneducated family members and the difficulty associated with it. Moreover, many students viewed their family as a major distraction while both transitioning to and attending college (Gibbons et al., 2016). First generation African American college students found it hard to juggle both family and responsibilities surrounding college (Brown, 2018).

Academic Performance

Upon transitioning into college, first generation African American students may experience some barriers related to academics. These barriers could include environmental changes and adjusting to college. Many first generation African American students share common experiences. These experiences can vary among individuals and their environments (Tate et al., 2015). Previous academic challenges and barriers related to them could greatly affect first generation African American students academically (Azmitia et al., 2018).

First generation African American students may experience feelings of doubt as it pertains to their academic ability (Adams et al., 2016). As these students transition into college, they are more likely to take remedial classes, delay major declarations, or repeat or withdraw from classes (Adams et al., 2016). At times, these students can have difficulty in maintaining grades while experiencing common barriers resulting in lower GPA's. This can be difficult, and students usually do not initiate the help-seeking process

once barriers have been experienced. However, in some cases, the abilities of this unique group can be underestimated (Adams et al., 2016). Although the previous barriers encountered by these students can often be viewed as a negative (Hui, 2017), first generation African American students are considered strong, determined, and resilient (Kantamneni et al., 2016).

Additionally, faculty and stakeholders can have a major impact on the success of first generation African American students. Faculty members who serve this unique cohort of students can assist them by creating a more engaging learning environment, providing opportunities to develop peer relationships, and offering mentorship opportunities (Schademan & Thompson, 2016). Moreover, faculty can also assist students foster a strong and positive cultural identity as they navigate through college. This will ultimately allow students to attain a sense of belonging (Schademan & Thompson, 2016).

Retention

Many inquire about first generation African American students and question if they are academically ready for college (Schademan & Thompson, 2016). These students also represent the lower enrollment and retention rates for most college and universities (DesJardins et al., 2017) The number of first generation students attending college will continue to increase. Although enrollment of first generation African American students is expected to increase, retention will become a bigger issue (Schademan & Thompson, 2016). In about 6 years, 11% of first generation students would have earned a bachelor's

degree (Schademan & Thompson, 2016). Unfortunately, low retention rates for first generation students mean greater consequences. Such consequences include higher student loan debt, reduced annual incomes, decreased tax revenues, and increased incarceration rates (Schademan & Thompson, 2016). Due to a lack of academic preparation for college, first generation African American college students will experience some type of obstacles while attending college. As a result, students may perform lower than their advantaged peers (Hui, 2017).

Implications

There are many perceived barriers that may prevent first generation African American college students from completing a degree (Gillen-O'Neel, 2021). As higher education institutions aim to meet the needs of first generation African American college students, it is imperative that innovative approaches are implemented. On the basis of the findings from this study, the project was designed to implement a program for first generation African American college students. This program will provide additional resources such as strategies, life skills, and mentorship (Gillen-O'Neel, 2021). Program initiatives will not only assist African American college students as they transition through college but also higher education institutions as they try to increase college retention. Most importantly, program effectiveness will be measured through the use of student surveys, retention data, and accomplished program goals.

Another tentative project could be implementing quarterly professional development programs. During this time, university faculty could have the opportunity to

share ideas, ask questions, and learn additional competencies as they relate to serving first generation African American college students. Innovative strategies and best practices on how to assist African American college students minimize barriers can be shared continuously during the facilitation of professional development (Gillen-O'Neel, 2021). Additionally, faculty insight and professional development effectiveness would be evaluated through the use of surveys.

Summary

First generation African American college students are a unique yet fragile group of individuals. Section 1 identified the perceived barriers first generation African American college students experience while seeking degree completion. The perceived barriers included finances, parental advocacy, insufficient resources, and academic challenges. The retention of first generation African American college students among 4-year colleges were discussed in Section 1. As this cohort of students continues to seek college degrees, minimizing barriers is essential. Moreover, the findings from this qualitative study offer greater insight into possible future solutions.

In Section 2, I describe the research design, the selection of participants, the research site, the collection of data, and the data analysis process. Section 3 consists of all project specifics and research findings. Section 4 includes both research reflections and conclusions. The aim of this study was to identify barriers that prevent degree completion among first generation African American college students. Positive social change can be

fostered by identifying barriers and understanding the resources needed to support first generation African American college students and their success.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived barriers that prevent successful degree completion among first generation African American students who attend a traditional 4-year institution. To better understand the perceived barriers, I used a basic qualitative research design. A basic qualitative research design helped me to outline the perceived barriers of first generation African American students. Interviews from participants were a valuable aspect of the data collection process. Interviewing participants and obtaining rich data provides a more meaningful research experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research is defined as research that consists of philosophical orientations and approaches. With this research design, a variety of methods could have been used as participant data was collected. Interviews were the main form of data collection in the study because it allowed the participants to share deep and meaningful information about their experiences. There are various types of qualitative research designs that include ethnography, narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although the various research designs share similarities, the context in which each is utilized is what differentiates them from each other.

Ethnography is the most common research design and consists of the researcher being immersed within the study setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This type of engagement allows the researcher to become fully involved in the participants' culture or

setting. Narrative research integrates a sequence of events. Narratives usually consist of one or two participants. In-depth interviews are conducted, and sometimes documents are reviewed. Interviews are conducted over an extended period. It is possible with the collection of narrative data for results to be conflicting, which can ultimately provide room for further research and innovation. Phenomenological research includes a variety of combined methods. Such methods include interviews, documentation, the review of videos, and the option of visiting specific environments to better understand a group of individuals. Interviews are conducted utilizing a large number of participants with the goal of identifying common themes among specific participant groups. The purpose of grounded theory is to identify an explanation or theory after data has been collected. Interviews are also conducted alongside the utilization of a theoretical framework. Case studies are both explanatory and exploratory, which provide a more in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon. For this study, a basic qualitative research design was selected to examine a specific setting, event, and subject. As interviews were conducted and data was collected, research initiatives began to narrow. As a result, new ideas, themes, and subjects emerged.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

To better identify perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion, I selected a basic qualitative design. I chose this specific research design to explore perceived barriers among first generation African American college students who experienced them while attending a specific 4-

year university (see Yin, 2015). Narrative inquiry was not selected because the goal of the research was not to tell a structured sequence of events. Grounded theory along with phenomenological methods were not selected due to the inability for both research designs to align with the goal of this study (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Participants

Participants only qualified for the research study if they answered yes to all questions on the participant eligibility survey (see Appendices D & E). The faculty and student participant eligibility survey consisted of five yes or no questions. Faculty survey questions sought to identify professional experience working with this cohort, if they were currently employed at the university research site, if they currently serviced first generation African American college students, and if they currently worked with any university first generational programs on campus (see Appendix E). Student participant eligibility questions inquired if the student was African American, a first generation college student, between the ages of 18 and 25, currently attending the research site university, and had experienced barriers while attending the research site university (see Appendix D). Once the surveys identified participants as eligible, I contacted five university faculty members and eight first generation African American college students from the 4-year university research site between the ages of 18 to 25 who consented to participate in the research study.

A total of 13 participants voluntarily agreed to participate within this research study. Five of the 13 participants were faculty members from the selected 4-year

institution. Faculty member participants consisted of both adjunct and associate professors. Faculty members who participated in this basic qualitative study were interviewed to obtain their experiences working with or teaching first generation African American college students. The remaining eight participants were African American college students between the ages of 18-25 who were currently enrolled at the selected 4-year institution. For this research study, 13 participants in total were used, and saturation was reached according to the themes and patterns that emerged in the interviews. Participants shared meaningful experiences that surfaced both new and repetitive themes regarding perceived barriers (see Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Gaining Access to Participants

Identifying and gaining access to participants when conducting research can be somewhat challenging (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Prior to Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the research site, I contacted the university IRB chair for direction on how to gain both research approval and access to participants. Upon my request, I was assigned two coprincipal investigators on campus. Assigned coinvestigators guided me through the IRB process and assisted me throughout the duration of my research. I attended frequent meetings with both investigators and communicated via email and phone as needed. Upon approval from the study institution Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), approval number 04-01-20-0445676, coinvestigators had me work with the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability & Environmental Sciences, also referred to as CAUSES, to gain access to participants.

The research site point of contact provided assisted me with gaining access to both university faculty and first generation African American college student participants by providing me with an email directory for the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability & Environmental Sciences. I generated an email invitation introducing myself with a brief description of the proposed study. The email invitation also stated the importance of voluntary participation and essential contact information for prospective participant questions. With hopes of promoting feelings of confidence and eagerness to share their experiences a total of 13 participants formally accepted the invitation to participate in the study. Participants were given an eligibility survey to ensure they met the research study criteria. Upon survey determined eligibility, I sent consent forms via email to participants to confirm their participation. Once I received all signed consent forms, interviews were scheduled over the span of 3 weeks. Lastly, coinvestigators were present during all student participant interviews to ensure comfort.

Researcher-Participant Relationship

Establishing an effective rapport with participants is essential to the success of a study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). To minimize barriers in the researcher-participant relationship, I established an effective rapport with every participant prior to conducting interviews. This was done by engaging in small talk with participants on a common topic prior to conducting each interview. Next, I briefly reviewed the purpose of the study while reassuring a welcoming atmosphere that promoted comfort and a safe space for participants. Some of the barriers known to impede the research-participant relationship

include both gender and race (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Gender may play a role in why a relationship between a participant and the researcher may not be able to work effectively together. In some studies, female interviewers establish relationships easily with female participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In contrast, female interviewers may be less likely to form effective relationships with male participants. Moreover, race and cultural identity may stand as a barrier surrounding the relationship between both the researcher and the participant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This often happens when the researcher and the participant are part of the same ethnic group. The subject of ethnicity can be powerful, and assumptions are easily formed. This can cause both the researcher and the participant feelings of discomfort. While conducting my research, this was not a barrier during the interview process. As a result, it was not necessary for me to discuss possible solutions that would foster comfort or give the option for the participants to remove themselves from the interview session.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical practices as a researcher are essential to the overall fieldwork process. Researchers should always avoid unethical practices. Most moral codes exist to assist researchers with moral issues and dilemmas (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Participants generally enter research studies voluntarily while acknowledging potential dangers involved. Moreover, IRBs exist at colleges and universities to review proposals and ensure the safety of participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). IRBs also consider participant risks and aim to reduce them. To ensure the protection of every participant I avoided all

research sites and practices where participants could have potentially felt persuaded to participate. This usually occurs when the researcher works in a location where they can conduct a study while utilizing convenient ways to collect data such as gaining immediate access to participants whom they know. Furthermore, I gained permission to both interview and audio record the interviews from both faculty members and first generation African American college students via the signed consent form. University faculty and student participants were informed of their rights through the terms of agreement listed with the consent form. As the researcher, during the research process, I ensured I abided by the contract as well. I protected participants from harm by providing respect and sensitivity during all interviews. In addition, I employed confidentiality procedures protecting participant identities. This process was done by replacing names with pseudonyms such as P1 for participant one and P2 for participant two (see Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Data Collection

Data Collection Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were the selected form of data collection for this research study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). All interviews were recorded and transcribed. In addition, a password-protected computer was utilized to ensure the security of all research findings and transcribed interview notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Interviews are used to gather a sense of the participant's reality or experience. Semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity for participants to express a variety of experiences.

Interview questions were developed around research questions. Student participant questions focused more on identifying the perceived barriers believed to prevent first generation African American students from degree completion. Faculty participants were asked questions that focused more on the resources being provided to first generation African American college students (see Appendices C and D).

Interviews began with some initial small talk and transitioned into a review of the research study's purpose and confidentiality procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). All participants were asked to provide consent upon the initial start of the research study. Interviewees were also informed that all interviews would be recorded. Additionally, faculty members and first generation African American college student participants were asked to provide additional artifacts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Artifacts can be extremely helpful due to the specific information detailed throughout the documentation. Additional artifacts may include brochures /program forms from the upward bound, first-year experience, or TRIO programs. These programs are often utilized while working with first generation African American college students. However, while conducting this research study university faculty and first generation African American college participants were unable to provide any additional artifacts.

Data Collection Strategies

Faculty and first generation African American college student participants within the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability & Environmental Sciences were randomly selected. I then contacted all prospective participants via email invitations to

voluntarily participate (See Appendix A). The email contained relevant information about the proposed study and enforced the option to voluntarily participate if interested. A total of 13 participants, 8 students and 5 faculty members were selected. Therefore, the number of participants was a sufficient size and met the participant criteria (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). All participants received the consent form via email. Initially, interviews were scheduled to take place face-to-face, however complications arose from the Covid-19 virus. Interviews were completed via telephone in order to safeguard the health of all involved as well as to comply with local ordinances. Interviews were scheduled after all consent forms were received and confirmed via email. Semi-structured 30-40 minute interviews were conducted to identify the barriers that prevent successful degree completion among first generation African American college students.

While interviewing participants, each session was recorded utilizing an audio recorder, which is common. The duration of each interview lasted approximately 30-40 minutes. As I interviewed participants, extensive notes were taken in addition to recording. However, this presented some challenges considering the longer the interview the more difficult it was to develop notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Once interviews were completed notes were developed after the review of each recorded tape. Lastly, I transitioned recordings into typed interviews, also referred to as transcripts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Systems for Keeping Track of Data

Upon facilitating recorded interviews, I both analyzed and converted them into transcripts. All notes were recorded in a notebook after every interview session. Next, I created descriptive field notes, typed them, and stored them on a password-locked computer. I also organized interview notes into an accordion-style file labeled by the date in which the interview session took place (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To ensure the protection and privacy of participants all interview notes and research study materials were securely locked within a file cabinet in my home office.

Role of the Researcher

I have been a professional school counselor for more than seven years. Most of my roles have been in low-income education settings, specifically high schools. Within this role, most of my student population has been first generation African American students. In preparing this cohort of students for life after high school, I have seen them encounter and overcome many barriers. In assisting this unique cohort of students, I noticed that the desire to attend college was evident. However, the lack of resources and parental support were two of the biggest barriers for students. Many students would graduate high school but immediately drop out of college during or after the first semester. I also noticed that after students experienced various barriers, they would return to me, their high school counselor, for assistance on what to do next.

As a professional school counselor, I wanted to identify what perceived barriers first generation African American college students were experiencing the most. I have

selected to conduct this research study at a four-year university, located in the northeastern region of the United States. I have no association with the university or participants, and they will be purposefully selected (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). However, while conducting this qualitative research study, it is possible that some biases will arise. As a professional school counselor, I have developed some personal perceptions due to experiential learning within the field of counseling. However, minimal biases arose during the research study, and I addressed them immediately by writing in a journal.

As a researcher, it is important that I am aware of my biases, personal feelings, and thoughts towards first generation African American college students. While conducting interviews, minimal biases arose. I reflectively wrote in a journal about the thoughts and feelings I encountered to reduce any barriers while working with participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I also made sure I record detailed field notes and ask a team of colleagues to analyze those notes to eliminate any evident biases as well (American Psychological Association Publication Manual, 2012). In addition, I made sure when discussing specific ethnic groups that I addressed them appropriately and clearly specified the issue being discussed as it relates to the group it involves avoiding any possible allusions or assumptions (American Psychological Association Publication Manual, 2012).

Data Analysis

When analyzing data, identifying themes, and developing analytical questions is essential (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Patterns and regularities stand as a great foundation

for coding. It is not uncommon for coding categories to form during the data collection process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Coding was conducted during the analysis stage to better organize data. While conducting participant interviews many notes were taken. Additional comments and queries that were added in the margins of interview transcripts were also utilized during the coding process as well. Most importantly, when coding my data, I noticed that specific research questions or responses surfaced various coding schemes and themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Analyzing and Coding Data

The first step I took in coding data began with reviewing the initial interview transcripts and field notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Due to the complexity of coding categories, using notes from the margins allowed me to slowly start constructing categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Specifically, I coded all data by hand and descriptive information was categorized such as identified themes within the research study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As I was conducting the coding process, I first grouped codes into five major coding categories. After identifying the five major coding categories, subcodes and themes were discovered. While assigning codes, I continued to revise categories while analyzing until all categories were finalized and all evidence was sorted. To assist with this process, collected data was written on paper cut into strips, and placed into labeled file folders. This is also known as open coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While evaluating the categorized data identified themes were created as a result of

similar descriptions mentioned during interviews. This process was the start of identifying patterns and regularities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Analysis Results

Eligibility surveys were provided for participants to take prior to the start of the research study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Although participant demographics were not ethnically diverse, the wealth of experiences among both instructors and students varied. Participant demographics are in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Faculty Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Sex	Yrs of Exp.	Professor/Adjunct
FP1	Africa Amer	Female	2 years	Professor
FP2	African Amer	Male	2 years	Professor
FP3	African Amer	Female	9 years	Professor
FP4	African Amer	Female	10 years	Adjunct
FP5	African Amer	Female	5 years	professor

Table 2*Student Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Sex	Age	Classification
SP1	African Amer	Female	21	Junior
SP2	African Amer	Female	20	Sophomore
SP3	African Amer	Female	21	Junior
SP4	African Amer	Male	24	Senior
SP5	African Amer	Female	19	Freshman
SP6	African Amer	Female	19	Freshman
SP7	African Amer	Female	19	Freshman
SP8	African Amer	Female	19	Freshman

All participants were both students and faculty members from the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability & Environmental Sciences also referred to as CAUSES. To protect the identity and the confidentiality of all research study participants pseudonyms were utilized (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Faculty participants were identified as FP following a number 1-5. For example, Faculty Participant 1 was identified as FP1. Student participants were identified as SP following a number 1-8. For example, Student Participant 1 was identified as SP1. There was a total of 5 University faculty members who participated in this study. All faculty participants identified as African Americans to included four females and one male. Each faculty member had been with the university for over five years and currently employed. Four of the faculty members indicated that they were full-time professors with the university. The last participant classified as an adjunct or part-time professor. During the eligibility survey and interviews, faculty participants also expressed their previous experience teaching or working with first

generation African American college students and the estimated number of students within their courses currently enrolled. Data was collected to identify perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion. Research questions guided participant interviews as they shared perceived barriers and the project study trajectory.

Research Question 1

Participant interview questions were developed to address research questions. Student participants were asked if they encountered any barriers during their first year of college. Student participants answered this question by listing finances, family support, and a lack of precollege exposure/preparation as perceived barriers. This question was guided by research question one which asked student participants to identify the barriers they believed first generation African American college students encounter prior to and throughout the duration of college. Research question one also guided faculty participant interview questions as well. Faculty participants were also questioned about the barriers they believed this group of students encounter. Faculty perceived family support, finances, commitment, lack of precollege exposure/preparation as barriers for first generation African American college students. The themes that emerged from these research questions included finances, lack of precollege exposure/preparation, and family support. Research question two focused on the barriers experienced by first generation African American college students and the perceived support needed.

Research Question 2

Student participants were asked various interview questions that were guided by the second research question which inquired student participants to identify how the selected institution/research site assist first generation African American college students and what school resources/supports could have assisted as barriers were experienced. All student participants stated that university programming or strategies that focused on transiting first generation African American students into college would have better assisted them as they navigated through the experienced barriers. Faculty Participants were also asked to share what supports/resources the university offered to first generation African American college students. In response, faculty participants shared that the university offered a variety of resources for students under the Division of Student Development and Success to include financial resources, academic advising, academic tutoring, and counseling services. However, faculty participants also mentioned the university's inability to assist first generation African American students as they transition into college. University faculty were also asked to share what supports/resources do they offer to this specific cohort of students. Participants shared that they offered a variety of support depending upon the situation and the student, but also mentioned once again the lack of transitional skills among this cohort of students. The evident theme that emerged from RQ2 was the lack of student transitional programming.

