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Mentoring and Retention of First Year College Students at Brown Community College

Valrey Dawn Francis
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Education

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Valrey Francis

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Review Committee

Dr. Christian Teeter, Committee Chair, Education Faculty

Dr. Cheryl Bullock, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Amy Gaskins, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2019

Abstract

Mentoring and Retention of First Year College Students at Brown Community College

by

Valrey Francis

MS, Florida International University, 1996

BS, Trinity International University, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

April, 2019

Abstract

Retention of first year college students has been problematic in many U.S. colleges, and different mentoring frameworks have been explored to help resolve the issue. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to examine how the mentoring program at Brown Community College (BCC; pseudonym) positively increased retention of first year college students. BCC is a community college located in a metropolitan urban area in a southern state. Tinto's model of social integration and academic success was used to undergird the study. Research questions were developed to understand how BCC's mentoring program was supporting first year students' retention and what these students perceived as integral in order to persist throughout their program of study. Another question sought the faculty's perceptions of how their mentoring program influenced retention at the college. Data collection included structured face-to-face interviews with a purposeful sample of 10 first year college students and two faculty mentors who provided mentorship at BCC. Content analyses were used to identify and isolate the themes through axial coding. The results showed that mentoring may be the catalyst needed to ensure that students stay in college and increase retention and graduation rates. The findings provide useful data for developing curriculum policies that may improve service delivery opportunities for at-risk students. The findings also showed that having qualified college graduates may increase productivity in the workforce and help the college graduates become more successful citizens. Recommendations are offered to improve the existing mentoring program to enable the students to experience social changes in their pursuit of academic success.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to God who brought me through this journey when many times I felt like quitting, but He gave me the will-power to continue to its completion. He provided me with supportive family members who stayed on the journey with me. Therefore, I dedicate this study to my parents, Astley and Gertrude Ramsay who often asked, "How are you coming along with your studies?"

In memory of my dear sister, Dr. Marvel Ramsay! I think of the times when she said, "Sissy, you can do it!" She did not live to see me graduate but she will hear all about it in the Kingdom. Thanks to her children, Dr. Kahilah Whyte (spouse, Pastor Jovan Whyte) and Kellon who cheered me on with their Mom. I appreciate my brother, Dr. Raymond Ramsay and his wife, Merna for their support. Thanks to Elrado, my brother for editing certain parts of the study. My appreciation extends to my brother-in-law, Dr. Anthon Francis, and his wife Nalda, for doing some editing, and giving me suggestions about the study. Thanks to my dear husband, Dr. Creaton Francis, who over the years has encouraged me to shoot for the stars and go for the doctorate degree. I appreciate his wisdom all the way through this journey. Last but not least, I am indeed grateful to my two children, Corey and Coretta with their spouses and children who encouraged me not give up.

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Section 1: The Problem

First year students entering college after graduating from high school frequently face several problems once they are immersed in the college environment. They struggle to adjust to the learning environment and face difficulty with starting a new curriculum. The college pace is faster than high school, and the onus is placed on students to be more accountable for academic growth within this new environment. DiMaria (2016) reported that the transition from high school to college could overwhelm many first year students. Hence, they often undergo a stressful induction into their new environments (Fullick, Smith-Jentsch, & Cielzo, 2012). This stress is likely results from a struggle with new academic structures, classroom expectations, uncertainty, and exam performance pressures. Therefore, it is important that first year college students get help from their faculty mentors to acclimatize to the new college settings.

Another factor that compounds the new environmental challenges is the high cost of undergraduate education. Landry and Neubauer (2016) reported that the U.S. higher education financial structure has dramatically changed over the past 30 years, resulting in a significant reduction of public funding. One result is that the steadily increasing cost of tuition has shifted to students. Nevertheless, students want to pursue their education goals. Landry and Neubauer (2016) mentioned that students take out student loans to finance their education in order to persist in their education. Wright, Jenkins-Guarnieri, and Murdock (2012) believed that decisions about persistence play an integral role in career development goals. Mentoring at the student level typically focuses on the desired

outcomes including persistence, commitment to a field as major, and retention from year to year resulting to graduation (Baker, 2015; Davidson, Feldman, & Margalit, 2012).