Research Question 3

RQ3 asked student participants to identify what potential resources could be provided from the university and faculty to better support first generation African American college students. Both student and faculty participants stated that the most important resource that could be provided by the university would be institutional/faculty-wide awareness about how to better assist/work with first generation African American college students. Student participants were also asked if university faculty/stakeholders were supportive. In addition to this question, participants were encouraged to answer any follow-up support related questions to better expand on their responses. Student responses conveyed those faculty members were supportive but lacked awareness about the barriers associated with being an African American college student and how that directly impacted their progression towards degree completion. To gain the insight of faculty participants they were asked if faculty /stakeholders have any input as to what resources should be provided for first generation African American college students. Instructors answered these questions by stating that they have expressed to university leaders their inability to provide institutional/faculty-wide awareness about how to work with this specific cohort of students. Lastly, instructors mentioned the importance of the university implementing more awareness moving forward to ensure the success of first generation African American college students in the future. Inadequate awareness that focuses on how to better assist first generation African American college students is the theme that emerged from RQ3.

Recorded interviews were reviewed several times to ensure the accuracy of the perceived barriers among first generation African American college students (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Transcripts were reviewed immediately after every interview to capture all meaningful experiences shared. As I read through the data, the repeating of words, phrases, behavior patterns, similar thinking patterns, subjects, events often became repetitive and stood out also known as coding (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Once I noticed this, I began to identify evident similarities, repetitive and notable terms, and started coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I developed a list of themes, subcategories, and coding categories, which are synthesized in Table 3.

Student and faculty participants' interviews and perceptions were categorized into themes that aligned directly with research questions. All participant interview responses were summarized during the coding process to better assist with identifying themes. As participants repeatedly stated the same phrases, significant terms, and displayed evident similarity's themes originated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). All participant interviews were coded. Additionally, themes were color-coded. Next, I sought out to identify the coloration of themes to research questions. Although NVivo was considered for coding data, this system of coding was manually done. Moreover, this information will be detailed further in the findings of the study section of this paper. These were the emerging themes: Finances, lack of support, precollege preparation, transitional programming, and first generation African American awareness.

Table 3*Themes and Subthemes*

Themes	Subtheme 1	Subtheme 2
Financial hardships	Financial aid	Ramifications of financial hardship
Lack of support	Lack of family support	Lack of faculty support
Lack of precollege preparation	Inadequate high school preparation	Inadequate precollege awareness
Lack of transitional programming	Lack of mentoring	Lack of life skills
Awareness	Lack of cultural empathy among university faculty	Community partnerships

Theme 1: Financial Hardships

While conducting faculty and student interviews, financial hardships were mentioned as one of three barriers students perceived to have encountered the most. Participant responses address specifically Question 3b (Appendix C) for student participants which focused on barriers that participants have encountered during their first year. Question 2b (Appendix D) specifically asked faculty participants to share the barriers they believed this group of students encounter the most . Both questions were guided by RQ1 which focused on the barriers first generation African American college students encounter prior to and throughout the duration of college.

Subtheme 1.1: Financial Aid

Student participants expressed that financial hardship included barriers around yearly tuition, transportation and food expenses, or daily miscellaneous expenditures such as clothing and school supplies. SP6 shared that her barriers included not having money to continue school and having to take out additional loans. She spent a great deal of time discussing taking out additional school loans and the process associated. SP6 stated, “My mom never went to school and didn’t know how to help me with my financial aid or take out loans.” Unprepared and unknowledgeable were two words SP6 utilized to express her frustration surrounding financing school. “I had no idea where to go for help with college stuff my high school guidance counselor was no help and was unavailable most of the time”. Student participants also shared their inability to access scholarship information, the process associated, and the assistance needed to complete applications. SP7 specifically expressed that although she received a partial sports scholarship, she still needed additional aid to cover her remaining balance. Her frustration around this barrier included not knowing how to seek additional funding within the time frame given. Other student responses mentioned the lack of understanding around the total cost of college and the overall impact it would have long after obtaining degree completion.

Subtheme 1.2: Ramifications of Financial Hardship

SP6 described financial hardship around securing and paying for health insurance while enrolled in school.

I remember getting sick with an infection and going to the health center on campus. I never thought about having insurance while in college until I got a bill from the health center. At that moment I realized I did not have any medical insurance. Immediately I became stressed and started to think about being more careful about creating extra bills like medical expenses.

She also mentioned that due to feeling overwhelmed by financial hardships, she lacked motivation, which resulted in her not returning the following semester. SP1, SP2, and SP5 in addition to tuition financial hardships shared experienced barriers included, limited access to food, transportation, and miscellaneous items such as clothing and school supplies. These student participants in addition to those not listed describe frustration around gaining access to reliable transportation and food after university cafeteria hours. Participants also shared their frustration around not having money for required textbooks and specific academic program school supplies as well. SP3 shared the challenges she encountered with obtaining clothing, “I didn’t even have enough clothing for school, nor did I think about needing clothing for college. I had no money for anything extra”. SP4 and SP3 expressed barriers around not having an adequate amount of necessary clothing for the various seasons while enrolled at school. Overall, student participants shared many similarities among responses around financial hardships.

Faculty participants shared what they perceived as barriers for first generation African American college students at their institution. FP4 specifically expanded upon how this cohort of students encountered many financial hardships around purchasing

textbooks and academic program supplies. FP4 shared her concern around first generation African American college students being unprepared prior to entering college she stated, “Students often attend a University without considering all of the associated expenses and immediately experience challenges succeeding in school”. She also mentioned along with FP2 that many students also experienced transportation barriers and a lack of financial aid throughout the continuation of attending school. All faculty participants shared that as this cohort of students experienced barriers they noticed a lack of motivation in overcoming the challenges encountered. “When these students encounter barriers getting them back on track is almost impossible. Once their motivation decreases their academics are almost immediately impacted,” FP2. As a result, this leads to many students discontinuing their education for the following year.

Theme 2: Lack of Support

Support was a theme that was common among student and faculty participant interview responses. A lack of support was considered a perceived barrier often experienced by first generation African American college students at this specific institution. This theme centered on RQ1 which focused on the barriers that first generation African American college students encounter prior to and throughout the duration of college. This theme also addressed the following Questions 3b, 3d, and 3e (Appendix C) for student participants which asked questions that centered on the barriers encountered during the freshmen year and what support was provided from both family members, university faculty, and additional stakeholders. Faculty participants provided

responses to questions 2b and 2d (Appendix D) which asked what perceived barriers are often encountered by their specific cohort of students and the specific supports offered in efforts to assist these students' overcome barriers. Both faculty and student participants elaborated on the theme of support and its impact on first generation African American college students as they seek degree completion.

Subtheme 2.1: Lack of Family Support

All student participants were first in their families to attend a four-year college/university. Participants expressed the lack of family support throughout the duration of attending college. SP8 began to get emotional as she spoke about her experience attending college without the support of her family.

I love my family, but they don't understand how hard it is to attend college, keep my grades up, and still worry about how things are going back home. When I think about the hardships my family experiences daily it stresses me out and I cannot focus on school as much.

She believed that her family was proud of her for continuing her education but did not understand the barriers associated. SP2 spoke about her family's lack of support and their inability to provide words of encouragement during moments of intense academic deliverables. As SP2 stated, "there are some moments when I just need a little encouragement like when I take finals at the end of every semester. Having support like this from my family would help me stay motivated." SP5 and SP4, stated that although they knew their family support would not meet their expectations prior to attending

college, their family members did try to support them the best way they knew how. “My family did not have much to give me while at school, but they always told me how much they loved me and that they were proud of me,” stated SP5. SP1 and SP3 experienced same uncomfortable moments as they shared their responses. These two students specifically shared how their families not only did not provide support, but how they drained them with issues from home, which added additional stress. Such issues included family drama and unforeseen tragedies. SP6 discussed how her family was only supportive when everything was going well and nowhere to be found when she encountered barriers. Moreover, most student participants did share that their families could not have provided the support they expected due to various reasons such as not attending college or the completion of high school.

Subtheme 2.2: Lack of Faculty Support

Student responses reflected their experiences with university faculty. Some student participants mentioned that they transferred into the selected research site and that their experiences around support varied between the two universities. This was particularly the situation for SP6.

At the previous university I attended there was a lack of faculty support. I transferred into this university to improve my GPA and hopefully transfer to another local college. However, after receiving some support from this university it influenced me to stay enrolled.

When she began to discuss her experience with faculty members, she mentioned that minimal support was offered from the selected institution during her transition but would have appreciated more support. Other student participants stated how they received minimal support from the university but did express that faculty members do try to provide support on a case by case basis. Although student participants shared some positive feedback around faculty support, they also stressed that this was still a barrier and needed to be improved to ensure the success of future first generation African American college students.

During various interviews, faculty participants recognized that first generation African American college students lacked family support throughout the duration of college. Most faculty participants agreed that this cohort of students experienced this due to being first in their families to attend a four-year college/university. FP3 also emphasized that family members are less likely to empathize with and support these students while they experience various barriers.

I have worked with this University for several years. First generation African American college students make up most of our student population from year to year. However, these students are impacted the most by barriers and the lack of family support.

University faculty participants mentioned how families of these students often depend on them for support surrounding issues at home causing additional student stress and barriers. Faculty participants believed that families are unable to provide first

generation African American participant college students with support because of their inability to relate having never attended school previously or even the completion of high school. Faculty participants shared how they believe they offer support to first generation African American students within their classrooms. FP3 mentioned the importance of mentoring students, “I mentor a variety of students outside of the students I advised because I know they need help when they get to the University”. She elaborated on how she offers support to this cohort of students on a smaller scale by providing her mentorship when necessary and its overall impact on the student’s success. FP4 shared that she offers support for first generation African American college students by being accessible to students via email, office hours, and by phone. She also provided multiple opportunities and attempts for students to submit completed assignments. During the interview, FP4 recalled some of the barriers she encountered as a college student, “I was once a first generation African American college student myself and vividly remember the barriers I encountered and the absence of family support”. She also stressed how she encourages students to communicate effectively to prevent academic barriers. FP2 also offered support to first generation African American college students within his classroom by adjusting the initial start of the course to allow students ample time to get to school.

At the start of the semester I began to notice that a significant number of students were arriving to class at least a half hour late. Instead of working against my

students, I decided to assist them in overcoming this barrier by adjusting both the course start and finish time.

FP2 mainly saw a need to accommodate students with transportation, childcare, and employment barriers. More importantly, FP2 shared that once he started to support this cohort of students he began to see a change in the number of unforeseen barriers encountered.

Theme 3: Lack of Precollege Preparation

The lack of precollege awareness and high school preparation was commonly mentioned among both faculty and student participants. This theme emerged from questions 1a and 2a (Appendix C) for student participants which centered on prior exposure to precollege programming such as college tours, or knowledge about college prior to attending and if they felt they were adequately prepared for college. Additionally, student interview questions and responses were guided by RQ1 which focused on the barriers that first generation African American college students encounter prior to and throughout college. Student responses reflected the lack of precollege and high school preparation as a perceived barrier. Although faculty participants were not specifically asked questions around precollege exposure and high school preparation, various interview responses surfaced frustration among university faculty members and perceived this as a barrier for many entering first generation African American college students.

Subtheme 3.1: Inadequate High School Preparation

Student participants shared their experiences around a lack of high school preparation and the idea of being adequately prepared for college. Interviewees discussed perceived barriers experienced prior to college. SP5 spoke very passionately about her high school experience, “If I could go back in time to select another high school to attend, I would have. You know one that would have given me more help with the whole college process.” She mentioned that she did not have a very good relationship with her high school counselor and felt as though she was unapproachable. Due to this, SP5 felt that this hindered her college seeking process and created additional barriers prior to her transition into college. SP1 discussed that her barriers prior to college included academic challenges, “When I was in high school my grades were not the best and academically, I struggled”. She elaborated on having difficulty with reading, writing, and math. She expressed her difficulty in these content areas and how it interfered with her decision to apply to college. SP8 spoke about transition through grades K-12 with an individual education plan also referred to as an IEP. Emotions began to arise as she described her experiences matriculating through high school with an IEP and the various barriers associated. “I honestly thought I was not smart enough to attend college. Having the classification of an IEP attached to my name lowered my confidence and my comfortability in asking questions.”

She went on shared both academic and emotional barriers that she believed hindered her from being fully prepared for college prior to attending. SP2 spoke about

her high school experience and mentioned that after attending her first full year of college as a first generation student she wished her high school would have provided more life skill resources. Such resources could have included life skills courses such as financial or college preparation courses to assist students as they transition effectively into college.

Subtheme 3.2: Inadequate Precollege Awareness

During student interviews, various participants elaborated on the lack of precollege exposure and high preparation received prior to attending college. Students expressed frustration around the college application process, the lack of guidance provided by their professional school counselor, and fully being academically prepared for the collegiate experience. SP5 stated that she never thought about post-secondary options, nor did she have anyone to push/motivate her towards the thought of attending college. SP2 mentioned how she desired to learn more about college but did not have the help or resources to do so.

When I was in high school, I wanted to visit different colleges, but no one was available to take me. Both my mother and father never attended college and worked hard to make ends meet and could not easily take off.

Similarly, SP2 shared that she did not have any precollege exposure prior to attending college and had never gone on any college tours, attended a college fair, or open house.

She also shared that the college seeking, and financial aid process was also completed by her with no guidance. SP1 mentioned in her interview that precollege

programming was offered throughout high school, but only to a selective group of students. SP1 experienced some uncomfortable emotions as she shared her frustration around the inequality of services offered within her high school. SP8 mentioned that her high school rarely offered any college tours, any precollege programming for students, college information, or opportunities for additional college research. The lack of concern surrounding post-secondary plans after high school from her professional school counselor was also discussed within her interview. She elaborated on how there was no additional assistance offered from her school counselor during the college application process and thereafter. With frustration during the interview SP8 stated, “I believe that if I had the right guidance from my high school counselor or anyone from the school the barriers and mistakes I experienced could have been avoided.” Overall, the majority of student participants reflected through their response that the lack of precollege exposure/programming would have been beneficial considering they were first in the family to attend a four-year college/university. With no family support during the college application and financial aid process additional support from high school faculty would have been greatly appreciated.

Interview responses from faculty participants suggested that many first generation African American college students struggle academically both prior and during college. Instructors expressed that this cohort of students transition into college having to take remedial English and math courses during the summer to adequately prepare for the college rigor prior to attending. FP5 is a math adjunct professor and shared that most of

her incoming freshman student data showed low math skills among first generation African American college students. “I expect this cohort of students to enter college with both low math and reading skills,” stated FP5. While elaborating she mentioned specifically that student data showed basic math skills as one of the biggest barriers upon transitioning into the first year of college. FP2 mentioned academic challenges prior to college as a barrier for first generation African American college students as well. This faculty member mentioned that he has seen this cohort struggle the most with both reading and writing. Moreover, all faculty members shared that due to previous barriers surrounding reading and writing content areas, first generation African American college students transition into college experiencing more difficulty academically than any other ethnical background.

Theme 4: Lack of Transitional Programming

During various interviews both faculty and student participants mentioned the lack of transitional programs. This theme was repeatedly mentioned to have been a huge disadvantage towards the success of first generation African American college student’s social emotional and academic progress. This theme emerged from RQ2 which centered on how the selected institution/research site assist first generation African American college students. Interview responses suggested that transitional programs could have provided additional support during the transition to and during college. Participants also mentioned that such transitional programs could include a first generation program, mentoring program, a life skills course, or programs that offer social emotional support.

Subtheme 4.1: Lack of Mentoring

Many student participants mentioned that during their first year of college the need for mentorship was evident. Students expressed the thought of being paired with a mentor, the potential benefit, and its overall impact. SP8 stated that she could have used a mentor during her first year of college: “I wish I could have had a mentor during my freshman year that would have really helped me”. She also mentioned how difficult it was to navigate through college with limited transitional resources. Such as the thought of being first in her family to attend college and not fully being supported by those around her during her transition prior to and during college. SP3 stated that a mentorship program would have been beneficial and believed that if a mentor had been made available for her during her first year of college she probably would not have returned home after her first semester.

“During my first semester of college, I was so unprepared. I mean I knew nothing. I had no idea what campus resources were available to me. It’s like I needed guidance or someone to literally hold my hand”. SP6 stated she believes mentorship is essential for all first generation African American college students as they strive to complete the first year of college successfully. FP1 mentioned the importance of modeling and its impact on first generation African American college students, “These students need examples of the success of attending and completing college looks like”. While expanding on this, FP1 discussed that due to this cohort of students being first in their families to attend college they lack modeling. Providing transitional programs such as mentorship includes

the ability for these students to visually see what it looks like to overcome barriers and obtain degree completion. Moreover, additional faculty responses also supported the idea of mentorship programs and its ability to promote peer-to-peer learning, modeling, and experiential learning.

Subtheme 4.2: Lack of Life Skills

Financial literacy and time management were some of the challenges SP6 experienced as a first generation African American college student during the first year of college. SP6 elaborated on her lack of financial literacy around budgeting and how to manage daily expenditures. She also expressed her inability to maintain a steady flow of income in regard to gaining employment and the associated challenges that followed. Effective study habits, time management, and organizational skills were basic skills she did not know how to facilitate. SP4 said that communication, personal advocacy, and self-awareness are basic life skills he lacked during the transition into college. SP7 would spend hours going over the same material when studying and would try to do homework before class instead of afterwards, “I was so unorganized when I first got to college. I waited to the last minute to do everything. I was unproductive and failed a few courses due to this.” In addition, SP7 spoke of being misled by her advisor and failing to advocate for herself by speaking up and trying to overcorrect the situation. In this moment she described the feeling she felt not knowing how to effectively advocate for herself. FP4 explained that first generation African American college students do not know how to self-advocate for themselves, utilize resources, and lack good work ethic. FP4

passionately expressed how this cohort of students lack self-advocacy, “Many students come to college with the inability to advocate for themselves, take advantage of University resources, and usually look for things to easily be handed to them without having to work hard”. FP2 discussed how students have difficulty committing to college and the resiliency needed to overcome barriers and achieve degree completion.

Theme 5: Awareness

When interviewing first generation African American participants the lack of empathy University wide was a concern. Student participants stated that although they were offered minimal support from their instructors, a lack of empathy was still present. RQ3 centered on the potential resources that could be provided by the university and faculty to better support first generation African American college students. Faculty and student responses highlighted areas of concern to address how to better support first generation African American college students in the future. In addition, identifying how to provide additional awareness to all university faculty can be essential in implementing both social change and how institutions better support first generation African American college students in the future. Student participants also mentioned the importance of the university providing awareness on first generation African American college students during the recruiting process with surrounding community schools and precollege programming organizations.

Subtheme 5.1: The Lack of Cultural Empathy Among University Faculty

SP8 and SP3 discussed the lack of empathy they experienced with their instructor. Although the professor understood at times student participants felt as though he lacked empathy when unforeseen barriers arose. They understood his expectations for the course but expected empathy and support throughout the duration of their barriers. SP2 mentioned that she has experienced difficult instructors in the past, specifically during the first year of college who were not flexible, empathetic, nor knowledgeable about first generation African American college students and the barriers encountered. FP1 elaborated on the importance of transitional programming, “As a University we need more programming that better assists the needs of first generation African American college students as they transition into college and throughout the duration”. The faculty participant mentioned during her interview that she tries her best to support this cohort of students. However, she would like the research site/university to offer professional development that would provide additional insight and strategies on how to better work with this population at the collegiate level. FP5 also discussed how the trends in education are constantly changing and her desire to learn more, “Having the opportunity to attend professional development that focuses solely on first generation African American college students would be beneficial to both myself and other colleagues.” FP5 also believes that gaining awareness through the facilitation of professional development will be insightful and impactful towards the success of first generation African American college students.

Subtheme 5.2: Community Partnerships

Faculty participants not only expressed their interest in additional professional development surrounding first generation African American college students, but their interest in community collaborations was also mentioned as well. FP5 spoke about the importance of reaching these students prior to college through community collaborations/partnerships.

I think it would be great if we could prepare these students for this level of success prior to attending their first year of college. Now this would take some planning and many collaborations would have to take place, but I believe if we put the work in this will benefit us in the long run/future.

Such partnerships may include working closely with surrounding and feeder high schools to better prepare students during the transition into college. FP3 suggested that in addition to university wide professional development community partners from local high schools and precollege community programs should be included. Professional development would assist community partners in effectively preparing this specific cohort of students for college. FP1 suggested the idea of providing awareness for families of first generation African American college students to assist them in better supporting their students prior and throughout the duration of college.