Definition of the Problem

At an urban metropolitan community college campus in South Florida, the administrators have initiated a mentoring program for first year college students. The problem is that no research has been done to find out the success of the mentoring service relative to the retention of first year college students. Students across Florida continue to drop out of college frequently because they become frustrated and lose interest (DiMaria, 2016). Most college campuses are equipped with advisors to guide new students; however, they frequently drop out because they need one-to-one attention. DiMaria (2016) posited that at most colleges, the role of the academic advisor is limited to helping students choose those courses that will ultimately lead them to complete a degree. First year college students may need more than advisors to advise them. They need mentors to guide them through their first year experience to meet both their academic and social needs. According to Fullick, Smith-Jentsch, Yarbrough, and Scielzo (2012), when an academic institution “sponsors a formal mentoring program with the purpose of socializing students, it typically matches the new students with more experienced students. It also provides some sort of guidance regarding the expected frequency and goals of mentor-protégé meetings” (p. 60).

Students should feel comfortable in their educational environment but most students leaving high school take some time to settle down in their first year of college. Greenfield, Keup, and Gardner (2013) provided resources for researchers, educators, and

students related to the first year experience of college students. Some students may become stagnant if they do not interact with others and mobilize themselves. As Tinto (2014) noted, Newton's first law of motion holds that an object at rest, tends to remain at rest and an object in motion tends to stay in motion with the same speed in the same direction unless acted upon by an external force. When this law is analogized to first year college students, it is imperative that they gain and maintain momentum through completion.

Students' financial situations may have an effect on their enrollment. Revenues for college education are tied to students' enrollment, and when revenue is insufficient, first year college students are the most likely to be affected. Harkin (2013) argued that the federal government can help by encouraging states to innovate college programs for first year students. Therefore, it is of essence that funding college enrollment is given Federal support proportionate to college enrollment and funding demands to retain and maintain the level of enrollment for college freshmen. College enrollment programs are only as vibrant as the finances at their disposal.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

In this study, I focused on Brown Community College (BCC; pseudonym), which is located in a Southern Florida. The college's population reflects the socioeconomic and ethnic diversity of the area (Campus Explorer, 2015). The demographics consist of 33% Hispanics, 30% African-Americans, 29% Caucasians, 4%, Asians, and 4% other (Bigfuture, 2014). I selected BCC as the focus of this study based on my knowledge of

the mentoring program gained from communication with the directors of the mentoring program.

Reviewing data provided by American College Testing, Inc. (ACT), Adams (2013) found that despite significant efforts to increase student success, college-retention rates in recent years have remained virtually unchanged. Gardner (2014) asserted that the national conversation about college costs and outcomes have led to legislative rules that focus on retention rates at educational institutions. He further asserted that states provide public funds to support students' retention in higher learning. According to Gardner (2014), the State of Florida's support for higher education rose 5.7% from 2013 to 2014. Therefore, from a monetary standpoint, designing effective student mentoring programs for retention is of critical importance (Mertes & Jankovich, 2016).

Social and academic integration also play a significant role in influencing students' desire to stay in college (Bansal, 2013). Stephens and Beatty (2015) noted that social connectedness contributes to a sense of community as it involves strong, positive relationships in students' lives and provides a context in which they can discuss their own challenges and successes. Social and academic integration undergird the mentorship theory embedded within this study. Thus, my intent was to examine the success of the mentoring program at BCC. The mentoring program is effective in increasing retention and graduation rates among first year college students.

Evidence of the Problem in the Professional Literature

Carson and Reed (2015) mentioned that retaining students in college is a concern in the United States. Studies have shown that 50% of college freshmen do not finish

college. Morrow and Ackerman (2012) asserted that although college enrollment rates are increasing, it is growing more difficult to retain students annually. Percians and Masemola (2013) cited various factors that contribute to student dropout that may be student-related, school-related, family-related, and community-related, all of which have negative implications for these pupils.

Percians and Masemola (2013) explained these factors as follows:

- Student-related factors such as drug abuse, trouble with the law, and pregnancy are qualities students have independent of their demographics.
- School-related factors are those in the control of the school or school district.
- Family-related factors include socio-economic status, parental support, or whether one or both parents live in the home.
- Community-related factors include societal pressure, the impact of poverty, as well as environmental influences.

Wahesh, Milroy, Lewis, Orsini, and Wyrick (2013) postulated that in the United States, alcohol consumption by undergraduate students remains a significant public health issue on college campuses in the United States. Additionally, students who enter college may have a problem adjusting after leaving home and may get involved with other students who rely on drugs and alcohol to satisfy their needs. In other cases, school-related factors such as interaction with the school system may cause a problem for first year college students. Alarcon and Edwards (2012) asserted that students might drop out from college for personal motives such as lack of integration, dissatisfaction with a course or institution, lack of readiness, or incorrect choice of course. Additionally,

homesickness, that is a form of personal motive, may lead to a lack of preparedness at school or even a lack of integration at school. To enjoy college life, students must maintain a certain minimal social fit with the student body. Lack of social fit will lead to negative emotional tendencies causing students to either change the academic institution or even abandon it altogether. Lukosius, Pennington, and Olorunniwo (2013) recommended that social support systems originating in student organizations and peer relationships should provide leverage to offset any social vacuum at the institution. Similarly, Morrow and Ackerman (2012) highlighted academic difficulties of first year college students that contribute to students drop-out during or following their first year enrollment. Some of the difficulties relate to motivational attitude, adjustment problems of transitioning from high school to college, uncertain goals or feeling no sense of belonging, lack of commitment, inadequate finances to cover expenses, lack of student involvement in class curriculum, and a poor fit in the campus setting.

Turner and Thompson (2014) reported that first year college students who dropped out of school revealed four core themes that served as either an obstacle or an enabler that students faced transitioning into a college environment. The four themes were: freshmen focused activities, developing effective study skills, instructor-student relationship, and academic advisements-support. Institutions could benefit from constructing a social and academic transition into the college environment. A study by Campus Explorer (2015) pointed out that South Florida Community Colleges' graduation rate was 46.2% for the region; this means that more than half of the students are not completing their studies. These students may need a program to help them continue in

college with a degree of success, as evident in Wheeler's (2012) study of administrators at a university who set out to change low student retention numbers. The administrators initiated a student-led mentoring program that prevented 300 students from dropping out of college.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore how the mentoring service at BCC increased retention among first year college students and enabled them to persist in their education unto graduation. Fountain and Newcomer (2016) stated that within any organization, especially educational institutions, reciprocal learning relationships are characterized by trust, respect, and commitment that provide valuable support not only for the mentored faculty members as they develop their careers but also for other members of the university community, especially students.

Tanjula (2014) stated that institutions play an important role in motivating students by understanding intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate students to remain in college. College administrators should provide a range of programs to help students face their challenges and weaknesses. The experiences should provide academic and social pathways that assist first year college students to overcome inadequate preparation for college. Students need to see and feel creative methods that motivate them to persist through the first year of college to graduation. Snowden and Hardy (2013) mentioned that peer mentoring process between mentee and mentor, can have a positive impact upon the learning experience by improving engagement in the academic community. This kind of mentorship adds value to student outcomes.

Definitions

Throughout this study, I used the following operational definitions of key terms:

Attrition: Tinto (1975) described student attrition as the departure from or delay in successful completion of program requirements. He further stated that student attrition is “a longitudinal process of interactions between the individual and the academic and social systems of the college during which a person’s experiences in those systems...continually modify his goals and institutional commitments in ways which lead to persistence and/or to varying forms of dropout” (Tinto, 1975, p. 94).

Mentoring/mentors: The complex developmental process mentors use to support and guide students through the necessary transitions that are part of learning. In this study, *mentors* refer to advisors, coaches, teachers, and advocates.

Persistence/persisting: Staying in school until completing a degree or certificate program. If students do not resolve transition issues from secondary to post-secondary institutions in the first year, the likelihood of persisting in college is diminished. This affects future enrollments and graduation rates.

Significance of the Study

Completion of an Associates’ degree serves as a motivational factor for the growth of an individual and the community (Elliott, 2013). Elliott (2013) indicated that higher education is expected to contribute to the community by providing highly skilled and entrepreneurial graduates who will drive forward economic growth through their active participation in the acquisition of knowledge. According to Hout (2012), “A

college degree is beneficial for a host of reasons including the possibility of college graduates finding better jobs, earning more money, and suffering less unemployment than high school graduates do” (p. 380). The researcher identified pertinent data that further support any existing policies or innovations towards retention and attrition that will ultimately promote better employment opportunities for college graduates.