Evidence of Research Quality

Qualitative studies should include methods to enhance credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Credibility is defined as a trustworthiness strategy in qualitative data

analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Strong evidence is needed to formalize conclusions that are credible. However, it is only possible if the evidence provided is clear (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Credibility Strategies

To increase the credibility of this research study, I asked a team of three qualified peer reviewers within the educational field to review the research study results to determine if they agreed with the accuracy of the research findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During this process, individuals adhered to IRB standards to protect participant confidentiality. Additionally, peer reviewers did not have access to knowing or identifying participants. Member checks were also utilized as a credibility strategy to ensure credibility of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After interviews were conducted, faculty and student participants were given the opportunity to review and evaluate transcripts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This process allowed participants to ensure all information transcribed was interrupted correctly (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This process allowed me as the researcher, to ensure my biases were not the result of something observed incorrectly (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, peer reviewers, student and faculty participants stated that all research findings and themes represented first generation African American college students and their experiences well.

Dependability Strategies

Dependability strategies ensure that the findings of a study must be consistent with the data presented (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In fact, the more consistent the

researcher is throughout the study the more dependable the findings are. The most common dependability strategy is an audit trail (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During this process, the selected auditor validates the findings of the research study by following the researcher's trail/log (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The audit trail shows how the data was collected, categories were obtained, and decisions were made. Overall, it is a detailed view of how the study was conducted and data was analyzed. To validate the findings of this research study, an auditor was selected to review in detail all data collection field notes, journal entries, and reflective notes. .

Discrepant Cases

While analyzing research, it is possible for discrepant cases to surface at any time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). When gathering data from multiple participants, contradictions may appear (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Discrepant cases are those that fall outside the expected research trajectory (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Also, known to be information that runs counter to the identified themes. This may be the result of different perspectives among participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this research study, only two male participants were interviewed. One student and one faculty participant. Despite the low number of male participation interview responses reflected no difference from those shared by female participants. However, during the interview process a female student participant met all of the eligibility requirements, but her interview responses reflected that she had plenty resources and experienced no barriers as a first generation African American college student. Due to this, she could not answer all of the interview

questions and another student participant was selected. Therefore, only data from participants who completed the research study were utilized, and participants were asked during each interview session if they wanted to add any additional information. This gave all participants the opportunity to provide any information I may have overlooked when asking questions. Additionally, all incomplete participant data that may have surfaced was removed from the research study as well (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Summary

In this research study, Section 2 contained the description of the methodology and data collected from participant interviews. The purpose of this study was to identify perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion. Within this research study the following items were discussed student and faculty participant selections, ethical protocols, and interview data analysis. In Section 3, a proposed project will be presented to support the research findings in Section 2. The project will include a literature review and detailed components that will prompt social change and provide awareness around assisting African American first generation college students overcome perceived barriers towards degree completion.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion at one specific 4-year institution. I conducted semi-structured interviews to identify the perceived barriers that the first generation African American students and faculty participants identified. While facilitating interviews, a plethora of data was collected and transcribed. As a result, various themes emerged such as financial hardships, support, precollege exposure and high school preparation, transitional programming, and faculty awareness around how to better support first generation African American college students' as they experience barriers. Due to these emerging themes, a professional development seminar was selected entitled "Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting Universities in Support of First Generation African American College Students." The project selected for this study was a professional development seminar series. Three modules provide a variety of resources and awareness about first generation African American college students and the barriers they encounter while seeking a degree. Seminars will be offered to university faculty, instructors, and community stakeholders. Seminar materials will be presented via PowerPoint slides and tangible resources such as handouts will be provided as well. In addition, seminar sessions will be interactive to ensure attendees are asking questions, retaining information, and providing feedback. Participants will also have the opportunity to break

off into departmental groups and create goals on how to better assist first generation African American college students. Providing professional development seminars also has the potential to convey the best strategies and practices on how to increase the retention of first generation African American college students as they seek degree completion.

Project Goals

The analysis of the semi-structured interview data prompted the development of a professional development seminar entitled “Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting Universities in Support of First Generation African American College Students.” This professional development seminar was based on the findings from the research study. The overall goal of this professional development seminar is to address how to better assist first generation African American college students overcome their perceived barriers. This professional development seminar will assist university faculty and community stakeholders to address summer bridge preexposure programming, mentorship, goal setting and planning. Awareness regarding support of first generation African American college students will also be described. Seminars will be facilitated over the course of 3 days. The professional development seminars will be broken into three sessions: (a) summer bridge preexposure programming, (b) mentorship, and (c) goal setting and planning. The 3-day professional development has the potential to help drive both social change and increase awareness of the needs of first generation African American college students.

Rationale

A variety of research has been conducted around first generation African American college students; however, the research is limited regarding specific barriers that first generation African American college students may encounter. The purpose of this study was to identify the perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion. Semi-structured interviews provided both rich data and insight regarding the perceived barriers that can prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion. However, there is also a lack of research about how to support first generation African American college students overcome the barriers that this cohort of students encounters while seeking a degree.

The barriers encountered by first generation African American college students continue to be identified as the reason why degree completion is not achieved (Means & Pyne, 2017). This greatly impacts university retention and how prospective first generation African American college students potentially could be supported in the future (Gibbons et al., 2019). Providing essential training for all university faculty, instructors, and surrounding stakeholders could offer useful strategies on how to best support this cohort of students as they navigate through college (Means & Pyne, 2017). First generation African American college students often experience barriers throughout their college careers without the proper support and often do not overcome the barriers. As a result, these students withdraw from school and degree completion is never achieved

(Gibbons et al., 2019). As educational trends continue to evolve, exploring how to better support first generation African American college students overcome barriers is imperative to the success of this cohort.

Review of the Literature

While searching for literature to support professional development in higher education that centered mainly on supporting first generation African American college students successfully overcoming barriers, I discovered research was limited. However, there was a plethora of research related to professional development in higher education. Research also mentioned the positive impact professional development had on university faculty and students in regard to retention and graduation. Saturation in the literature search was achieved through the utilization of the following terms” *professional development, goal setting, first generation, mentoring, college students, summer bridge programming, interactive learning, and precollege programming*. Research was conducted through Walden University databases, which included ProQuest, ERIC, and SAGE. Peer-reviewed research articles were centered on various topics that influenced specific professional development sessions and seminars. The most prevalent themes identified throughout the literature were in regard to the necessity for professional development and best practices that specifically target assisting first generation African American college students overcome barriers and achieve degree completion. In addition, findings from the research study indicated the need for seminars of workshops that solely focused on supporting first generation African American college students. In fact,

implementing professional development and best practices could potentially increase university enrollment, graduation, and retention rates (Srinivasacharlu, 2019). Facilitating such seminars could also help university faculty and assist additional stakeholders as they seek to support this cohort of students. Furthermore, a review of components that will best assist university faculty and stakeholders to support generation African American college students included strategies such as professional development, summer bridge programming, mentoring, and goal setting. Best practices, ideas, strategies, and implementation suggestions are shared below.

Professional Development

Education quality is fundamental to student achievement, and quality university education depends on the quality of instructors and programming (Srinivasacharlu, 2019). Continuing professional development is the process of documenting the skills and competencies gained by instructors via informal or formal training (Srinivasacharlu, 2019). Researchers state that although educators have many roles, most receive minimal opportunities for preparation via professional development (Appelgate et al., 2019). Continuing professional development aims to provide engaging activities that promote teacher development in areas such as self-confidence, greater intellectual ability, and additional interests (Hott & Tietien-Smith, 2018). Furthermore, as educators prepare to take on these roles it is imperative that they receive the proper training.

For teaching in higher education, different approaches may need to be applied due to the complexity of each student's individual needs (Srinivasacharlu, 2019). Such

approaches may include teachers considering how their students learn and reexamining how they teach. In addition, educators should be aware of their own educational biases, beliefs, and values as they process new knowledge (Hott & Tietien-Smith, 2018). Many administrators at institutions of higher education encourage educators to attend professional development, use best practices, and contribute to the field of education (Appelgate et al., 2019). Attending professional development can provide a platform for participants to discuss relevant issues within the field of practice (Srinivasacharlu, 2019). Furthermore, discussing relevant issues in a group setting can create a space for multiple solutions to formulate (Srinivasacharlu, 2019).

Participants who attend professional development activities could meet and network with colleagues in their particular field of practice. Another added benefit is the ability to learn with and from other experienced educators (Czerniawski et al., 2019). Professional development creates the venue for best practices, strategies, and new ideas to be shared (Appelgate et al., 2019). Researchers also mentioned that in some cases educators may fear professional development due to competitiveness and criticism from other attending participants. However, it is suggested that most educators seek opportunities to be supported rather than opportunities that offer support to other colleagues (Czerniawski et al., 2019). Yet the experience of collaborating among other educators is still strongly recommended by research experts. The experience is considered stimulating and one of many ways for educators to explore best practices with professional guidance (Appelgate et al., 2019).

Facilitating Professional Development

As the facilitator, it is essential to know what skills and competencies educators need most to ensure effective teaching and student success (Czerniawski et al., 2019). It is also beneficial to know how to teach as the professional development facilitator. Knowing how to teach will assist in preparing current and future educators (Srinivasacharlu, 2019). It is also important that the facilitator take advantage of teachable moments with participants. This provides opportunities for professional development leaders to assist participants in self-examining their own practices so that new ones can be adopted and implemented (Czerniawski et al., 2019). Participants can reflect on their experiences as they aim to better serve students (Appelgate et al., 2019). Facilitators should also be viewed as a resource for participants to both learn from and as a potential source of collaboration (Czerniawski et al., 2019).

Professional development sessions should be innovative, insightful, and engaging. Moreover, facilitators should create opportunities for participants to own their learning, ask questions, and share their experiences. Professional development activities should be innovative and experiential. Participants should be able to engage in activities that leave impactful impressions and an eagerness to implement new ideas. Professional development facilitators should also know that they are models for participants and should feel comfortable in sharing their experiences as needed (Hannah, 2019).

Communities of Practice

In higher education, learning is often collaborative and facilitated within a community. Developing a community of practice is a process where the learners deepen their participation on a specific topic within a group of other learners (Appelgate et al., 2019). This community often meets to discuss areas of concern, share best practices, build relationships, and create solutions. On the collegiate level, communities of practice are often utilized to enhance the academic practice of experienced university instructors and lend support to newly hired university instructors. Research also shared at one specific university how faculty members stated that they felt less secluded when utilizing communities of practice. Instructors mentioned how impactful discussions within their communities of practice were and how new ideas were developed as a result (Appelgate et al., 2019). Research also mentioned the benefits of integrating both technology and communities of practice. The support associated through the integration of both is that it provides another avenue of communication for colleagues in the field of education to learn and share best academic practices (Appelgate et al., 2019).

Within every community of practice, a lesson study is a process that exists to provide instructional improvement. In this process, academic practices are examined, and support is provided through the implementation of professional development (Appelgate et al., 2019). The lesson study is composed of four parts/steps, (1) research, (2) reflect/process, (3) formulate goals/objectives (4) plan (Appelgate et al., 2019). While attempting to assist first generation African American college students overcome barriers

and reach degree completion, following these steps would be beneficial. Researching and reflecting on the make-up of a first generation African American college student is essential. Formulating goals and composing a plan on how to best assist this cohort of students is critical to the development of their success such as degree completion (Hannah, 2019). Moreover, the concept of communities of practice could be introduced to first generation African American college students. Students could form communities of practice as a means of support during the first-year experience. Within these communities' students could share best practices as it pertains to overcoming the perceived barriers that most prevent them from degree completion. Students could also utilize the process of a lesson study as they seek to continuously research how to overcome barriers, reflect, goal set, and develop a plan of action as they seek the ultimate goal of degree completion (Hannah, 2019). Stakeholders could also utilize this resource as they seek to better assist this cohort of students throughout the duration of college. Resources such as communities of practice and the process of lesson studies are great tools to utilize and can best be introduced to first generation African American college students through precollege exposure programming such as summer bridge programs.

Summer Bridge Preexposure Programming

In 2016, 60% of college students in the United States who had started college in 2010 earned a bachelor's degree. However, first generation African American college students accounted for only a small portion of this percentage (Dixon et al., 2018). Additionally, within the last 50 years, almost half of the students in the United States who

entered into a two or four-year university withdrew and did not receive their degree (Dixon et al., 2018). 50% of these students were considered first generation college students of color (Gonzalez Quiroz & Garza, 2018). Researchers believe that disadvantaged students such as first generation college students or students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds greatly contribute to the U.S collegiate drop-out rate. It is also believed that both the external and personal barriers encountered throughout the duration of college influence their decision to withdraw from college as well. Such barriers included academic unpreparedness, family issues, isolation, homesickness, finances, selecting the incorrect program of study, lack of guidance, and employment (Velázquez-Torres, 2018). Moreover, researchers suggested that this cohort of students withdraw from college without their degree due to the quality of their college experience, university climate/culture, commitment level, and interactions with university faculty (Grace-Odeleye & Santiago, 2019). To overcorrect this issue, higher institutions should promote programs that increase internal support systems and student achievement throughout the duration of their college experience; Such support systems include summer bridge programming (Dixon et al., 2018).

Summer bridge programming is commonly utilized among higher education institutions to better prepare college students prior to their first semester of college during the first year-experience (Hermann et al., 2020). In fact, college students who participate in summer bridge programming are more likely to graduate with their degrees specifically students of color (Hermann et al., 2020). College initiation programs such as

summer bridge assist disadvantaged students meet expectations, encourage persistence, and close achievement/identity gaps (Hermann et al., 2020). Summer bridge programming also assists students in formulating relationships with peers and university faculty, the rigorous academic courses, and the transition into the collegiate community prior to the initial start of the first-year experience (Velázquez-Torres, 2018). Moreover, summer bridge programming is known to improve student retention, academic and college success (Velázquez-Torres, 2018).

The duration of most summer bridge programming is usually facilitated within a 2-to-8-week timeframe (Howard & Sharpe, 2019). Students who are normally selected specifically for summer bridge programs include first generation, at-risk, and disadvantaged students who struggle academically and show a need for additional support (Grace-Odeleye & Santiago, 2019). The program starts off with a student and family in depth- orientation. During this time both students and parents have the opportunity to ask questions once program details and expectations are discussed. Summer bridge schedules are also distributed to students, and they are introduced to program faculty as well (Gonzalez Quiroz & Garza, 2018). Each student is usually assigned to a faculty advisor and usually reviews the goals of the summer bridge, but this can vary by university (Howard & Sharpe, 2019). Program goals for summer bridge usually aim to achieve a variety of successors. Such goals include strengthening student skills, improving writing and oral communication skills, promoting motivation around academic success, and attending college classes consistently, providing additional

exposure to campus resources and engagement opportunities, increasing career preparation, and promoting involvement and awareness among student support systems (Atchison et al., 2021). In addition, participants also experience added benefits of participating in summer bridge programming. This can include early course registration, university campus and resources familiarity, early access to dormitories, and on-campus social engagement opportunities (Atchison et al., 2021). When implemented effectively, summer bridge programming is designed to promote successful transitions into college, increase student academic readiness, social integration, and mentorship opportunities (Grace-Odeleye & Santiago, 2019).

Mentorship

Mentorship is defined as a developmental, caring, and sharing relationship (Irby, 2019). In this relationship one person invests time and effort into improving the growth, knowledge, and skills of another person (Irby, 2019). In higher education, mentorship has been utilized to assist college students during their transition into college (Bărbuceanu, 2019). Most college withdrawals and withdrawal considerations are influenced by the incorrect expectations of college and reality (Bărbuceanu, 2019). As a result of this finding, it is suggested that first generation African American college students be mentored starting from the first year experience until degree completion (James, 2019). In the past, most higher education institutions have used university faculty as both instructors and academic advisors. In this role, university faculty members were expected to teach courses, register students for classes, and provide additional support as needed.

Additional support included but was not limited to faculty/advisors assisting students with financial guidance, social and emotional development, extracurricular opportunities, and continuous motivation in efforts to keep students on track towards graduation (Irby, 2019). As we transition into the future, individuals at universities are deciding to phase this past tradition. Instead, higher education institutions are implementing mentorship programs to better support student needs and assist with the transition into college (James, 2019).

The Role of the Mentor

Mentors are identified as a more experienced individual within an organization or phase of life that provides various types of support/guidance to increase the success of those that are less experienced (Andrade et al., 2020). Mentors form both informal and formal relationships depending on the setting in which the bond was developed. Informal mentor relationships are usually externally formed, more spontaneous, less structured, and often not managed. In this relationship mentors seek proteges that are high performing and resemble younger versions of themselves (Birkeland et al., 2019). On the other hand, formal mentor relationships are strategically formed, managed, and very structured (Lane, 2019). Formal mentors are often paired with the protégé and focus more on the developed goals of the relationship. Mentors usually lack in providing a more personable approach, comfort, trust, and these relationships are usually short-lived once goals are met (Birkeland et al., 2019). As higher education institutions transition into the future, there has been an increase in implementing formal mentorship

relationships/programs for students entering into college (Andrade et al., 2020).

Moreover, colleges and universities have identified the value in implementing mentorship opportunities. Whether mentorship opportunities are formal or informal both professional and personal avenues for growth towards success (Beltman et al., 2020).

Role of the Mentee

A mentee is defined as a person who needs support and additional growth in a variety of areas from a more experienced individual (Lane, 2019). The areas of growth can vary depending upon the timing and setting in which the individual is currently operating in (Beltman et al., 2020). As mentees are placed in mentor relationships/programs the phases of the mentor relationship should be considered (Beltman et al., 2020). The relationship stages include the initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition phases (Kram, 1983). The Initiation phase is when the mentorship relation occurs during the first 6 to 12 months of the mentorship relationship. In this phase, the I admires and respects both the Mentors competencies and additional support (Kram, 1983). The Cultivation phase lasts two to five years and the protege begins to challenge the mentoring relationship (Kram, 1983). As the relationship continues to grow both the mentor and mentee start to identify the value of relating to each other. The Separation phase lasts from two months to two years. In this phase both the mentor and the protege experience a significant change in the emotional connection of the relationship (Kram, 1983). In the final phase, the Redefinition phase, the mentor

relationship characteristics change into more of a friendship and the relationship comes to an end (Kram, 1983).

Mentees are usually sought out and placed into mentor relationships/programs based on their current needs and future goals (Lane,2019). The goal of all mentorship relationships/programs is to ensure the growth and success of the mentee. Protege should feel a sense of trust and comfortability to effectively grow within the relationship/program. They should also have their own goals and expectations. Commitment to the mentorship experience and hard work ethic should also be displayed as well (Birkeland et al., 2019). Moreover, to ensure the effectiveness of the mentorship relationship mentees should ask questions, gain feedback, and be accountable. Proteges should also be flexible throughout the experience as different approaches are introduced to better assist them succeed and grow.

Peer Mentoring

As colleges and universities struggle to increase student retention, peer mentoring has become one of many strategies to retain students. Peer mentoring has also been utilized by college and universities specifically with first-year freshmen as an effort to impact future outcomes (Andrade et al., 2020). Universities spend a great deal of funds on recruiting efforts to gain prospective students. However, keeping students enrolled once they are admitted has become the challenge. Students enter college transfer to another institution, dropout, or take longer than the allotted four years to obtain a degree (Birkeland et al., 2019). Nonacademic and academic factors influence the decision to

transfer, drop out or prolong degree completion. Such factors may include stress, a lack of social support, engagement barriers transitioning into the college community, and the inability to develop short/long term goals (Birkeland et al., 2019). However, peer mentoring has emerged as a strategy in aiding higher institutions combat this issue.

Peer mentoring on the collegiate level involves a relationship between a more experienced upperclassmen and underclassmen college student. In this relationship, the upperclassmen provide social, emotional, and academic support to the underclassmen (Birkeland et al., 2019). Characteristics of a peer mentor include goal oriented, self-confident, resilient, influential, and empathic (James, 2019). In addition, peer mentors aim to connect with their protege by sharing their experiences, creating a space for transparency, and modeling expectations (James, 2019). Peer mentors also provide opportunities to discuss and share strategies that assist underclassmen as they encounter barriers. This is extremely impactful; this strategy serves as a potential preventive measure as higher institutions aim to increase student retention. Therefore, researchers state that peer mentioning has been very effective, produces positive outcomes on student achievement, and sets the tone for future goal setting in higher education (James, 2019).