In this project, I focused on the readiness of students entering college immediately after high school. Alarcon and Edwards (2012) emphasized the importance for students to stay in school for economic reasons. From the school’s perspective, a student leaving the institution after the first year of college would indicate a waste of resources because there is no benefit to the student or school. This project has the potential to bring about positive change in students so that when they graduate, they will make a positive impact on our society. Some students may enter college after high school and get side-tracked, or lose their focus and become frustrated with college (Elliott, 2013). They may approach a college environment disengaged and aimless because they want to disengage from parental control. According to Bansal (2013), retention relates closely to persistence and attrition. Some experts agree that the number of advisor-advisee meetings may positively influence rates of student persistence and academic standing (Bansal, 2013).

Another positive social change includes the potential of mentoring programs to assist first year students in remaining in college until they graduate. The results of this study may be the catalyst needed to ensure students’ persistence and success. Using the findings from this study, I have developed recommendations that may improve service delivery opportunities for at-risk students. Bansal (2013) stated that institutions should

implement effective programs to increase the retention of students. There are strong links between students' informal social interaction and their learning since social networks can be sources of social and academic resources. Students' social relationships with other students enable them to move from the margins of belonging to achieve full membership in school life (Thomas & Hanson, 2014).

In this study, I sought to understand the extent to which mentoring of first year college students reduces the number of students who drop out of college. By setting up mentorship programs, colleges are able to give students assistance that reduces attrition and subsequently helps society and themselves. This research supports professional and educational practice in the sense that stakeholders have been exploring methods to avert student dropout. In this project, I examined one of the many methods to alleviate or minimize this problem.

Guiding/Research Questions

In this study of BCC's mentoring program for first year college students, I looked at the benefits of the program in the academic success rate of participants in the program. The following research questions were used to guide the study.

RQ1: How has the BCC's mentoring program supported first year college students with continuing in college?

RQ2: What do first year college students perceive as integral in a mentoring program to increase persistence until completion of their program of study?

RQ3: What are faculty mentors' perceptions of the impact of the mentoring program on retention?

Review of the Literature

Although the term *mentoring* emerges in the literature repeatedly, articles describing the process of mentoring are emerging steadily. Using databases such as SAGE, ERIC, and Education Research Complete, I searched for terms including *student mentoring*, *attrition*, *retention*, *mentoring models*, *mentoring theories*, *mentoring relationship*, *mentors and student academic performance*, *mentoring and funding*, and *college education policies*. There is an abundance of literature that defines or describes mentoring models and the theories that undergird them. For instance, Park, Newman, Zhang, Wu, and Hooke (2016) described mentoring as an interpersonal exchange between a mentor and a protégé. The mentor provides support, direction, and feedback to the protégé regarding personal development. Mentors have advanced experience and knowledge and commit to providing upward mobility and support to protégés. Weinstein (2016) mentioned that the term *mentoring* is used to refer to processes of coaching, collaborating, or consulting. Coaching implies a relationship that works one-to-one with the mentor assisting the mentee. Collaborating refers to a relationship that works for individuals who are equals. Consulting implies that the mentor has a status outside of the department or school when the mentee is employed. In the college context, a mentoring culture is an environment that enhances the possibility of growth through discussion of classroom activities.

Mentoring relationships have been shown to be beneficial to students' college experiences. Christie (2014) posited that uncritical acceptance of the beneficial effects of mentoring has led universities to devote more time and financial resources to mentoring programs. One such example is a program that was set up by a central university service to provide support for undergraduate students throughout their first year. This mentoring program was instituted to support new students to make the transition to university, to help them integrate into college, and to refer them to other sources of support when needed.

Researchers have mentioned that mentoring could be a stimulating factor that assists students in their first year of college to persist to graduation. Nolte, Bruce, and Becker (2015) indicated that even in helping doctoral students, the development of a community environment and strong mentoring relationships is integral in helping them complete their degrees. Students enter the college arena fresh out of high school feeling disengaged and fearful. They need guidance in their first year college experience. Bansal (2013) noted that institutions should work towards providing students with a meaningful learning environment to help them connect with the college, which will subsequently reduce the attrition rates for college students. Jakubik, Eliades, and Weese (2016) mentioned that mentoring emerged in the business world as an organizational phenomenon in the early 1980s, but today is seen as part of corporate culture and success. In the next section, I discuss some of the concerns that impact student retention in colleges and other higher education systems. The section also juxtaposes these concerns

with the need to find positive ways to help students adjust quickly on entering college and encourages them to stay until completion of their studies.

Student Retention

Student retention can be viewed as students staying in college until the completion of their programs. On the contrary, there are many students who drop out of college before completing their course of study. This seems to be a major concern universally, so more and more studies have been conducted to find strategies that colleges can use to increase retention. Visser and van Zyl (2013) reported that student retention and success in higher education systems and institutions are major concerns worldwide. College level students are generally less prepared for higher education and more at risk of dropping out or taking longer to complete their qualifications. Ravel (2014) stated that in an era saturated by news about university budget cuts, the dwindling future of tenure, and rising student debt, it seems that economic concerns are inseparable from the work done within institutions of higher learning. Several educational institutions are using the medium of research on student retention to help resolve budgetary crises.

O'Keefe (2013) posited that student attrition rates reach between 30% and 50% in the United States of America, and over 30% percent in Australia. The inability of higher education institutions to retain their students is a significant issue in these countries. The capacity students have to develop a sense of belonging in the institution is of paramount importance for retention. Colleges should provide positive ways for students to interact so that they can be support system for one another. For instance, Palmer, Maramba, and Dancy (2011) concluded that colleges of agriculture pressure institutions to develop ways

of helping students to adjust in college. One way to do this is through structured mentorship programs that are well-organized to meet the needs of the students.

Mentorship Frameworks

Colleges can offer various types of mentoring, but this depends on the type of mentoring administrators can offer to freshmen students. Nichol and Lockhart (2015) discussed the role mentorship in the development of the general practice (GP) specialist trainee. The elements of the medical leadership competency framework (MLCF) include learning through participation, demonstrating self-awareness, and continuing personal development. Other elements of the program include managing people and working with colleagues, and the opportunities available for GP trainees. Mentoring is a bridge that connects first year college students to not only the physical environment but to the content area of study. Wong and Ortega (2015) noted the need for mentoring new science teachers to develop skills to teach the content and language of science and academic English. Mentoring can help new teachers avoid didactic and lecture-based instruction for inquiry-based teaching, and strategies for developing a trusting relationship and dialogs with teachers.

Dimitriadis et al., (2012) offered a detailed analysis of the overall mentoring process among medical students and their faculty members. They used descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon-test to assess the difference between medical students with or without mentors. Demitriadis et al., concluded that mentoring relationships between students and faculty attest to high academic performance in the students' overall career development. Likewise, McGuire (2015) supported the idea that mentoring is a well-

established practice for helping individuals successfully negotiate new or unfamiliar territory.

Pearson (2012) presented evidence showing the value of creating mentor roles to support student retention. In an attempt to achieve this, it would seem appropriate if college students pass the final high school tests, they should not be required to complete college entrance examinations. This would allow first year college students a fair chance of continuing their education. Smith and Vitus Zagurski (2013) focused on providing information about a study that allowed colleges and universities to eliminate entrance examinations to give every student a fair chance to experience college education. Turner and Thompson (2014) examined the attitudes of U.S. first year college students from the millennial generation. Topics included college retention initiatives, and difficulties students faced in transitioning from high school. Whissemore (2014) stated that a small percentage of college students return to college after the second year despite some national initiatives and a push from the White House to increase college completion rates. However, Witte (2013) mentioned that, unfortunately, many low-income families enter college underprepared, and too few find the support they need to succeed in college. Student success requires institutions to structure activities directed toward that success.