Planning and Goal Setting

Goal setting and planning is essential in higher education to ensure program effectiveness (Kautto et al., 2018). Higher education institutions must effectively plan to increase student recruitment, retention, faculty development, program quality, and school-wide success (Kautto et al., 2018). Higher education in the 21st century has drastically

evolved. Colleges and universities have utilized newly developed approaches/methods to actively engage students within the college community (Dobronyi et al., 2020). In fact, the integration of technology along with additional resources has proven to be effective in higher education and known to produce positive student outcomes (Bastiaens et al., 2018). Moreover, planning and goal setting short and long term milestones in any setting is essential and should center around the needs of those being served. To identify these areas of need observations should be facilitated, surveys should be distributed, data should be reviewed, feedback should be considered, and faculty buy-in should be examined. As colleges and universities aim to plan for future, their goals and objectives should be organized, clear, concise, and reflective of organizational needs (Dobronyi et al., 2020).

Organizational Planning

Organizational planning is defined as the process of identifying an organization's existence. During this process goals are created, and action plans are developed. Organizational planning consists of three different types of planning approaches. Such approaches include strategic, tactical, and operational planning (Durksen & Lee, 2018). Strategic planning involves higher level leaders developing organizational goals through a holistic lens. In this stage of planning higher level leaders investigate organizational strengths and weaknesses, potential threats/ barriers, and analyze possible competitors (Ahmad et al., 2020). Tactical planning includes lower level leadership. Once higher level leaders develop holistic university wide goals lower level leaders map out a short

term implementation blueprint for achieving goals (Dobronyi et al., 2020). Operational planning involves the implantation team. This team includes but is not limited to specific departments, individuals, learning communities, and work groups. The implementation team plays a crucial role in carrying out organizational goals and the expected success associated (Latham & Locke, 2018). In a short time frame, implementation teams put action plans into practice so that newly developed strategic goals and objectives can be achieved (Burns et al., 2019).

The utilization of organizational planning could assist higher education institutions as they aim to assist first generation African American college students both now and in the future. Colleges and universities could implement strategic, tactical, and operational planning as they seek new ways to assist this cohort of students overcome barriers and reach degree completion (Burns et al., 2019). When defining the roles in which higher education leaders would play during the process of facilitating organizational planning, expectations should be clear. High-level university leaders may include the university president, acting board members, and university provost. These leaders would be responsible for developing university needs based goals and objectives. Lower-level leaders may include department chairs, academic advisors, and academic deans. In this group, leaders would be responsible for mapping out the blueprint to accomplishing newly developed goals and objectives. Lastly, the implementation team may include university instructors, learning communities, additional support staff and stakeholders. As previously stated, this stage of planning process is the most crucial

because students will experience the implementation of the planned goals and objectives (Bastiaens et al., 2018). This stage could make or break experience for university faculty, prospective students, and current students. Therefore, university planning and goal setting should be considered the initial step in assisting first generation African American college students combat barriers and attain degree completion.

In summary, identifying ways to assist first generation African American students overcome barriers and obtain degree completion is essential. To assist university faculty and additional stakeholders better support this cohort of students, professional development can be a great resource for implementation. The facilitation of professional development could offer best practices, innovative ideas, and new strategies for universities to utilize while working with first generation African American college students. Mentoring programs, summer bridge pre-exposure, setting goals, and planning are also additional resources that can be utilized to assist this cohort of students as well. Overall, the implementation of these best practices/resources could potentially promote social change for current and future first generation African American college students for years to come.

Professional Development Facilitation

The proposed professional development seminar will be facilitated by myself and additional stakeholders and colleagues. The professional development will be provided in three days during the Summer break prior to the fall semester to better equip university faculty and stakeholders as they implement new approaches and aim to better assist first

generation African American college students. Furthermore, this professional development session will take place on the campus of the research site in the student union building and conference center room. Prior to the facilitation of this professional development activity the following action steps will be taken to ensure all University logistics have been covered. Action steps include University consent/persimmon, facilities approval to the university conference room, collaboration with additional colleagues who will be guest speakers, plan and set professional development goals and initiatives to ensure effectiveness. The sessions will include the following topics summer bridge programming, mentorship, planning and goal setting (see appendix A).

Potential Resources and Existing Resources

A request will be filed for both additional and existing resources. This professional development session will be offered for free with no additional cost for participants. As previously mentioned, it will be facilitated over the span of three days for at least seven hours each day. Due to the duration of each seminar, the initial request will be for the university's dining services to provide continental breakfast, lunch, snacks, and beverages for professional development participants daily. Supplies such as post-it chart paper, markers, pens, pencils, and access to facility copiers/printers are additional resources that will be requested as well. Existing resources would include university technology with audio capabilities such as projectors to display content related PowerPoints, videos, and additional documentation. University laptops and iPads may be utilized for collaborative group work, participant registration/check ins, and to identify

other content related resources. Other existing resources would include university facilities, round tables and chairs for participants and rectangular tables to hold tangible resources, breakfast, lunch, beverage, and snack options.

Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions to Barriers

While planning this professional development many potential barriers came to mind. The first potential barrier is funding. With yearly budget cuts and adjustments in education, the additional resources requested such as food and materials could be a funding issue. A possible solution to this barrier could include participants providing their own food. The second potential funding barrier could be the requested chart paper and writing utensils. Asking participants to bring their own paper/notebooks and writing materials could be a potential solution to this barrier. Funding could also jeopardize the usage of the facility and the 3-day duration of the professional development seminars. Hosting a virtual professional development or collaborating with local community resources could be a potential solution to barrier number three. The fourth barrier would be gaining the buy-in of university faculty/professional development participants. Providing surveys both prior to and after the facilitation of this professional development seminar and allowing registered participants to sit in on the workshop planning could potentially be a solution to this barrier.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Upon the approval of this project, the desired timeframe which this professional development could be facilitated would be during the Summer break prior to the fall

semester. Only department leaders will be invited to attend this professional development. Once leaders attend, they will be responsible for briefly providing this professional development information to their specific department staff who did not attend on one designated day when students have no classes. Implementing these sessions during the summer term would benefit both students and university faculty. Due to the facilitation of seminars being offered during the Summer students will not be on campus, will not interfere with academic courses or additional university departmental areas/roles. This professional development series will be provided 3 full days for at least seven hours. Each session will create a space for newly employed faculty to collaborate with other university faculty. Group work and planning will also be promoted during each day as well. Participants will also have assigned seating according to the department which they work in or with. Each table will seat eight participants per department.

Each day will start promptly at 8:00am and end by 4:00pm. Participants will be given thirty minutes for continental breaks, two 10-minute breaks one in the morning and afternoon, and one forty-five minutes lunch. Every session will start with a review of session goals and objectives, an icebreaker, various session topics, content related session activities, and end with a summative/formative evaluation. Day one (see Appendix A) seminar topics/sessions will include a pre-session that will provide some background insight on the purpose of the professional development and awareness about this specific cohort of students will be presented. In these sessions participants will learn the characteristics of a first generation African American college student. In addition, the

importance of summer bridge programming alongside best practices such as establishing communities of practice, and lesson studies will be discussed. Participants will investigate a case study within their grouped tables/departments and watch content related videos.

Day two (see appendix A) seminar topic will be mentorship. This session will highlight the importance of mentorship, the mentorship relationship, and the utilization of peer mentorship. Activities will also include participants identifying what qualities they look for in a mentor and how to ensure they model this for first generation African American college students. Content related videos and tangible documentation will also be shared in this session as well.

Day three (see appendix A) the importance of goal setting and planning will be discussed. Organizational planning will be introduced as a best practice for participants to utilize as they plan to better assist first generation African American college students in the future. Participants will also identify on-campus resources for students and develop departmental goals and future planning as it relates to new programming that fits the needs of these specific students. During the final session, participants will also be expected to complete a first generation program proposal which will be developed throughout the course of the three day professional development. Please refer to appendix A to review the program proposal outline.

Roles and Responsibilities

I will be the point of contact for this professional development series. My role will include developing and facilitating seminar sessions. As the point of contact I will first gain the approval of Walden University who influenced and granted the opportunity for a project such as this to be developed. Next, to ensure university and departmental alignment I will collaborate with other colleagues on campus to gain approval of the content and sessions that will be provided. These collaborative efforts will take place during scheduled planning and debrief meetings. Copies of the prospective professional development itineraries, tangible items, and PowerPoints will be presented for approval.

Although this professional development series was created for participants to gain additional competencies within their field of practice, they have roles and responsibilities as well. Such expectations include participants actively engaging in professional development sessions, being committed to the process of change, and providing transparent feedback, being present throughout the duration of the training, arrive on time and prepared. Lastly, all additional participants such as guest speakers, university dining and logistical faculty are expected to fill responsibilities and roles also. Additional participants should effectively communicate, arrive prepared, and aim to assist as needed. This will ensure the professional development series runs smoothly.

Project Evaluation Plan

With the implementation of any program or professional development series, participant feedback is essential. Providing a platform for participant feedback measures

the overall effectiveness of the program/professional development facilitated. Identifying the needs of any population can be challenging. However, through the utilization of various evaluation platforms the continuous needs of any population can be addressed. Two types of evaluations most often utilized are formative and summative. Both evaluation types will be used to gain feedback from professional development participants (Biklen & Bogdan, 2007).

When the evaluator provides feedback within the duration of the program facilitation this is referred to as a formative evaluation (Biklen & Bogdan, 2007). Professional development participants will be given the opportunity to provide feedback through writing and reflection of what was learned (see Appendix. A) which may be allotted during the end of a session. Activities such as these help to provide continuous feedback from the evaluator and program improvement. This type of evaluation feedback is also quickly shared with participants in efforts to present additional findings and discuss future changes (Biklen & Bogdan, 2007).

Summative evaluations are short and create a final report of the feedback data collected. Reports are then utilized to implement change or adjustments to the program/resource allocations. Professional development participants will answer a set of questions evaluated with a Likert scale (see Appendix A) and short-answer questions that will provide feedback at the end of a session. This formal evaluation will provide long-term implications for change as a result of the feedback which is rarely provided to participants to limit tensions between both the evaluator and participant (Biklen &

Bogdan, 2007). Overall, evaluations will examine the quality of professional development sessions and future seminars which are both outcome and participant based.

Social Change Implications Project Importance

Social change is the implementation of societal changes to social behaviors, institutions/organizations, and social interactions (McMichael, & Weber, 2020). First generation African American college students are often classified as at-risk. This cohort of students experience many challenges both prior to and throughout the duration of college. These students are also underrepresented and lack additional support as they transition into college. As these students encounter barriers while seeking degree completion the influence of withdrawing from college often becomes a reality (Sunstein, 2019). As previously stated within the literature review first generation college students of color compose a small portion of the overall number of college students who obtain degree completion (McMichael, & Weber, 2020). Now that higher education institutions are aware of this data the need to initiate new approaches and programming that promote social change is vital.

Looking into the future, social change must be implemented in higher education settings to immediately impact this cohort of students (Sunstein, 2019). As colleges and universities seek to assist first generation African college students obtain degree completion, higher education institutions must look to increase student retention. To accomplish this goal, buy-in from both university faculty and additional stakeholders will be needed. New approaches such as professional development have the potential to assist

the university in utilizing best practices and appropriate strategies. Professional development series also have the potential to ensure university goals are clearly conveyed and that all involved are in alignment with the universities holistic view (Sunstein, 2019). Integrating the proper planning, goal setting, mentorship opportunities, and summer bridge programming will also assist higher institutions implement a change in the way this group of students are assisted as they experience barriers and seek degree completion.

Conclusion

Within this section the project was outlined and discussed in detail. Project goals and rationale were also presented and outlined research themes and professional development seminars. The project consists of a 3 day seminar on how to better assist first generation African American college students overcome barriers and seek degree completion. A literature review was also included and overviewed professional development alongside additional topics such as awareness, summer bridge programming, mentorship, goal setting and planning. These topics were also identified as themes and utilized as the professional development seminars/sessions. Project timeline, role and responsibilities, evaluation platforms, social change implications, barriers and solution to barriers were also discussed within this section as well. In Section 4 project strengths, limitations, recommendations, alternative approaches, scholarship, leadership, project development, and change will all be discussed to better assist this cohort of students both now and in the future.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The goal of this qualitative research study was to identify the perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion. Semi-structured interviews were facilitated with participants to gather specific barriers often encountered for this cohort of students throughout their college careers. Additionally, research questions guided interview questions in an effort to capture the authenticity of every experience shared. Once interviews concluded, analysis of the data identified the perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion and themes. Such themes included financial hardships, a lack of support, precollege awareness and high school preparation, transitional programming, and university faculty awareness. The emerging themes from this research study led to the creation of a 3-day professional development series to assist institutions of higher learning in better supporting first generation African American college students overcome barriers and attain degree completion. This section includes project strengths and limitations, recommendations, alternative approaches, scholarship, leadership, project development, and future implications.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The professional development project will greatly benefit universities as they seek to increase student retention and better support first generation African American college students. This 3-day program offers new approaches, best practices, opportunities for

university growth, and impactful social change on a smaller scale. To meet challenges such as student retention, higher education institutions must implement professional opportunities that enhance faculty development. Molding the mindsets and setting the tone regarding adopting new trends is the start to ensuring a strong project. I believe this professional development series will help universities assist first generation college students remove barriers and attain degree completion. Lastly, a project such as this could also provide opportunities for school-wide collaboration, new curriculum development, and future networking opportunities among community stakeholders.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

This 3-day professional development was created to assist university faculty and additional stakeholders in higher education better to assist first generation African American college students to obtain degrees. In developing this project, considering limitations was essential to the effectiveness of the professional development. One limitation that may arise would include accessibility to training seminars. Although the professional development series will be offered in the summer, those who are unable to attend may not have the opportunity to attend the professional development series if it is only offered one time during the summer. An alternative solution to this issue would be to offer this professional development three times a year. Opportunities to register for professional development would include summer, fall semester, and spring semester. Another limitation would be faculty buy-in. It is important that university goals are conveyed, and everyone is in alignment. Faculty members must coordinate their vision

with that of the university to ensure student needs are met. If university faculty are given an option to attend this professional development and decide not to do so, this could potentially be a limitation. An alternative approach to this limitation would be to make professional development mandatory or virtual. If the professional development is mandatory it would guarantee that university goals are being conveyed, faculty members are in alignment, and everyone is moving in the same direction. A virtual option may help provide a chance for faculty who cannot attend due to geographic and time constraints.

Scholarship

This opportunity has granted me insights in a variety of areas. I initially sought out to obtain my doctoral degree in higher education due to my passion for the success of first generation African American college students. As a previous first generation African American college student, it was important for me to conduct research that influenced how universities could further the success of this cohort as they seek to achieve degree completion. I also learned more in-depth information about both qualitative and quantitative research. Building this additional knowledge assisted me in selecting the best method for this specific research study. Another area in which I gained more expertise was use of the APA format when writing. In the beginning of my doctoral journey, the use of APA format was challenging for me at times. However, I have become more acquainted with this format. In closing, as I reflect on my academic journey, the most

valuable thing learned was how to research. This opportunity taught me both the importance of research and how to properly facilitate it.

Project Development and Evaluation

Formative and summative evaluations were designed to capture the feedback of professional development attendees. The data collection from evaluation feedback would provide space for professional development reflections and immediate changes as needed. During the development of this project a curriculum design was initially pursued due to my passion for curriculum and instruction. However, after the review of research data and committee discussion, a professional development was more suitable. The professional development series would focus more on how to equip university faculty and stakeholders with the resources needed to assist first generation African American college students and promote school-wide retention.

Leadership and Change

I have always viewed myself as a leader and have often found myself in leadership roles. I believe a leader is composed of several characteristics and the role of the leader can change at any time based on the environment. In addition, I also find myself being a leader outside of my professional role. Being a leader has taught me the importance of learning to lead and follow at the same time. In my current leadership role, sometimes I find myself allowing my colleagues to lead so that I may learn. It is important as a leader to collaborate to ensure the tone of teamwork is present. I also thrive on teachable moments because it's impossible for me to know everything, but

essential for me to always learn new things. Furthermore, implementing this research study has provided me with so much information about first generation African American college students and the barriers that prevent them from degree completion. As a first generation African American college student myself, the findings from this research study have influenced me to become more of a leader in assisting this cohort of students attain success. When I consider my doctoral journey, Walden University has been that leader for me. I have learned so many new things and experienced so many teachable moments that have molded me into the person I am today. As I move towards the completion of my doctoral journey, I have learned the importance of integrating research with leadership so that I may be a change agent in the field of any practice.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

When I think of the characteristics of a scholar, one word comes to mind: resilience. A scholar is known to be a person who is both an advanced learner and academically sound. Without being resilient I would not have been able to overcome the barriers encountered during this process to continue pursuing a degree. I decided to pursue my doctorate degree about 4 years ago immediately after obtaining my master's degree. Obtaining a doctorate degree has always been a dream of mine. I have always enjoyed learning and recall making the decision during my first year of college to one day become a Doctor of Education. As the first member of my family to attend college, after obtaining both a bachelors and master's degree, it was extremely important for me to also seek a doctoral degree. Overall, this experience has been filled with a mixture of

unforgettable challenges, rewarding milestones, and life changing experiences. Pursuing a doctoral degree has also enhanced my writing skills and research abilities and influenced future career goals. The word resiliency describes my experience best. This academic opportunity has taught me much about myself and my purpose within my career field. Currently, as a high school professional counselor, maintaining a resilient mindset has enabled me to seek out first generation African American students and better prepare them prior to attending college. In the future I hope to one day be a middle or high school assistant principal and adjunct professor who teaches other school counselors how to be effective counselors. In these roles I hope to implement social change on a smaller scale by promoting precollege exposure.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

My view of a practitioner is one who is both passionate and actively engaged in their profession. An effective practitioner must also display superior leadership qualities. Most practitioners are also considered subject matter experts in their field of practice and usually possess years of experience. As a doctoral student, I have learned that what makes a practitioner most effective is not only their experience and leadership but their passion and ability to implement change for the better. As I have continued to research on the perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion over the last 4 years, I believe that I have gained considerable knowledge about this topic and can model the leadership and passion needed to implement social change as a practitioner within the field of education.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

In my career field I have been afforded several opportunities that have rewarded me with extensive experience in project/program development. As educators, we are trained to be innovative thinkers and system creators. In my current role as a high school counselor, I develop programming because of student needs and performance data on a consistent basis. I also develop and facilitate programming for school-wide activities such as graduation, faculty training, and parent and stakeholder workshops. Moreover, I enjoy developing projects and programs and became extremely excited when presented with the task of creating a project for this research study. In developing my project study, I saw my skills, creativity, and passion for education set the tone for future changes in higher education. In closing, the completion of my project study allowed me to consider the importance of integrating research, data, and innovativeness as the key to effective programming.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

The proposed professional development series was created to support university faculty and stakeholders in higher education better assist one specific cohort of students. In this qualitative research study, participants were interviewed to share the barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion. The data collected from the research study highlighted some common themes among participants. This was extremely important because it guided the development of the project/professional development. As I reflect on the overall research study and the

passion that drove this interest the importance of the professional development facilitation is the initial step towards social change in higher education. Identifying the barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion and providing a professional development that addresses how to assist students overcome these barriers and obtain degree completion was the goal. Equipping university faculty with the strategies, best practices, and effective programming to assist these students is a step in the right direction and impactful towards social change on a smaller scale such as the school level. The hope is that once higher institutions implement this professional development in the future, first generation African American college students could potentially be able to better cope with barriers, eventually overcome them, and ultimately obtain degree completion. In addition, this project implementation could also provide ways to assist universities maintain effective programming, faculty, and increase student retention as well.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Throughout the duration of this doctoral journey, the direction in which I wanted to go with my research study fluctuated as my interests consistently changed. As a current educator, there are so many areas I desire to change on a smaller scale with the hopes of influencing social change on a larger scale. As previously stated, I was the first to attend college in my family. As an African American first generation college student I experienced many of the barriers identified by research study participants. While pursuing my doctoral degree, I experienced a change in my professional career. In my

new professional role, the students I served were African American high school seniors. Most of these students had a desire to continue their education but did not have the resources or knew how to start the process of applying to a college/university. I also graduated high school seniors who were admitted to college, briefly, attended, but withdrew. These students were first in their families to attend college and lacked support and the life skills to overcome encountered barriers. As I witnessed this yearly trend it became evident to me the direction in which I wanted my research study to go.