Tinto's Theoretical Framework

In an effort to identify the academic, social, and cultural factors that lead to and predict academic success and retention of first year college students at BCC, Tinto's (1999) academic and social model was used. Tinto is known for his extensive research on student retention in the higher education arena, particularly on the impact of effective

learning communities on student enrollment and retention. Tinto's social integration and academic success model is considered one of the most influential models that identifies factors that lead to and predict students' academic success and persistence to college completion. Mertes and Jankoviak (2016) agreed that among various retention models, Tinto's interactionist model is the most studied, tested, and critiqued model in the literature. Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) stated that students enter a higher education institution with various characteristics (e.g., gender, aptitude and achievement, and family socioeconomic background) that interfere with their initial commitment to a higher education and their goal of graduating. Using Isaac Newton's First Law of Motion, which states that an object at rest remains at rest and an object in motion, which gains momentum tends to stay in motion unless acted upon by external forces, Tinto (2013, 2014) explained how the Newton's Law of Motion is applicable to students' figuratively staying in motion to gain and maintain credit to remain in college. He identified intermediate points of attainment which relate to student progress to completion whereby students who finish their first year successfully with the credits needed for second year tend to remain in college until completion. Tinto (1993) also mentioned that academic and social retention is achieved when students identify with the climate of the institution. In his study of college retention and completion, Tinto (1993) incorporated tutoring and other academic support systems to increase academic success. He favored peer interactions, interactions with the institutions, and social adjustments presented as all social characteristics. From the data collected, I was able to connect the findings with Tinto's framework to better explain how the law of motion applies to the

dynamic interactions between the faculty mentors and the first year college students that subsequently yielded academic and social gains.

Funding for College Programs

Colleges look at the advantages that come with using grants to provide certain kinds of mentoring for college students. Gardner (2014) mentioned that states give colleges funds, but they want students to perform in college and that schools ensure that students graduate from college. Schneider and Yin (2012) postulated that the majority of students entering community college fail to complete their degrees, and as a result, receive lower wages throughout the course of their lives. Cutting the dropout rate by half would generate substantial gains: The 160,000 new graduates would earn \$30 billion more in lifetime income, and create an additional \$5.3 billion in total taxpayer revenue.

Student Diversity in Undergraduate College Education

In today's competitive global economy, six out of every 10 jobs require some amount of undergraduate college education and training. Moreover, the issue of cultural diversity influences not only the applicant pools that enter undergraduate programs yearly but to a large extent, diversity is a critical characteristic of the population of the United States of America. Hence, there is a need for a culturally diverse workforce. Hurtado, Cuellar, & Guillermo-Wan (2013) conducted a study of students' sense of validation for understanding college student retention and success. The authors examined two validation constructs, students' perception of academics in the classroom and general interpersonal information by using the Diverse Learning Survey (DLS).

Interestingly, Hurtado et al., (2013) explicated that historically, racial and ethnic diversity is representative of the population of the United States of America. Student diversity plays a major role in the admission process of higher education institutions, and the ultimate aim is to ensure that degree attainments are possible for these students for the benefits of the nation in general. Therefore, the primary goal of the DLS study was to provide a framework for educators to assess needs and advance the success of the diverse student population they service by providing programs that can promote degree attainment, build leadership capacities, and life-long learning among their students. Hurtado and colleagues believe that the American society not only needs more college graduates, but for its graduates to reflect the diversity of the nation and embody a variety of multicultural competencies and habits of mind for effective leadership and lifelong learning (p. 7).

Models of College Retention

Keller and Lacey (2013) conducted a study on the outcomes of the honors program in which they discussed the analysis of the retention and graduation rates of the students. The results revealed that students who participate in honors programs are likely to have higher achievement than non-honors students. After adjusting the confounding variables, Keller and Lacey (2013) concluded that the benefits of honors programs were eminent in the innovative structure, small classes, residential learning communities, and extracurricular activities afforded to the students who participate in honors programs. Evidently, students need to be motivated to continue their education in college up to graduation.

From another dimension, Carson and Reed (2015) explained that early research efforts to understand the problem of retention produced mixed results with little understanding of the real issues. They believed that initial research efforts on retention operated under the assumption that cognitive factors such as grade point averages and test scores were key issues to the problem. Later studies revealed that non-cognitive factors were much more relevant to the problem showing the role of self-concept, goals, and integration into social and academic system of the school (Carson & Reed, 2015).