Directions for future research suggest a need for change. When conducting research on this specific topic there was limited to no research on the importance of professional development as a solution to this area of concern. Professional development could assist higher institutions as they seek to improve programming, faculty student interactions, best practices, student retention, and the overall first year freshman experiences. Additional research could also provide innovative ways for universities to better collaborate with community stakeholders such surrounding high schools and other youth development organizations. Collaborative relationships such as these could provide insight into newly developed educational trends and potential barriers among this cohort prior to attending colleges. Insight such as this could assist colleges in better preparing for students and the barriers to come. This could be viewed as a strategy to improve faculty development, increase student retention and degree completion in the future.

Conclusion

The project/professional development series was the focus of this section. Discussing the development, limitations, and strengths of this project was vital. Understanding the potential impact that this professional development could have on colleges and universities in the future could possibly change the trajectory of how first generation African American college students succeed in college. Student retention is also an issue for higher institutions as they seek to better assist students. “Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting universities in support of First Generation African American College Students” professional development would increase faculty development and the approaches utilized to assist these students. With enhanced approaches/practices that address increasing student retention, successes, and programming change is sure to come.

In Section 4, I provided an extensive summary of the study. I shared project strengths, limitations, and potential recommendations for alternative approaches. The importance of project evaluations and the impact it could potentially have on the field of higher education was mentioned as well. Social change impacts and leadership was also explored to suggest the need for future research. In closing, my doctoral journey has been life changing. I have gained additional knowledge on how to research and transition data collection into implementation. Most importantly I have grown first as a scholar, second a practitioner, third a developer, and lastly as a professional. Integrating the facilitation or professional development on the university level will influence ongoing research to

provide resources to better assist colleges as they seek to help first generation African American college students overcome barriers and obtain degree completion. Future research will set the tone for future social change and student success.

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Appendix A: The Project

Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting Universities in Support of
First Generation African American College Students

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Introduction

This project was designed to assist university faculty and stakeholders better serve first generation African American college students cope with barriers and reach degree completion. Providing awareness about this cohort of students and setting the tone for effective programming planning is the overall purpose. Faculty and stakeholders will learn about the importance of pre-exposure programs such as summer bridge, the impact of mentorship, and how to effectively set departmental goals/plans. This professional development series will be facilitated over the course of three days and will be provided to departmental leaders only. Once departmental leaders have completed this training, they will then be asked to facilitate this same training to their departmental instructors and support staff. By the end of the professional development series, participants should have learned best practices, new strategies/approaches, and effective planning. Please refer to the outline provided below that details the 3 day professional development series

Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting universities to support First Generation African American College Students

Professional Development Series Outline

Day 1 : Awareness & Summer Bridge Pre-Exposure Programming

- ❑ Pre-Session-Professional Development Introduction *-Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting universities to support First Generation African American College Students*
- ❑ Session 1- Who are First Generation African American College Students
- ❑ Session 2- Summer Bridge Programming

Day 2: Mentorship

- ❑ Session 1-Mentorship
- ❑ Session 2-The Role of the Mentor in the Relationship vs. The Role of the Mentee in the Relationship
- ❑ Session 3-Peer Mentoring

Day 3: Goal Setting and Planning

- ❑ Session 1- Goal Setting and Planning
- ❑ Session 2-Organizational Planning
- ❑ First generation program planning

Professional Development Series Routine Tasks

This 3 Day professional development series will be facilitated by myself, Ms. Jordan, and occasional guest speakers. Attendees will register daily and pick up a packet which will include professional development agendas, lunch menus, and reminders. Necessary materials will also be provided daily on designated tables including session handouts and additional tangibles. Each session will begin with a welcome and summary of goals, objectives, and specific topics. An icebreaker will also be presented to participants during the start of each session to ensure comfortability and opportunities for participants to collaborate. Participants will be provided with time to reflect through writing on newly learned competencies daily before the introduction of the next professional development session overview. Lastly, formative, and summative evaluations will be provided daily to gain participant feedback. Upon university budget approval, professional development attendees will be provided with continental breakfast before the start of each training day.

Day 1: Pre-Session Awareness & Summer Bridge Pre-Exposure Programming

Professional Development Groundwork Information

Pre-Session: *Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting universities to support First Generation African American College Students*

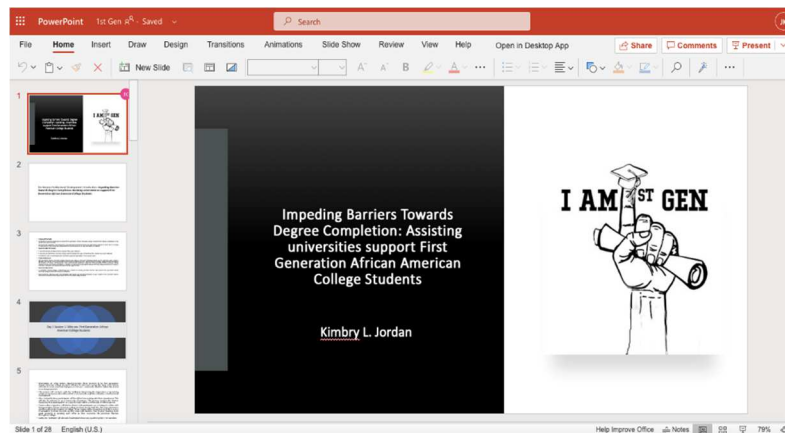
- ❑ Professional Development Address/Location

University Conference Center

21421 College Drive

Washington DC 20008

- ❑ Conference Room 1A



Professional Development Registration

8:00AM-8:30AM- 30 Minutes

- ❑ Participants will register in the conference center foyer, pick up essential information, additional training tangibles, and ask questions as needed.
- ❑ Continental Breakfast will also be offered to participants during this time as well. Breakfast will be hosted by university dining services in the conference center foyer and is contingent upon budget approval from the university.

- Session goals, purpose, and expected learning outcomes will be shared with participants.

Transition- the facilitator will transition participants from registration and breakfast to day one pre-session.

Icebreaker

8:30AM- 8:45AM - 15 Minutes

- **“I Do You Do”**- Participants will identify what their expected role will be, what they expect from the facilitator, 1 thing they expect to learn, and 1 professional goal. Once completed participants will share with other attendees. During this time, the facilitator will share their role and responsibilities with attendees to ensure accountability. Participants will complete this task by completing the provided half sheet.
- **Materials Needed**
 - Copies of the “I Do You Do” half sheet
 - Pens/Pencils

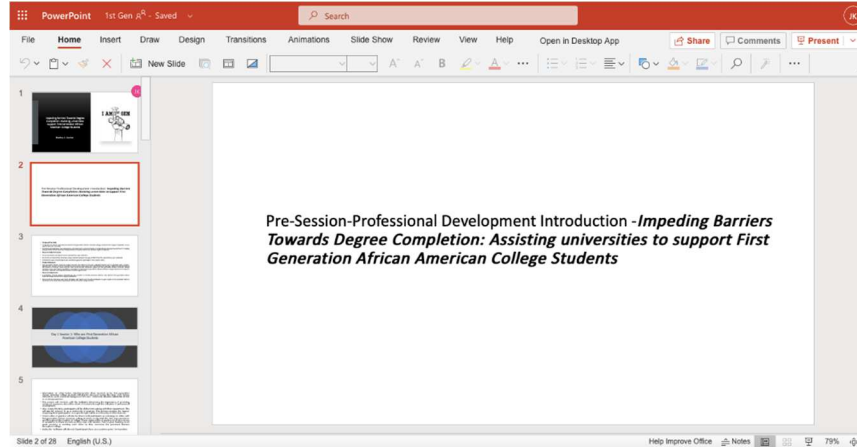
“I Do You Do” Icebreaker Activity

Name:

Date:

Directions: Please complete the questions below. When you finish, the facilitator will share their response to the same questions you will answer below. The efforts you put in the facilitator will do the same thing also referred to as “I Do You Do! Please feel free to volunteer when the facilitator asks for participants to share.

- 1. What do you expect to gain from the facilitator?**
- 2. List one thing you expect to learn:**
- 3. List one professional goal:**



Transition- the facilitator will transition participants from the Icebreaker into the pre-session.

Pre-Session - 8:45AM to 9:45AM (1 Hour)

- ❑ **Professional Development Groundwork/Background Information-** the facilitator will share the importance of professional development. The purpose, problem statement, participant selection, and research results will be shared to provide background insight. The following areas will be discussed:
 - ❑ Materials Needed
 - Projector
 - Laptop
 - Session Handouts

Purpose of the Study

- ❑ To identify the barriers perceived to prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion at one specific four-year university.

- ❑ To provide best practices, new approaches, and planning to university faculty and stakeholders that would assist them in helping first generation African American college students overcome barriers and achieve degree completion.

Research Study Participants

- ❑ 5 university faculty members from the selected four-year institution
- ❑ 8 currently enrolled African American college students between the ages of 18-25 from the selected four-year institution
- ❑ In total there were 12 participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research study.

Problem Statement

- ❑ First generation African American college students who attend a four-year college/university seek to graduate with a degree. However, this specific cohort of students are perceived to experience more barriers than the average college student throughout the duration of college. Addressing this issue would provide additional support for first generation African American college students as they seek degree completion. In addition to retaining first generation African American college students an increase in university retention is an expected benefit of addressing this issue.

Research Study Results

- A qualitative research design methodology was selected to identify perceived barriers that prevent first generation African American college students from degree completion.
- Semi-structured interviews were both facilitated with faculty and student participants to gain insight on the perceived barriers commonly encountered by first generation African American college students.

Pre-Session Activity

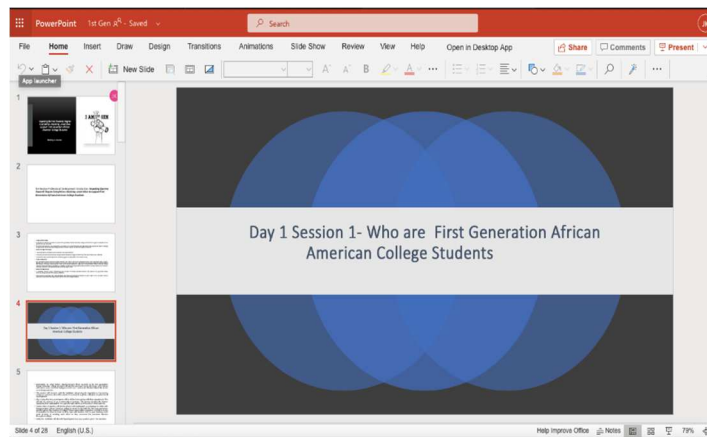
Parking Lot- 9:30AM to 9:45AM (15 Minutes)

- Participants will have the opportunity to form any additional questions they may have about the purpose of the research study. There will be an assorted color of post-it sticky pads that attendees may use to write their questions on. Once this is completed participants will stick the post-it on the parking lot template centered in the middle of their table. The facilitator will move from table to table reading responding to questions out loud. The forming of questions, reading of questions and responses should be facilitated in the allotted 15 minutes.
- Materials Needed
 - Colored assorted post-it stickies
 - Black pens
 - Parking lot template (See handout master copy below)
 - Timer



Parking lot your questions! Participants this is your opportunity to form any additional questions you may have about the purpose of the research study. Please find an assorted color of post-its sticky pads in the center of your table. Write your questions on these post-its. Once this is completed, please stick the post-its on the parking lot template one question per space. If participants do not have questions, they may share professional experiences/ concerns in regard to this specific cohort of students. When this is completed, the facilitator will move from table to table reading and responding to questions/experiences out loud. The forming of questions/experiences and the reading of responses should be facilitated in 15 minutes.

Transition- Participants will be able to take a 10 minute break and the facilitator will transition participants from the pre-session into the next session, who are First Generation African American College Students.



Session 1- “Who are First Generation African American College Students”

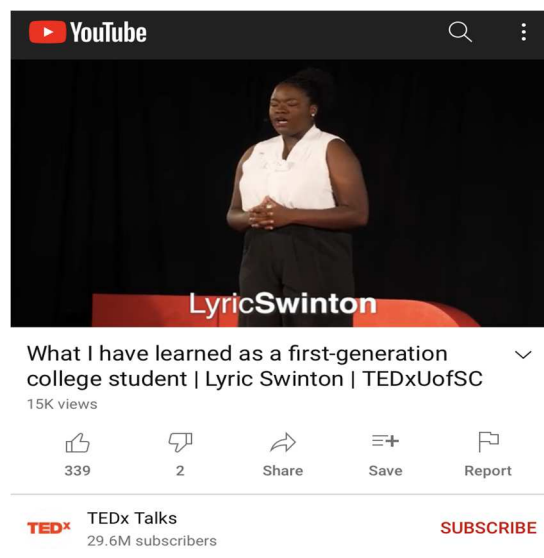
10:00AM to 11:00AM (1 Hour see facilitator notes below)

- ❑ Materials Needed
 - Projector
 - Laptop
 - Session Handouts
- ❑ The facilitator will start the session by asking participants, When you think of a first generation African American college student what words come to mind? The facilitator will provide an outline of a body with lines on the body for participants to write the various selected words on. The allocated time will be 10min.
- ❑ Once participants are finished, the facilitator will ask for volunteers to share what words they selected and why. Once all have shared, the facilitator will share a first

generation word web and compare/contrast what is on the web versus what was shared. This will take place for about 6-8 minutes.

- ❑ The facilitator will transition participants out of the activity and into a YouTube video entitled, What I have learned as a first-generation college student.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRVG7kjvw7g&t=19s>)



- ❑ Following the video, the facilitator will pull key segments from the video to discuss more in depth with participants.
- ❑ Information on what factors classify/consider these students to be first generation African American college students will also be discussed during this time. Such factors will include socio-economic background info and commonly classified labels like at-risk or underrepresented.

- ❑ This session will conclude with the facilitator introducing the importance of providing continued awareness about this cohort of students through the utilization of professional development.
- ❑ Also, during this time, participants will be shifted into seating with their department. This will also be referred to as a community of practice. This process involves the learner deepening their participation on a specific topic within a community of other learners.
- ❑ Information regarding communities of practice will also be shared with participants as a strategy to utilize with first generation African American college students during both the first year experience and throughout the duration of college. These communities of practice could be a source of assistance to these students as they cope with barriers. Peer to peer learning could assist students in assisting each other as they overcome the perceived barriers throughout college.
- ❑ Lastly, the facilitator will also ask if participants have any questions prior to transition.

Transition- Participants will be able to take a 10 minute break and the facilitator will transition participants into the session activity.

Session 1 Activity- Discovering the Narrative of African American First Generation College Students

11:00AM-12:15PM (1 Hour 15 Minutes)

- ❑ The facilitator will provide each table with a case study.

- ❑ Each table will read the case study and answer the questions on how to best support this first generation African American college student overcome barriers and achieve degree completion.
- ❑ Once each table has completed evaluating their case study they will be asked to select one person at the table to share their response to the case study.
- ❑ Materials
 - Provided case study and response sheet
 - Pens/Pencils

Discovering the Narrative of African American First Generation College Students

Directions- Please read the provided case study. Answer the questions below on how to best support this first generation African American college student overcome barriers and achieve degree completion. After you have read and completed the questions as a group please select one person at your table to share the responses to the case study.

- 1. State the problem(s)/evident barriers.**
- 2. What factors could have possibly caused these problems/barriers?**
- 3. State possible solutions to the problem(s).**
- 4. What limitations do you foresee with your proposed solutions?**
- 5. List some alternative approaches to the possible limitations.**
- 6. List all additional university/exterior resources you will need to assist this student.**
- 7. Please list 3 short-term goals for this student.**
- 8. Please list 3 long-term goals for this student.**
- 9. What evaluation tools will you utilize to measure the effectiveness of this intervention plan?**
- 10. Please list any additional recommendations for this student.**

Discovering the Narrative of African American First Generation College Students

Directions- Please read the provided case study.

Sherry Pratt Is a first year freshman at four year University. She is 18 years old, and an African American first generation college student. She is the oldest of four children and the first to attend a college within her family. Despite her challenging childhood, Sherry was able to overcome her barriers and attend college. She grew up in the inner city where gun violence and a lack of resources were among the commonalities of everyday life. She spent most of her life between foster care and her broken home. Her father was killed when she was only ten forcing her mother into single parenthood and a lifelong struggle with various addictions. Sherry often took care of her siblings and worked while in school to help support her mother.

At a young age, Sherry knew she wanted something different other than the childhood she was experiencing. The high school she attended was in a low-come neighborhood with limited resources. Her school lacked precollege exposure and support staff to assist her with the college seeking /application process. During her senior year, Sherry identified a college of her choice, applied, and was accepted. She knew college would be her way out of a troubling life, but she did not know what steps to take first. Sherry also began to worry about who would take care of her siblings while she sent off to seek a college degree.

After graduation high school, Sherry decided to attend college. Her first semester of college was very challenging. Sherry experienced many barriers during the first semester of college.. Although she completed her first semester as a first generation African American

college student, she was placed on academic probation for the following semester with specific directions on how to recover her good standing status with the university. Once informed, Sherry began to get discouraged and scheduled a meeting with her academic advisor for some advice on what to do next. As her academic advisor, please utilize the questions below to identify what her next steps will be so that she may be academically sound, able to overcome barriers, and ultimately achieve degree completion.

Day 1 :First Generation African American College Student Awareness Facilitator Notes

First Generation College Students are Defined as (Cavazos et al., 2019):

- ❑ Students who are considered to be the first in their family to attend and obtain a degree from a 4-year college/ higher education institution.

First Generation African American College Students are also referred to one of the following terms below (Cavazos et al., 2019):

- ❑ ***Underrepresented-*** not equally represented, inadequate representation
- ❑ ***At-Risk Youth-*** students /youth who are seen to be less likely to achieve success and usually require additional interventions and academic assistance in order to succeed.
- ❑ ***Economically Disadvantaged Students-*** students/ families who benefit from assistance programs such as free or reduced lunch, food stamps, etc.

Characteristics of a First Generation African American College Student (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016).

- ❑ ***Categorized-*** neither the student's mother nor father has received a 4-year degree/attended a 4-year college
- ❑ ***Guilty-*** first generation African American college students often feel guilty of wanting to experience a better life and attend college while leaving their family and various barriers behind. This guilt can also impact the student's decision-making when being torn between seeking degree completion and gaining continuous support from their family throughout the duration of college.

- ❑ ***Underprivileged-*** first generation African American college students and their families often both experience financial hardship and lack financial understanding. These students and their families usually need support completing the FAFSA also referred to as the free application for federal student aid. Additional information about free money such as scholarships vs. loan options are also challenges for these students and their families as well.
- ❑ ***Unexposed-*** first generation African American college students often have limited exposure to college preparation programming. These programs offer additional knowledge on various colleges, scholarships, financial options, the college-seeking process, SAT/ACT testing prep, and the college admissions process. Additionally, this cohort of students also experiences or have limited to no accessibility to college tours, fairs, or open houses. These events/opportunities are essential to the exposure of first generation African American college students.
- ❑ ***Intimidated-*** first generation African American college students are often intimidated by the cost of attending college. As a result, these students often settle for a college that usually is not their first choice due to finances/financial hardships. This cohort of students also experiences intimidation among other college students such as non-first-generation college students.