Implications

The study on mentorship of first year college students to promote retention and promotion, projects future directions based on the anticipated outcome wherein the data is likely to reveal greater understanding of their mentoring program which maybe generalizable to others in other institutions. The fact that I used Tinto's (1975) renowned theory of The Theory of Student Departure which theorizes that students who integrate socially within their campus community increase the commitment to the institution and they are more likely to graduate (Demetriou, & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). The qualitative multiple case study design with its specific methods and methodological procedures, includes data collection and analysis. The likelihood was possible that the rich, thick description of the participants' data would provide more knowledge about the phenomenon. Although the literature highlights various odds that may be present in the path of first year college students, positive factors can be present to help students persist. Tinto (2006) posited that the students who choose to progress could be influenced by how they interact and perceive their environment. In a learning environment, adult

development is fostered for both mentee and mentor in a reciprocal and collaborative learning partnership (Klinge, 2015). Studies also show positive outcomes of mentoring programs to improve retention (Brown, 2014; Fullick, Smith Jentsch, Yarbrough & Scielzo, 2012; Nichol & Lockart, 2015). Therefore, the choice between choosing departure and the environment to which the student belongs connects the Theory of Student Departure (Tinto, 1975) hence projecting mentorship programs as valuable assets for first year college students.

Klinge (2015) posited that mentoring uses transformational theory through critical reflection in a non-judgmental manner addressing the andragogical principle that experience is the richest source for adult learning. In a learning environment, adult development is fostered for both mentee and mentor in a reciprocal and collaborative learning partnership. Poor and Brown (2013) stated that there were concerns with the retention of women in engineering at Washington State University (WSU) so a novel women's mentoring program started in 2008. The study showed that in discussions of the need for support to develop a strong sense of identity, finding alternative sources when faculty are not available and supportive is critical to retention, students had to seek alternative sources of support. The study showed that mentoring programs could help improve retention of women in engineering by providing an encouraging, supportive environment that helps them identify with the engineering field.

Morrow and Ackermann (2012) stated that students leave a university for many reasons such as academic difficulty, uncertain goals, and poor fit to the institution. Although various odds may be present in the path of first year college students, positive

factors can be present to help students persist. Tinto (2006) mentioned that the students may choose to progress could be influenced by how they interact and perceive their environment. The correlation between choosing departure and the environment to which the student belongs connects the Theory of Student Departure to social constructivism.

Summary

The literature review presented in the foregoing section augments research on mentoring and student retention within an active framework. These mentoring services ensure that first year college students receive the necessary support mechanisms for academic success. The discussion also juxtaposes many factors, challenges, or difficulties that the students sometimes face in making the transition from high school to the college setting. The situation adversely affects their academic performance and subsequent retention. As the climate within higher education changes, so does the environment in which first year college students are entering. The goal of having mentors at a college is to mentor students through the transition process from high school to college. Mentors encourage first year college students to explore their interests and to set goals for college and beyond. The remaining section discusses the methods and methodological procedures that include the rationale for qualitative study, the chosen design, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis, role of the researcher, and strengths and limitations of the study.

Section 2: The Methodology

I used a multiple case study design to explore the mentoring and retention of first year college students at BCC. Anderson, Anderson, Leahy, Del Valle, Sherman and

Tansey (2014) and Rule and Vaughn (2015) described multiple case study as a form of inquiry that involves gathering data from several cases within the same methodological framework to better understand the phenomena from various contexts. My rationale for using a qualitative multiple case study design, was based on the fact that I sought to understand and describe the meanings and explanations that first year college students and their faculty members ascribe to their mentoring experiences with the intent of promoting retention at their institution (BCC).

Qualitative research is characterized by its interpretative and naturalistic potentials to explain human beliefs and behaviors within their specific contexts. Generally, qualitative research “shows concerns for context and meaning” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014, p. 451). Meaning is construed from human behaviors which are embedded within the context of individuals’ experiences and how they make sense of or interpret said experiences. Creswell (2013) defined qualitative research according to the methodological features or processes inherent in understanding social or human problems. Qualitative research methods are guided by questions pertaining to the why, what, and how of the phenomena using specific theoretical frameworks or perspectives (e.g., case study, ethnography, social constructionism, feminism, phenomenology, interactionism, critical realism, and post-modernism (see Creswell, 2013). Moreover, the researcher must conduct the research within the participants’ natural settings since the settings influence the findings (Ary et al., 2014).