Concluding Discussion

- ❑ In summarizing this session, participants will be encouraged to participate in a whole group discussion that will highlight the importance of providing continuous

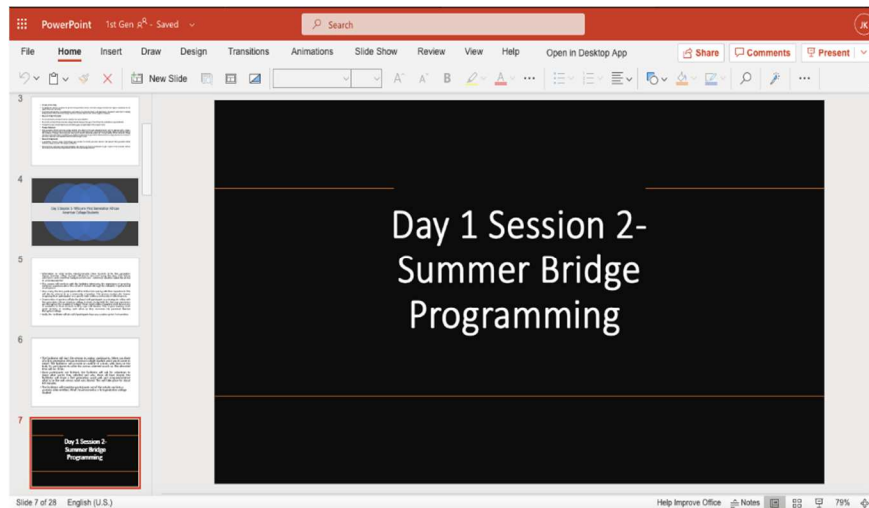
awareness around how to better support first generation African American college students in the future through the utilization of professional development.

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- Wilbur, T. G., & Roscigno, V. J. (2016). First-generation disadvantage and college enrollment/completion. *Socius*, 2.

Lunch/Bathroom- 12:15PM to 1:00PM (45 Minutes) lunch will also be offered to participants during this time as well. Lunch will be hosted by university dining services in the conference center foyer and is contingent upon budget approval from the university.

Transition- Participants will be transitioned into the afternoon session, Pre-Exposure Programming Summer Bridge.



Day 1: Session 2- Pre- Exposure Programming Summer Bridge

Icebreaker -University Bingo 1:00PM to 1:15PM (15 Minutes)

Participants will be provided bingo cards and playing pieces. The bingo board will consist of university resource programs/ places on campus that support college students during the first year experience.

- ❑ As the various resource programs/places on campus are called out a brief description will also be shared by the facilitator. 2 to 3 games will be played

depending on the length and time allotted each round. University swag/gifts will be the prizes for winners.

❑ Materials Needed

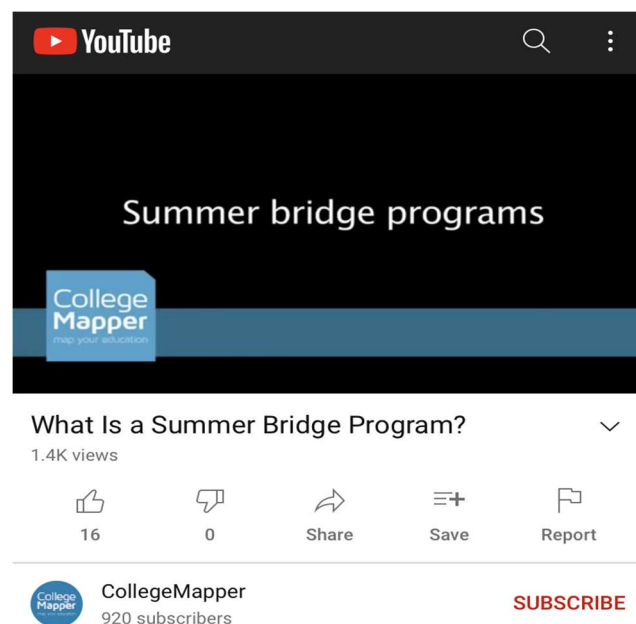
- Provided bingo card and playing pieces
- Projector for the facilitator to utilize when calling out bingo cards

University Bingo

Career Center	Upward Bound Program	TRIO Program
Student Achievement Center	Free Space	Student Success Center
Center for Academic & Career Excellence (CACE)	Counseling Center	Freshman Club

1:15PM to 2:00PM (45 Minutes see facilitator notes below before the next session)

- ❑ Materials Needed
 - Projector
 - Laptop
 - Session Handouts
- ❑ After the Icebreaker, participants will be transitioned into session 2, Pre-Exposure Programming Summer Bridge.
- ❑ In this session, the facilitator will define both pre-exposure programming and summer bridge followed by a YouTube video entitled, What Is a Summer Bridge Program (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBbjnUy528Y>).



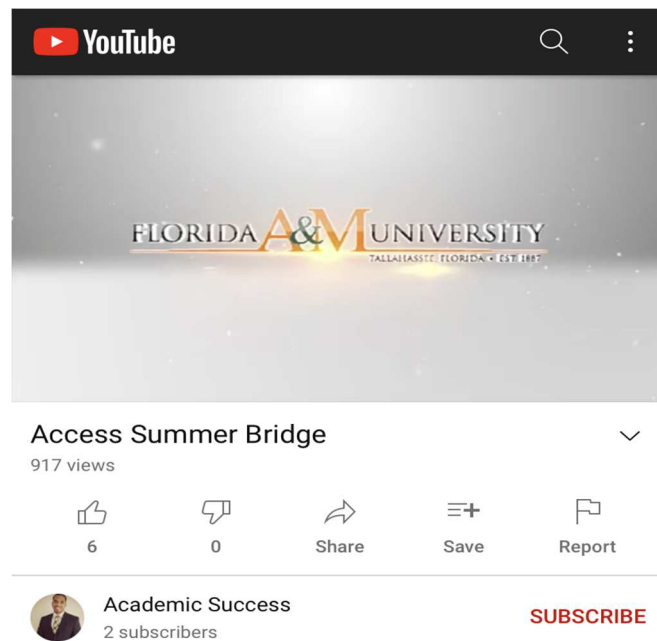
- ❑ The benefits of pre-exposure programming and summer bridge will be discussed.

- This session will conclude with the components of effective summer bridge programming.

Day 1: Session 2 Activity - First generation program proposal

2:00PM to 3:30PM (1 Hour 15 Minutes)

- The activity will start off with two YouTube videos entitled, Access Summer Bridge (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btllsKPUFpE>).



- Summer Bridge Program, (<https://www.youtue.com/watch?v=5BWLOhLAb3I>).



- ❑ Each video will show the different components of one specific summer bridge program. Participants will have the opportunity to see two different programs that may influence their thinking as they prepare to develop their own proposed first generation program with their department/table.
- ❑ Following the videos, participants will be given time to start their first generation program proposal planning and goal setting with their table/department. Each table will be encouraged to be innovative and strategic about how they will support students and prepare them for success through a first generation program.
- ❑ Groups will be granted time throughout the 3 day professional development series to work on this deliverable. Groups will be asked to share their plan on the last day of the professional development.
- ❑ Materials Needed
 - Huge Post-its paper for planning

- Pens/Pencils
- Timer
- laptop/iPad for research
- Proposal template/outline guide

3:30PM to 4:00PM (30 Minutes)

Closing of day 1, Closing remarks and survey (See Formative/Summative Evaluation below).

First Generation Program Proposal

- The purpose of this activity is to have university faculty reflect on their interactions with first generation African American college students and how this cohort of students are currently being served within their department. Professional development participants will be grouped by the university department in which they work. Within these communities of practice, university faculty will reflect on how students are taught, supported, transition into college, matriculate through college, stay enrolled, overcome unforeseen barriers, and most importantly obtain degree completion. Departments will utilize the rubric below to develop new ideas, innovative teaching approaches, and student resources. Proposal planning and goal setting will allow departments the opportunity to effectively map out how they will service first generation African American college students in the future. Lastly, this activity will be a part of a professional development series. What this means is that additional components will be added to the proposal

document over time as professional developments are offered on this specific topic. Additionally, on the last day of professional development, participants will have two hours of planning and one hour to present their proposal to the entire group. Due to proposal continuation, feedback will be provided after every presentation for departments to adjust proposals as needed.

First Generation Program Proposal Template/Outline

- ❑ **Cover Page- Include the name of the program, institution, academic school/department, and the date of the proposal.**
- ❑ **Table of Contents- this section should include all the proposal components.**

Body of the Proposal

1. Appropriateness to University Mission

- Description, scope, and purpose of the program alignment with the university's mission, goals, and student needs.

2. Program Needs

- Needs such as higher education trends, university, and student needs. Consider the demand for the program among current and prospective students. Consider the uniqueness of the program, retention, and enrollment.

3. Academic Integrity

- Program goals
- Curriculum overview
- Program eligibility/ requirements

- Program Offerings
- Learning experiences and instructional approaches/practices
- Program quality
- Services that will be offered within the program

4. Program logistics/administration

- Leadership and faculty roles
- Student eligibility/support/advisement
- Additional faculty roles/newly added employment opportunities
- Program budget

5. Collaborations with other Programs

- Partnerships with similar programs with surrounding higher institutions
- Partnerships with other university department
- Partnerships with exterior agencies, stakeholders, corporations, etc.

6. Program /Assessment Data

- Consider a process for collecting and evaluating student-learning outcomes data
- Develop data systems that will utilize student outcome data to improve program effectiveness
- Develop a system that collects and evaluates program goals

7. Program Resource Sufficiency

- Develop program budget
- Overview resource sufficiency

8. Impact on Educational Opportunity

- Impact on first generation program college students
- Impact on faculty buy-in, advisors, etc.
- Impact on university and specific departments

Day 1: Summer Bridge Pre-Exposure Programming Facilitator Notes

Summer Bridge Programming is defined as:

- ❑ a resource created to assist freshmen college students with the transition into college through the utilization of life skills, academic, and social resources prior to the start of college (Hermann et al., 2020).
- ❑ Summer bridge programming is usually facilitated during the summer months prior to the start of the fall semester (Howard & Sharpe, 2019).
- ❑ Summer bridge participants are strategically selected and usually, those who experience academic challenges throughout the duration of high school and must attend summer bridge programming at the selected college/university of choice to ensure a successful transition into college and throughout the duration of college (Hermann et al., 2020).

The benefits of pre-exposure programming/summer bridge will be discussed.

- ❑ Pre-exposure programs - defined as programs that offer insight and preparation. Summer bridge is considered a pre-exposure program. Many pre-exposure programs have benefits and aim to provide additional support and preparation (Velázquez-Torres, 2018).

- ❑ **Providing academic support-** summer bridge participants will be able to identify academic supports as it relates to their specific major/school. These students will have the advantage of being more academically sound during the first-year experience and their overall college duration. The long-term benefit is that students will be able to identify academic challenges and know what on-campus resources to utilize when encountering academic difficulties.
- ❑ **Acclimation to campus living-** summer bridge participants have early access to campus resources. Students can familiarize themselves with on-campus buildings and resources. Additionally, students will also be able to adapt to on-campus living and the overall transition process.
- ❑ **Familiarity with university faculty and support staff -**summer bridge faculty and support staff participants have the opportunity to meet students and build meaningful relationships prior to the start of school. This could have a major impact on student retention as students transition into college and experience barriers.
- ❑ **Networking opportunities-** summer bridge participants have the ability to learn about the importance of networking on the collegiate level and how to effectively network. Sharing with students and modeling how to socially interact with other individuals by way of exchanging information on the professional level could potentially impact the long-term success of these participants.

- ❑ **Financial aid/scholarship support-** summer bridge participants have early access to financial aid resources such as assistance with final balances, last-minute scholarships, work-study opportunities, etc.
- ❑ **Effective peer relationships-**summer bridge participants have the opportunity to build effective peer relationships prior to transitioning into college. This benefit would provide students with peer relationships and peer support that could potentially support them throughout the duration of college specifically during the first-year experience.
- ❑ **Life Skills-** summer bridge participants have the opportunity to gain skills on how to be organized, set goals, manage responsibilities, and effectively transition into college living.

Components of effective summer bridge programming (Gonzalez Quiroz & Garza, 2018).
- ❑ **Program Depth-** summer bridge programming duration should be at least a week.
- ❑ **Program Goals-** summer bridge programs should have student goals, program initiatives, and objectives.
- ❑ **Project-Based Learning-**summer bridge programs should implement opportunities for students to be challenged and for real-world/ experiential learning experiences.

- ❑ **Data**-summer bridge programs should be driven by data. Systems should be created to collect data for review. Program evaluations can be considered as data and should be viewed to implement program changes as needed.
- ❑ **Program Evaluation**-summer bridge programs should provide surveys or other methods of evaluation to ensure continued program effectiveness.
- ❑ **Career Planning**- summer bridge programs should plan to assist students with career planning as their interests change throughout the duration of college. This should also be done in collaboration with internal and external additional stakeholders such as the on-campus career department.
- ❑ **College Goal Setting**-summer bridge programs should aim to assist students in creating collegiate goals. These goals should map both their upcoming year goals and future goals. Creating college goals will allow students to see the importance of planning and the associated accountability.
- ❑ **Foundational Academic Skills**- summer bridge programs should provide workshops or remedial courses that provide additional reading, english and math support.
- ❑ **Opportunities for Mentorship**- summer bridge programs should offer opportunities for students to be mentored by faculty, support staff, additional stakeholders, university upperclassmen, or alumni. Providing opportunities such as this could assist students in coping with barriers as they are unexpectedly encountered.

- ❑ **Additional Stakeholders/Partnerships-** summer bridge programs should establish partnerships with external stakeholders to increase future collaborations and opportunities for students.
- ❑ **Social-Emotional development-** summer bridge programs should provide social-emotional support for students as they transition into college and as they endure barriers. Summer bridge programs should also collaborate with the university's counseling services to ensure participant needs are addressed.

Concluding Discussion

- In summarizing this session, participants will be asked to rate their competence level on summer bridge programming. Participants will be able to select from low, medium, and high to rate their new competency level.

References

- Hermann, J. R., Tynes, S., & Apfel, W. (2020). Trinity University's Summer Bridge Program: Navigating the Changing Demographics in Higher Education. *Journal of Student Affairs Research & Practice*, 57(5), 571–577.
<https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/19496591.2020.1717964>
- Howard, B. L., & Sharpe, L., Jr. (2019). The Summer Bridge Program: An Effective Agent in College Students' Retention. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education*, 7(2), 20–30.
- Velázquez-Torres, N. (2018). Setting Students Up for Life Long Success through Innovative Summer Bridge Programs and First Year Seminars. *HETS Online Journal*, 8, 88–103.
- Gonzalez Quiroz, A., & Garza, N. R. (2018). Focus on Student Success: Components for Effective Summer Bridge Programs. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 17(2), 101–111.

Day 2: Mentorship**Professional Development Registration****8:00AM-8:30AM- 30 Minutes**

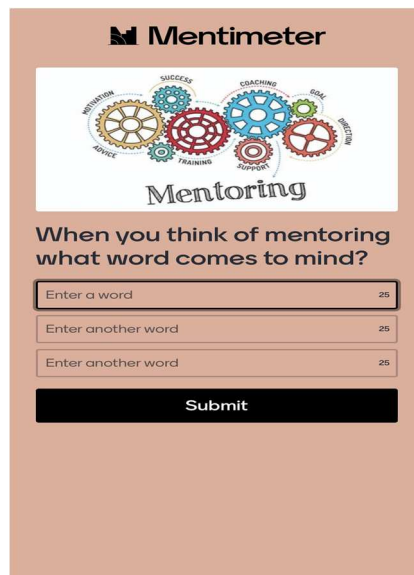
- ❑ Participants will register in the conference center foyer, pick up essential information, additional training tangibles, and ask questions as needed.
- ❑ Continental Breakfast will also be offered to participants during this time as well. Breakfast will be hosted by university dining services in the conference center foyer and is contingent upon budget approval from the university.
- ❑ Session goals, purpose, and expected learning outcomes will be shared with participants (see below).

Transition- the facilitator will transition participants from registration and breakfast to day two session.

Icebreaker-Mentimeter**8:30AM- 8:45AM - 15 Minutes**

- ❑ Participants will be asked to go to [mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com), a live polling tool, to reply to this question. When you think of the word mentoring, what word comes to mind? Participant responses will form a word cloud which will be utilized for an open discussion. This part of the icebreaker will take only 5 minutes.
- ❑ The facilitator will review the response on the projector out loud and discuss some of the words in the cloud and transition into the session material. This portion of the icebreaker will take about ten minutes.

- ❑ Session goals, purpose, and expected learning outcomes will be shared with participants (please refer to the outline below to goal specifics).
- ❑ Materials Needed
 - Participants will need to utilize technology (cell phone, iPad, or laptop) to enter the code and participate in the word cloud icebreaker.



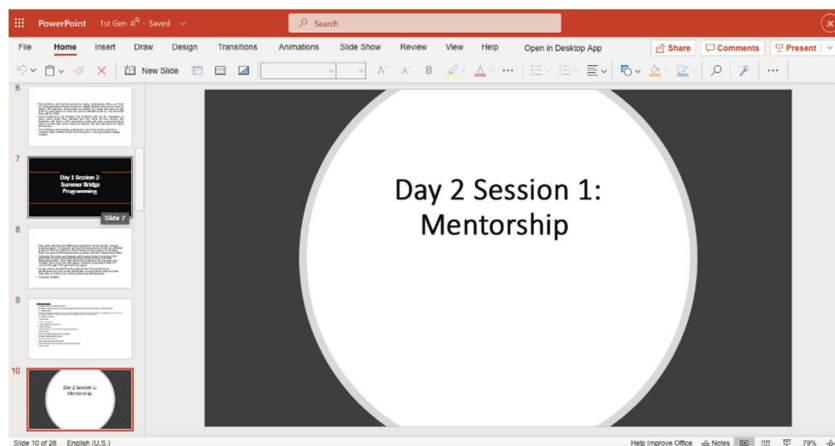
Mentimeter

Mentoring

When you think of mentoring what word comes to mind?

Enter a word	25
Enter another word	25
Enter another word	25

Submit

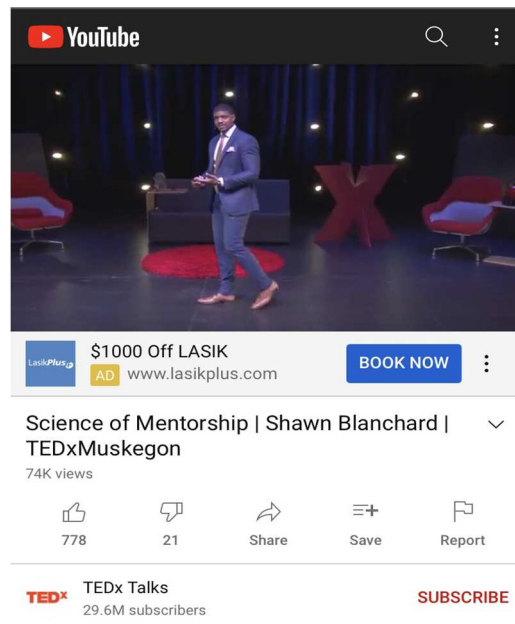


Session 1-Mentorship

8:45AM to 9:45AM (45 Minutes see facilitator notes below before the next session)

- ❑ Materials Needed
 - Projector
 - Laptop
 - Session Handouts
- ❑ The facilitator will start the session off by defining the meaning of mentoring.
- ❑ Mentorship programming will also be introduced. Its importance and potential benefits to student achievement/success will be discussed.
- ❑ Next, participants will look at a video entitled, Science of Mentoring:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh46lVSKWHc>)



- ❑ After this video, the facilitator will debrief about the video and jump into the impact of mentoring on student achievement.
- ❑ The facilitator will also discuss mentor programming and the various components that an effective program should have. In addition, the implementation of integrating a mentoring program to better assist first generation African American college students achieve degree completion and overall, in education specifically on the collegiate level.

Day 2: Mentorship Facilitator Notes

Mentorship is defined as:

- ❑ Mentorship- A developmental, caring, and sharing relationship where one person invests time and effort into improving the growth, knowledge, and skills of another person (Irby, 2019).
- ❑ Mentorship program- a structured group of individuals often strategically selected, who provide one-to-one guidance to a group of individuals who desire guidance, growth, and additional knowledge (Irby, 2019).

Pointing out the important benefits of Mentoring (Irby, 2019):

- ❑ **Mentorship creates opportunities for growth**
- ❑ **Mentorship provides additional support**
- ❑ **Mentoring promotes personal development**
- ❑ **Mentorship promotes leadership**
- ❑ **Mentorship promotes effective coaching**

❑ **Mentorship promotes student success/achievement**

Components of effective mentorship programming (Irby, 2019):

- ❑ **Program purpose-** it is important to identify why the mentorship program exists and what results to expect. Goals should also be developed to ensure both the purpose and the expected results are met.
- ❑ **Mentor/Mentee commitment-**gaining mentor/mentee buy-in also referred to as commitment is essential to the effectiveness of any mentoring program. Additionally, commitment is expected to last over time possibly past the length of the program duration. As new mentors/mentees join the program, new ideas could potentially influence a continued engaged and committed mentorship among participants.
- ❑ **Strategic program design-** mentoring programs should always align with the program purpose.
- ❑ **Effective communication-** very important in the mentor/mentee relationship for effective communication to be a strong foundation for continued successful relationships.
- ❑ **Impactful training-** mentor/mentee training should be offered earlier on in the program to ensure participant expectations are clear. Training will also ensure participants understand the program's purpose, benefits, mentor/mentee roles, and responsibilities.

- ❑ **Promotion-** mentor programs should highlight successes and successors within the program. It is also essential for program goals to be promoted/highlighted to ensure alignment.
- ❑ **Strong mentor/mentee matching-** the matching of participants is vital to the success of the overall mentoring program. This can also be the most challenging part of the program. In most cases, mentors are matched with protege as a result of the mentee's needs. This ultimately results in a more effective mentor-mentee relationship and a much more impactful experience.
- ❑ **Data tracking-**monitoring and tracking program data surfaces new needs, areas for growth and opportunities to implement program changes.

Mentorship programs can be implemented/ integrated at any time of the collegiate school year. However, it could be more beneficial for a mentoring program to be implemented during the summer bridge. This gives participants/students the opportunity to gain additional support during the college transition process and throughout the first-year experience which is a crucial year for most first generation African American college students.

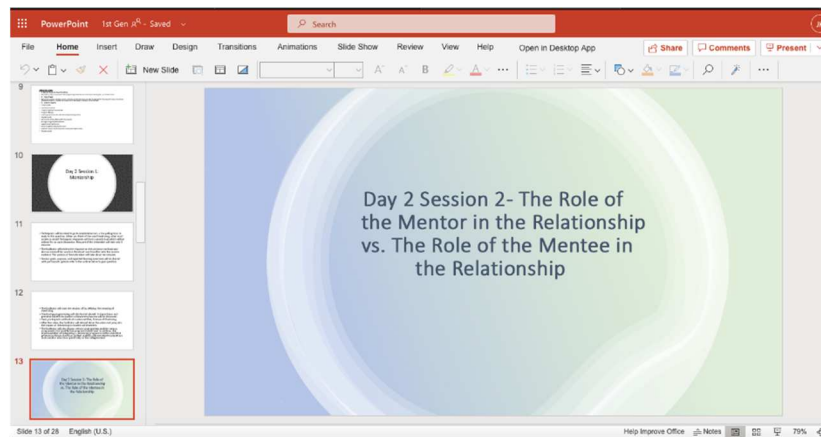
References

- Irby, B. J., Boswell, J., Jeong, S., Kappler Hewitt, K., & Pugliese, E. (2019). Editor's overview: Mentoring relationships in higher education. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 27(2), 127–130.

Transition- *the facilitator will transition participants into a 10 minute break into session*

2 The Role of the Mentor in the Relationship vs. The Role of the Mentee in the Relationship

Session 2- The Role of the Mentor in the Relationship vs. The Role of the Mentee in the Relationship 9:55AM to 11:10AM (1 Hour)



- ❑ Materials Needed
 - Huge post-it paper
 - Makers
 - Timer

- ❑ Gallery Walk- The facilitator will start off the session by asking participants to grab a colored marker. There will be two pieces of huge post-it paper in the center of each table. One will say “What qualities do you look for in a mentor.” The other piece of paper will state “What qualities do you look for in a mentee.” Participants will be asked to write one quality under each question/on each piece of paper. Once this activity has been completed participants will place both pieces of paper on the wall for others and the facilitator to review and discuss as they take a gallery walk. This activity will take 15 minutes. The remaining 45 minutes

will be utilized to review the Role of the Mentor in the Relationship vs. the Role of the Mentee in the Relationship

11:10AM-11:45AM (35 Minutes)

- ❑ After the gallery walk, the facilitator will transition into discussing the role of a mentor.
- ❑ Next, the role of a mentee and the many phases of the relationship will be shared.
- ❑ Formal and informal mentoring relationships will be defined.
- ❑ Lastly, participants will be able to form and ask content related questions.
- ❑ Materials Needed
 - Projector
 - Laptop
 - Session Handouts

Session 2 Activity- SheRo/HeRo

11: 40AM to 12:10PM (1 Hour)

- ❑ Participants will use the provided handout to complete this activity. This activity will have participants examine a past, current, or desired mentor. This activity will assist participants as they reflect on their own mentorship experience to better understand the impact of relationships such as this. Additionally, the facilitator will model by sharing their experience to ensure participants know what the expected outcome should look like. Participants will be able to share out if they desire to do so.
- ❑ Materials Needed
 - SheRo/HeRo handout
 - Pens/Pencils

SheRo /HeRo You Activity**Name:****Date:**

Directions- You've had mentors in the past and possibly didn't realize it at the time. This activity allows you to reflect on your life to identify past mentors and give thought to what characteristics each person possessed that helped establish a mentoring relationship and what behaviors you exhibited in that developed mentoring relationship. Think back about this and remember those individuals who had an important impact on your life. Some relationships may have included individuals such as teachers, coaches, counselors, friends, relatives, supervisors, and co-workers. Complete the table below to get a better idea of how your personal development has been enhanced by these individuals/mentors.

Mentors Name	How mentor helped me	Characteristics my mentor possessed that helped me

Day 2 : Mentor/Mentee Relationship Facilitator Notes

Mentor Relationship Roles: Informal and Formal:

- ❑ **Informal relationships** are more spontaneous and formed externally with less structure. These relationships are also not often managed as well. In most cases, these mentors seek proteges that remind them of the younger version of themselves (Birkeland et al., 2019).
- ❑ **Formal relationships** in contrast to informal ones are more structured. These relationships are strategically formed. Mentors create goals and focus on them until they are met. Once goals are met, the relationship usually concludes (Birkeland et al., 2019).

Mentee relationship roles (Lane, 2019):

- ❑ Mentees are recipients of additional guidance and growth in a variety of needed areas(Lane, 2019).
- ❑ Mentees are expected to effectively transition through the four phases of the relationship (Beltman et al., 2020).
- ❑ Mentees should ask their mentors questions, gain feedback, and be accountable.
- ❑ Mentees should be flexible and -open to change/growth.
- ❑ Mentees should commit both to their mentor and the overall process.

Four Phases of the mentee relationship (Kram, 1983):

- ❑ **Initiation-** relationship occurs during the first 6 to 12 months. During this phase, the protege admires and respects the Mentors knowledge and welcomes their additional support.
- ❑ **Cultivation-** lasts two to five years. During this stage, the protege will challenge the mentor relationship and both the mentor/ mentee start to identify the value of relating to each other as they grow.
- ❑ **Separation-** takes place from two months to two years. During this time, in the mentor-mentee relationship both experience a significant change in the emotional connection of the relationship.
- ❑ **Redefinition phases-** the mentor-mentee relationship characteristics transition more into a friendship and the initial relationship comes to an end.

References

- Birkeland, K. F., Davies, T. L., & Heard, C. A. (2019). College Mentoring 101: Student Preferences and Needs. *College Student Journal*, 3, 315.
- Lane, S. R. (2020). Addressing the Stressful First Year in College: Could Peer Mentoring Be a Critical Strategy? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 22(3), 481–496.
- Kram, K. E. (1983). Phases of the Mentor Relationship. *Academy of Management Journal*, 26(4), 608–625. <https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.2307/255910>

Lunch/Bathroom-

12:15PM to 1:00PM (45 Minutes)

Lunch will also be offered to participants during this time as well. Lunch will be hosted by university dining services in the conference center foyer and is contingent upon budget approval from the university.

Transition- Participants will be transitioned into the afternoon session, Peer Mentoring.



Session 3-Peer Mentoring

1:00PM to 1:45AM (45 Minutes see facilitator notes below)

- The facilitator will define peer mentoring.
- The facilitator will introduce peer mentoring pros and cons.
- The importance of utilizing peer mentoring programming.
- The facilitator will speak about how to implement peer mentoring and first generation African American college students.

(Peer mentoring pros and cons handout will be provided to participants during the session for them to follow along or review on their own)

1:45PM to 3:45PM (2 Hours)

Session 3 Activity- Mentoring Program Implementation

- ❑ The facilitator will have participants get into their groups and create a mentoring program component that will be required to be included in the first generation program proposal. Participants should reflect on the information provided from the three sessions provided and utilize the information to develop the requested mentoring component required for the proposal.
- ❑ Participants will have 2 hours to complete
- ❑ Materials Needed
 - Laptop
 - First Generation Program Proposal Template
 - Pens/Pencils

3:45PM to 4:00PM (15 Minutes) Day 2, closing remarks and survey (See Formative/Summative Evaluation below).

Peer Mentoring Pros vs. Cons

Peer Mentoring Pros	Peer Mentoring Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="357 525 852 556">❑ Levels of confidence may increase <li data-bbox="357 598 852 777">❑ Peer mentor-mentee relationships could be beneficial when barriers arise <li data-bbox="357 819 755 850">❑ Impactful decision making <li data-bbox="357 892 755 924">❑ Providing honest feedback <li data-bbox="357 966 852 1144">❑ Peer mentor-mentee relationships could last beyond the expected duration <li data-bbox="357 1186 852 1291">❑ Peer mentors could gain additional mentoring experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="925 525 1404 630">❑ High levels of dependency from mentees <li data-bbox="925 672 1364 777">❑ Lack of adequate peer mentor training <li data-bbox="925 819 1380 997">❑ Mentees could be inappropriately/unfairly treated by peer mentors <li data-bbox="925 1039 1396 1144">❑ Peer mentors and mentees could possibly be matched incorrectly <li data-bbox="925 1186 1404 1291">❑ Peer mentors could feel a lack of control when guiding the mentee <li data-bbox="925 1333 1364 1585">❑ Peer mentors can experience moments of disappointment when mentee expectations are not met.

(Andrade et al., 2020)

Day 2: Peer Mentoring Facilitator Notes

Peer Mentoring is defined as:

- ❑ Peer Mentorship-a relationship that involves an individual who is experienced mentors/guides another individual who has less experience. An example of this would be when a more experienced student mentors a student with less experience also referred to as peer mentoring (Andrade et al., 2020).

Peer mentoring pros (Andrade et al., 2020):

- ❑ Levels of confidence may increase
- ❑ Peer mentor-mentee relationships could be beneficial when barriers arise
- ❑ Impactful decision making
- ❑ Providing honest feedback
- ❑ Peer mentor-mentee relationships could last beyond the expected duration
- ❑ Peer mentors could gain additional mentoring experience

Peer mentoring cons:

- ❑ High levels of dependency from mentees
- ❑ Lack of adequate peer mentor training
- ❑ Mentees could be inappropriately/unfairly treated by peer mentors
- ❑ Peer mentors and mentees could possibly be matched incorrectly
- ❑ Peer mentors could feel a lack of control when guiding the mentee

- ❑ Peer mentors can experience moments of disappointment when mentee expectations are not met.

Implementing peer mentoring opportunities on the collegiate level could be very beneficial. Peer mentoring programs could provide opportunities for peer mentors to share their experiences with first-year college students. Shared experiences from peer mentors could bring forth strategies to less experienced students on how to overcome perceived barriers that prevent degree completion among first-generation African American college students. Peer mentors could also provide additional guidance/assistance with academic, social-emotional, or personal challenges as well (James, 2019). Moreover, providing peer mentoring during summer bridge is the ideal time as it will assist participants during their first-year transition into college

Concluding Discussion

- ❑ In summarizing this session, participants will be asked to reflect on the following quote. “ there is a much better chance of learning from someone in the next classroom than from someone 20 miles away ” (Reynolds, 2003). Prior to closing the session, participants will be encouraged to share their reflections.

References

Andrade, C., Alves, P., Fernandes, J. E., & Coutinho, F. (2020). A web platform to support mentoring programs in higher education. *2020 15th Iberian Conference on Information Systems and Technologies (CISTI), Information Systems and*

Technologies (CISTI), 2020 15th Iberian Conference On, 1–6.

<https://doiorg.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.23919/CISTI49556.2020.9140982>

Day 3: Goal Setting and Planning**Professional Development Registration****8:00AM-8:30AM- 30 Minutes**

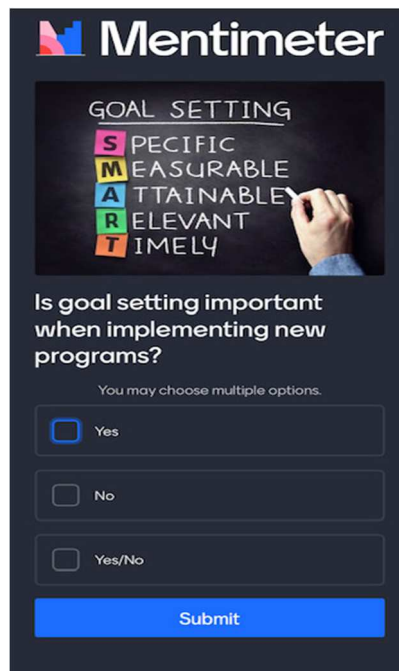
- ❑ Participants will register in the conference center foyer, pick up essential information, additional training tangibles, and ask questions as needed.
- ❑ Continental Breakfast will also be offered to participants during this time as well. Breakfast will be hosted by university dining services in the conference center foyer and is contingent upon budget approval from the university.
- ❑ Session goals, purpose, and expected learning outcomes will be shared with participants (see below).

Transition- the facilitator will transition participants from registration and breakfast to day three session.

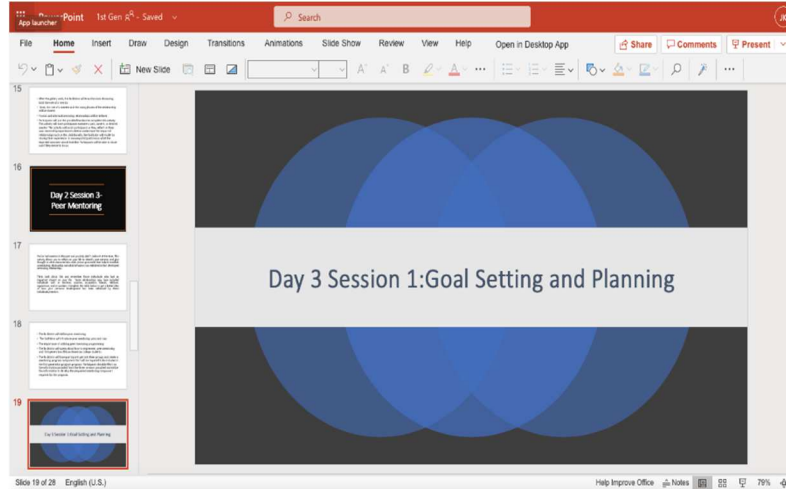
Icebreaker-Mentimeter**8:30AM- 8:45AM - 15 Minutes**

- ❑ Participants will be asked to go to [mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com), a live polling tool, to reply to this multiple-choice question. Is goal setting and planning important when implementing new programming for one specific cohort of students? Multiple choice responses include yes, no, somewhat. 5 min will be allotted for this portion of the icebreaker.

- ❑ The facilitator will review the response on the projector out loud and discuss each multiple choice response and transition into the session material. This portion of the icebreaker will take about ten minutes.
- ❑ Materials Needed
 - Participants will need to utilize technology (cell phone, iPad, or laptop) to enter the code 253545 and participate in the word cloud icebreaker.



The image shows a Mentimeter poll interface. At the top, the Mentimeter logo is displayed. Below it, a chalkboard graphic contains the text "GOAL SETTING" and the SMART acronym: "S PECIFIC", "M EASURABLE", "A TTAINABLE", "R ELEVANT", and "T IMELY". A hand is shown writing the word "SMART" on the chalkboard. Below the chalkboard, the poll question is: "Is goal setting important when implementing new programs?". Underneath the question, it says "You may choose multiple options." and there are three radio button options: "Yes", "No", and "Yes/No". At the bottom, there is a blue "Submit" button.



Session 1- Goal Setting and Planning

8:45AM- 9:45AM (1 Hour see facilitator notes below)

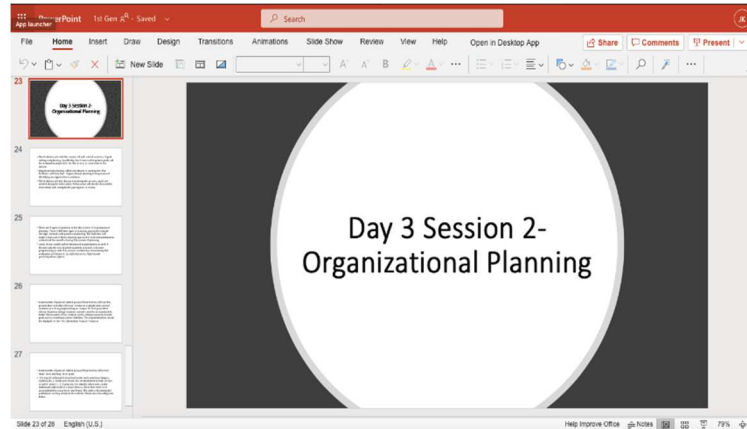
- ❑ The facilitator will start the session off with this quote, “Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success.”-Pablo Picasso.
- ❑ Once this quote has been read the facilitator will ask participants to share out their thoughts. Once share outs have been completed the facilitator will go into the importance of goal setting and planning.
- ❑ In addition, the facilitator will define both goal setting and planning. More in-depth information will also be provided for both goal setting and planning. Short-term and long-term goals will also be introduced and discussed. Examples of both

will be shared and participants will have the opportunity to review examples and examine any existing questions that may arise while learning.

Session 1 Activity- Jim Rohn Goal Setting Workshop Part 1**9:45AM- 10:30 (45 Minutes)**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CO7ybUb1n7o>)

- The video will guide participants on what to write down. The professional development facilitator will close this session by having participants reflect on their responses from video.
- Materials Needed:
 - Projector
 - Notebook Paper
 - Pens/Pencils

Transition- the facilitator will transition participants into a 10 minute break and from session 1 activity into session 2, Organizational planning.



Day 3: Goal Setting Planning Facilitator Notes

Goal Setting and planning are defined as:

- ❑ **Goal Setting-** is the act of developing a plan that guides and motivates individuals towards a goal (Kautto et al., 2018).
- ❑ **Planning-** is the process of mapping out the steps needed to achieve desired goals (Kautto et al., 2018).
- ❑ **Short-term goals-** are goals that can be completed/accomplished within the same day, a week, a month, or a year (Dobronyi et al., 2020). An example of this, would be the first generation African American college student planning to obtain an honor roll by the end of the semester.
- ❑ **Long-term goals-** goals that are completed/accomplished in the future. These goals consist of planning over time and are usually not met within a year, month, week, or day. These goals are often accomplished over the span of several years (Dobronyi et al., 2020). An example of this would be a first generation African

American college student aiming to graduate with a bachelor's degree in four years.

References

- Kautto, N., Trundle, A., & McEvoy, D. (2018). Climate Adaptation Planning in the Higher Education Sector. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 19(7), 1259–1278.
- Dobronyi, C. R., Oreopoulos, P., & Petronijevic, U. (2019). Goal setting, academic reminders, and college success: A large-scale field experiment. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 12(1), 38-66.

Session 2-Organizational Planning

10:40AM- 11:30AM (45 Minutes see facilitator notes below)

- Materials Needed
 - Projector
 - Laptop
 - Session Handouts
- The facilitator will start this session off with a summary of goal setting and planning. Specifically, short-term, and long-term goals will be reviewed in preparation for the activity to come later in the session.
- Organizational planning will be introduced to participants. The facilitator will state that Organizational planning is the process of identifying an organization's existence.

- The facilitator will also discuss that during this process, goals are created alongside action plans. Action plans will also be discussed in more detail with examples for participants to review.
- There are 3 types of planning within the process of organizational planning. These 3 different types of planning approaches include strategic, tactical, and operational planning. The facilitator will explore each one of these planning approaches to ensure participants understand the benefit of using this process of planning.

Lastly, lesson studies will be introduced to participants as well. A lesson study exists to examine academic practices to include programming as well. This process involves four steps during the evaluation: *(1) Research, (2) reflect/process, (3) formulate goals/objectives (4)plan*. Communities of practice (tabled groups/departments) will use this process later on in the afternoon session to evaluate what current academic practices/programming on campus for first generation African American college students currently need to be examined to better fit the needs of the students and to achieve university holistic goals such as increasing school retention. This implementation should be displayed in the First Generation Program Proposal.

Day 3: Organizational Planning Facilitator Notes

Organizational planning is defined as:

- ❑ **Organizational planning-** the process of acknowledging an organization's existence and includes goal setting and the development of plans (Durksen & Lee, 2018).

Organizational planning consists of three different types of planning approaches which include strategic, tactical, and operational (Durksen & Lee, 2018).

- ❑ **Strategic planning -** involves higher-level leaders developing organizational goals through a holistic lens. While planning, higher-level leaders investigate organizational strengths and weaknesses, potential barriers, and analyze competitors (Ahmad et al., 2020). This could benefit first generation African American college students as universities aim to ensure they are aware of program strengths/weaknesses, needed changes, and potential barriers.
- ❑ **Tactical planning-** includes lower-level leadership once higher-level leaders develop holistic university-wide goals lower-level leaders map out a short-term implementation blueprint for achieving goals (Dobronyi et al., 2020). This could be beneficial as universities set short-term goals for first generation African American college students.
- ❑ **Operational planning-** includes an implementation team but is not limited to specific departments, individuals, learning communities, or workgroups. This team plays a crucial role in carrying out organizational goals and obtaining

expected success (Latham & Locke, 2018). Groups such as implementation teams could assist in creating university goals that aim to support first-generation African American college students and future programs that promote success.

- The facilitator will also discuss that during this process, goals are created alongside action plans. Action plans will also be discussed in more detail with examples for participants to review.

Communities in practice- When learners deepen their understanding on a specific topic of concern. Within communities in practice, participants share best practices, build relationships, and create solutions. Communities of practice enhance academic practices and provide additional support to both tenured and newly hired university instructors/faculty (Appelgate et al., 2019). Another added benefit is that communities in practice could also increase university retention as it pertains to first generation African American college students.

Lesson studies - exist to examine academic practices and provide additional support through the utilization of professional development for instructional improvement (Appelgate et al., 2019). A lesson study consists of four parts/steps, (1) research, (2) reflect/process, (3) formulate goals/objectives (4) plan (Appelgate et al., 2019).

- **Research-** continued research and awareness of first generation African American college students is essential to understanding the overall dynamic of this cohort (Appelgate et al., 2019).

- ❑ **Reflect/process-** Reviewing research and reflecting on continued awareness is essential in meeting the needs of first generation African American college students as universities aim to assist these students to overcome barriers and obtain success and degree completion (Appelgate et al., 2019).
- ❑ **Formulate goals/objectives-** goal setting and program objectives are important as new approaches, best practices, and strategies are utilized to develop new programming that will assist first generation African American college students to be more successful in the future (Appelgate et al., 2019).
- ❑ **Plan-**developing a plan is vital to the success of first generation African American college students. This plan should be conducive to the needs of these students and should involve some type of evaluation tool/system that will gain the insight of participants to ensure evident and newly surfaced needs can be met and success can be gained. Planning could also give insight into what barriers could arise/be limited (Appelgate et al., 2019).

Concluding Discussion

- ❑ In summarizing this session, participants will gather into their communities of practice which were previously assigned and continue working on their first generation program proposal. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback from the facilitator.

References

Ahmad, A. R., Ming, T. Z., & Sapry, H. R. M. (2020). Effective Strategy for Succession

Planning in Higher Education Institutions. *Journal of Education and E-Learning Research*, 7(2), 203–208.

Soto, M., Gupta, D., Dick, L., & Appelgate, M. (2019). Bridging Distances: Professional Development for Higher Education Faculty through Technology-Facilitated Lesson Study. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 16(3).

Dobronyi, C. R., Oreopoulos, P., & Petronijevic, U. (2019). Goal setting, academic reminders, and college success: A large-scale field experiment. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 12(1), 38-66.

Lee, J., & Durksen, T. L. (2018). Dimensions of Academic Interest among Undergraduate Students: Passion, Confidence, Aspiration and Self-Expression. *Educational Psychology*, 38(2), 120–138.

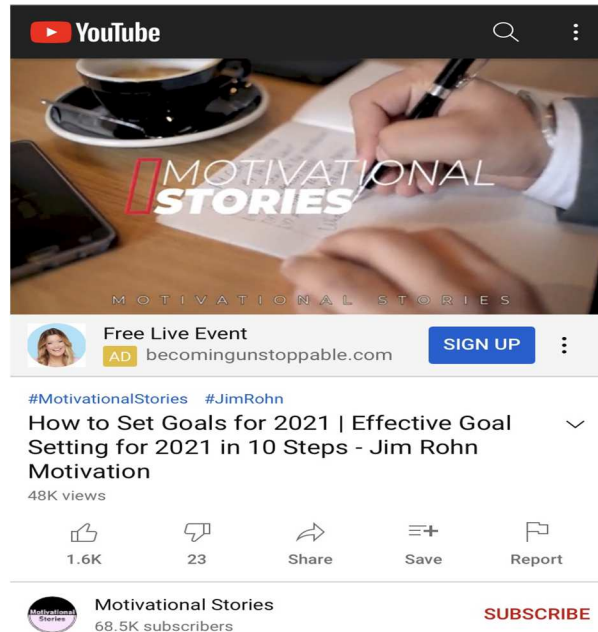
Latham, G. P., & Locke, E. A. (2018). Goal setting theory: Controversies and resolutions.

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Session 2 Activity- Jim Rohn Goal Setting Workshop Part 2

11:30AM to 12:15PM (45 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqgK5OhYxP0>



- ❑ Communities of practice (tabled groups/departments) will create short- term and long- term goals.
- ❑ 3 to 6 goals will need to be placed under each question/category. Additionally, a timeframe should also be distributed to each section as well in years (1, 2, 3 years etc.) to identify which ones can be realistically achievable in a short-term vs. those that need to be accomplished in a long-term time frame. The video will assist/guide participants as they complete this activity. Please view the categories below:

- What kind of program do we want?
- What do we want our program to be?
- What do we want to see in our program?
- What do we want to have in our program?
- Where do we want our program to go?
- Materials Needed
 - Projector
 - Notebook Paper
 - Pens/Pencils

Lunch/Bathroom- 12:15PM to 1:00PM (45 Minutes) lunch will also be offered to participants during this time as well. Lunch will be hosted by university dining services in the conference center foyer and is contingent upon budget approval from the university.

Transition- Participants will be transitioned into the afternoon session, First Generation Program Proposal Planning and Goal Setting.

Final Session Activity- First Generation Program Proposal Planning, Goal Setting, and Presentations

1:00PM to 3:00PM (2 Hours) Presentation Hour 3:00PM to 4:00PM (1 Hour)

- Participants will be in their communities of practice and will continue working on their first generation Program proposal. At this time, groups/departments will merge all moving parts of their proposal into one program for final changes,

review, and submission. Department leads will later meet with their team or specific department to implement first generation program ideas to better support their projected first generation African American college students in their department/school only. Groups will utilize the previously provided template and continue adding to the document. Groups will have 5 to 10 minutes to present their first generation program proposals. All presentations will be facilitated during the allotted time for presentations which will be one hour.

❑ Materials Needed

- Laptop
- Notebook Paper
- Pens/Pencils
- First generation program proposal template/outline

4:00PM to 4:15PM (15 Minutes) closing of day 3, final remarks and survey (See Formative/Summative Evaluation below)

Professional Development Series Conclusion/Closing Remarks

Facilitator will thank participants for attending the 3 day professional development series. The facilitator will ensure all evaluations are collected/submitted. She will also give participants the opportunity to ask any final questions. Lastly, the facilitator will provide her contact information for participants who may need to reach out for additional comments, suggestions, or questions. Her contact information will be placed on the projector for participants. Email: kimbry.jordan@waldenu.edu and phone:202-643-7109.

Appendix A: Professional Development Series Timelines and Agendas

Day 1: Pre-Session, Awareness, & Summer Bridge Pre-Exposure Programming

Professional Development Series: *Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting universities to support First Generation African American College Students*

❑ Target Audience	→ University faculty, department leaders, partners/stakeholders.
❑ Setting	→ University Conference Center
❑ Purpose	→ The purpose of this professional development is to provide awareness to university faculty/stakeholders about first generation African American college students and the perceived barriers that prevent degree completion.
❑ Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → University faculty and stakeholders will be able to identify the characteristics of first generation African American college students as they enroll into the university. → University faculty and stakeholders will be able to define summer bridge programming and know the components of the program.
❑ Learning Outcomes	→ University faculty stakeholders will be able to effectively remove personal bias and assist first generation African American college students overcome the perceived barriers that prevent degree completion.
❑ Activities /Allotted Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 8:00AM-8:30AM- Professional Development Registration Pre-Session-Professional Development Introduction -<i>Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting universities to support First Generation African American College Students</i> Session 1- Who are First Generation African American College Students Session 2- Summer Bridge Programming → 8:30AM- 8:45AM - 15 Minutes Icebreaker "I Do You Do" → 8:45AM to 9:45AM (1 Hour) Pre-Session-Professional Development Groundwork/Background Information → 9:30AM to 9:45AM (15 Minutes) Pre-Session Activity Parking Lot → 10:00AM to 11:00AM (1 Hour) Session 1- "<i>Who are First Generation African American College Students</i>" → 11:00AM-12:15PM (1 Hour 15 Minutes) Session 1 Activity- Discovering the Narrative of African American First Generation College Students → Lunch/Bathroom- 12:15PM to 1:00PM (45 Minutes) → Session 2- Pre- Exposure Programming Summer Bridge → 1:00PM to 1:15PM (15 Minutes) Icebreaker -University Bingo → 1:15PM to 2:00PM (45 Minutes) → 2:20PM to 3:30PM (1 Hour 15 Minutes) Session 2 Activity - First generation program proposal → 3:30PM to 4:00PM (30 Minutes) → Closing of day 1, Reflection and Survey
❑ Evaluation	→ 3:30PM- 4:00PM Formative/ Summative Evaluations & Closing Remarks
❑ Needed Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Laptop → Notebook Paper → Pens/Pencils/Markers → Huge post-it papers and stickies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Session handouts→ First generation program proposal template/outline
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Day 2: Mentoring

Professional Development Series: *Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting universities to support First Generation African American College Students*

❑ Target Audience	→ University faculty, department leaders, partners/stakeholders.
❑ Setting	→ University Conference Center
❑ Purpose	→ The purpose of this professional development is to provide awareness to university faculty/stakeholders about mentoring and its impact on first generation African American college students and its potential to decrease the universities retention rate among first generation African American college students.
❑ Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → University faculty and stakeholders will be able to define mentorship, identify both the mentor/mentee relationship, and peer mentoring. → University faculty and stakeholders will be able to understand how mentor relationships can assist first generation African American college students cope and overcome encountered barriers and achieve goals. → University faculty and stakeholders will understand how mentorship programs expose students, encourage experiential learning, and provide additional student support.
❑ Learning Outcomes	→ University faculty stakeholders will be able to effectively know the essential components needed to implement an effective mentoring program/initiative to impact student success such as overcoming barriers and degree completion.
❑ Activities /Allotted Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 8:00AM-8:30AM- Professional Development Registration Pre-Session-Professional Development Introduction -<i>Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting universities to support First Generation African American College Students</i> Session 1- Mentoring Session 2- The Role of the Mentor in the Relationship vs. The Role of the Mentee in the Relationship Session 3- Peer Mentoring → 8:30AM- 8:45AM – (15 Minutes) Icebreaker -Mentimeter → 8:45AM to 9:45AM (45 Minutes) Session 1-Mentorship → 9:55AM to 11:10AM (1 Hour) Session 2- The Role of the Mentor in the Relationship vs. The Role of the Mentee in the Relationship → 11:10AM-12:10PM (1 Hour 35 Minutes) Session 2 Activity- SheRo/HeRo → Lunch/Bathroom- 12:15PM to 1:00PM (45 Minutes) → 1:00PM to 1:45PM (45 Minutes) Session 3-Peer Mentoring → 1:45PM to 3:30PM (45 Minutes) Session 3 Activity- Mentoring Program Planning
❑ Evaluation	→ 3:30PM- 4:00PM Formative/ Summative Evaluations & Closing Remarks
❑ Needed Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Laptop → Notebook Paper → Pens/Pencils/Markers → Huge post-it papers and stickies → Session handouts

	→ First generation program proposal template/outline
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Day 3: Goal Setting & Planning

Professional Development Series: *Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting universities to support First Generation African American College Students*

<input type="checkbox"/> Target Audience	→ University faculty, department head leaders, partners/stakeholders.
<input type="checkbox"/> Setting	→ University Conference Center
<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose	→ The purpose of this professional development is to provide awareness to university faculty/stakeholders about the importance of goal setting and planning for first generation African American college students.
<input type="checkbox"/> Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → University faculty and stakeholders will be able to define goal setting and learn about additional components of goal setting/planning. → University faculty and stakeholders will define organizational planning and learn how to implement it into programming.
<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Outcomes	→ University faculty stakeholders will be able to effectively plan and implement programming specifically designed for first generation African American college students that promotes student success and increases university retention.
<input type="checkbox"/> Activities /Allotted Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 8:00AM-8:30AM- Professional Development Registration Pre-Session-Professional Development Introduction -<i>Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion: Assisting universities to support First Generation African American College Students</i> Session 1- Who are First Generation African American College Students Session 2- Summer Bridge Programming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 8:30AM- 8:45AM - 15 Minutes Icebreaker → 8:45AM to 9:45AM (1 Hour) Session 1- Goal Setting and Planning → 9:45AM to 10:30AM (45 Minutes) Session 1 Activity- Jim Rohn Goal Setting Workshop Part 1 → 10:40AM- 11:30AM (45 Minutes) Session 2- Organizational Planning → 11:30AM- 12:15PM (45 Minutes) Session 2 Activity- Jim Rohn Goal Setting Workshop Part 2 → Lunch/Bathroom- 12:15PM to 1:00PM (45 Minutes) → 1:00PM to 4:00PM (3 Hours) Final Session Activity- First Generation Program Proposal Planning and Goal Setting
<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation	→ 3:30PM- 4:00PM Formative/ Summative Evaluations & Closing Remarks
<input type="checkbox"/> Needed Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Laptop → Notebook Paper → Pens/Pencils/Markers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Huge post-it papers and stickies→ Session handouts→ First generation program proposal template/outline
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Day 1 Feedback Evaluation (Summative)

Professional Development Series : Impeding Barriers Towards Degree Completion:
Assisting universities to support First Generation African American College Students

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements listed below in #1-11.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Participation and interaction were encouraged.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The topics covered were relevant to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The content was organized and easy to follow.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The materials distributed were helpful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. This training experience will be useful in my work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The trainer was knowledgeable about the training topics.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. The trainer was well prepared.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. The training objectives were met.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. The time allotted for the training was sufficient.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. The meeting room and facilities were adequate and comfortable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Day 2 Feedback Evaluation (Formative)

Examine Your Learning

Directions: please provide 2 things you have learned from today's sessions on the left side of this chart in every box. On the opposite (right side) please indicate some areas you need additional clarity on.

<p style="text-align: center;">Mentorship</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mentorship</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Mentor Role vs. Mentee Role</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mentor Role vs. Mentee Role</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Peer Mentoring</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Peer Mentoring</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>

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What You Know

What You Need to Know More of

Day 3 Feedback Evaluation (Summative)**Express Your Feedback**

Directions: please provide your feedback in the form of a short answer. Please share your experience so that future professional developments can be both effective and informative.

- 1. What did you like most about this session?**

- 2. What aspects of this session could be improved?**

- 3. How do you hope to change your practice as a result of this session/professional development?**

- 4. What additional adult trainings would you like to have in the future?**

- 5. Please provide any additional information you would like to share**

Thank you for your feedback!

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Students

Once again, I would like to thank you for participating in this study. Your experiences will add a plethora of insight to the necessary support needed to better assist first generation African American college students overcome perceived barriers while seeking degree completion. Remember, this one-on-one semi-structured interview will be recorded and will last anywhere between 30-40 minutes. Lastly, if you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview and would like to stop please do not hesitate to do so. Do you have any questions before we begin? If not, we will move forward with the interview questions about your perceived barriers you have experienced as a first generation African American college student.

Describe your prior educational experience.

Did you have any pre-college programming, exposure such as college tours, or knowledge about college prior to attending?

What means of support did you have during the college application process?

Why did you select this higher institution?

2. Describe your transition to college.

Did you feel you were adequately prepared for college?

What university resources were provided upon transitioning into college?

Were you admitted on any conditional bases such as needing mandatory summer programming prior to attending college or remedial academic courses during the first semester?

3. Describe your first-year experience.

How was your first year of college as a first generation Africa American student?

What barriers have you encountered during your first year? Please provide examples.

As you reflect, could you have prevented any of the barriers?

What school resources/supports could have assisted you as you experienced difficulties?

What role did/has your family played? Have they been supportive?

4. Describe your collegiate experience thus far.

Have university faculty/stakeholders been supportive? If yes, how? If not, please explain?

When barriers are encountered, how do you motivate yourself to continue moving forward?

What suggestions could you offer to ensure the success of future first generation African American College students in the future?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Faculty Members

Once again, I would like to thank you for participating in this study. Your experiences will add a plethora of insight to the necessary support needed to better assist first generation African American college students overcome perceived barriers while seeking degree completion. Remember, this one-on-one semi-structured interview will be recorded and will last anywhere between 30-40 minutes. Lastly, if you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview and would like to stop please do not hesitate to do so. Do you have any questions before we begin? If not, we will move forward with the interview questions about your how you think how this university provides support to first generation African American college students.

1. Describe your role with the university.

- a. What position do you currently hold with the university?
- b. How long have you been with the university?
- c. What professional experiences have you had?

2. Describe your interaction with first generation African American college students.

- a. How many first generation African American students make your class population?
- b. What barriers do you believe this group of students encounter?
- c. What supports/resources do the university offer to these students?
- d. What supports/resources do you offer to these students? Please provide examples.

3. Describe additional resources needed to support first generation African American college students.

- a. What suggestions could you offer to ensure the success of future first generation African American College students in the future?
- a. Do faculty /stakeholders have any input as to what resources should be provided for this cohort of students?
- b. Will there be any opportunities to develop new courses or workshops centered around first generation African American college students in the future with this university?

Appendix D: Student Participant Eligibility Survey

(Please circle yes/no to the following questions)

- 1. Are you an African American?** (yes/no)
- 2. Are you first in your family to attend a college/university?** (yes/no)
- 3. Are you between the ages of 18 and 25?** (yes/no)
- 4. Are you currently enrolled at the selected four-year research site/institution ?** (yes/no)
- 5. Have you experienced barriers while attending the selected four-year research site/institution?** (yes/no)

Appendix E: Faculty Participant Eligibility Survey

(Please circle yes/no to the following questions)

Do you have any experience working with first generation African American college students? (yes/no)

Are you currently employed with the selected four-year research site/institution? (yes/no)

3. Do you work directly with the upward bound, first year experience, or trio program? (yes/no)

4. Do you provide services to first generation African American students?
(yes/no)