Qualitative research designs are flexible which allows the researchers an opportunity to modify the process, if necessary, once they enter into the settings

(Anderson et al., 2014). Regardless of the theoretical framework used, the central characteristics of qualitative research include: (a) participant(s) involvement in the data collection process; (b) data collection is done in the participants' natural settings with both the researcher and the participants interacting face-to-face; (c) the researcher is the key data collection instrument; (d) it involves multiple sources of data analysis; (e) the data collection process is inductive; (f) the researcher considers the meanings that participants provide (what they see, hear, and understand); and (g) researcher tries to interpret data to develop a complex picture of the topic or issue (Anderson et al., 2014).

Case Study

I employed a multiple case study design wherein I sought data from multiple cases at the research site (see Anderson et al., 2014; Rule & Vaughn, 2015) to explore the perceptions of first year students and faculty mentors about the effectiveness of their mentoring program on first year college students' retention and attrition. Case study, in general, is a popular approach used in the social sciences to study a single unit or unique entity to generate a theory from the data through coding, categorization, and cross case analyses (Rule & Vaughn, 2015). These scholars have defined case studies as the exploration of a bounded system through in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reporting using in-depth descriptions of themes (p. 89). In this sense, the bounded system (i.e., a person, group, community, event, policy, program, project, decision, site, class, or institution) must be embedded within a specific context or boundaries that the researcher uses to focus on the how or why of the range of behaviors within the specific context (Anderson et al., 2014; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2016). A

case study is one of the most common qualitative approaches that allow the researcher to gather information through multiple sources and perspectives (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

Theoretically, Rule and Vaughn (2015) argued for the inclusion of the *theory of the case* in understanding the concept of case study, since the case does not exist as a case in itself but has to be constructed *as* a case for the study. A theory is an abstract set of assumptions and assertions used to interpret and sometimes explain psychological, social, and historical processes. Theories are abstract in nature and therefore require specific contexts before any generalization to human relationship can occur. Therefore, any research that utilizes a case study design has the potential to unveil data that can be used to extend a theory or develop a new theory or theories (e.g., grounded theory) depending on the type of analysis used. In the context of this current study on mentoring and retaining first year college students, my intention was to use a multiple case study design where the focus was on understanding the *cases* in relation to the topic rather than using the *cases* to test a theory as in the case of the ground theory approach.

Methodological Procedures

In qualitative research designs, which begin with a conceptual framework, the researcher develops a general statement of the research problem, topic, or focus of inquiry (Ary, et al., 2014). Ngulibe (2015) noted that the choice of the research methodology influences the research paradigm, the purpose of the research, and the research question while the research design controls the data collection and analysis procedures. As a branch of qualitative research, case study enables the researcher to

conceptualize the research topic or problem (e.g., mentoring and retention of first year college students at BCC) to carefully arrive at a thought out conclusion concerning the topic of study, through the use of particularizing questions, process questions, and realist questions (Ary, et al., 2014). Particularizing questions are those which ask about the specific context, in this case mentoring and retaining of first year college students at BCC. The questions seek to understand what is happening in this particular context and then using the data to develop rich descriptions and interpretations using the case study design. Process questions examine how things happen (Ary, et al., 2014) in order to generate meanings or identify what influences the process. Realist questions are those that treat unobserved phenomena (e.g., feelings, beliefs, reactions, intentions, perceptions, motives, etc.).

In this multiple case study on mentoring and retention of first year college students, I relied on this theoretical framework and focused on how effective BCC's mentoring program is for reducing attrition and increasing retention. Participants included first year college students who were enrolled in the mentoring program and faculty members who mentored them. The research questions focused on what they considered integral in the mentoring program that enabled them to persistence until completion of their program of study. I also focused on how the faculty mentors perceive the impact of the mentoring program on retention.

Anderson et al., (2014) and Rule and Vaughn (2015) suggested that multiple case study, where several cases are part of the same methodological framework, provides a better scope for generalization and replication (by using more than one case), especially

when the phenomena being explored is evident in a number of different contexts. The possibility of conducting cross-context analyses or comparisons adds to the representation and robustness of the research which enhances replication of the study (Anderson et al., 2014). My intention was to use a multiple case study approach to explore the mentoring and retention process at BCC, and I collected the data from multiple cases within the context of their natural settings.

Research Questions

In any research investigation, the research questions guide the process as the beginning of the exploration. Ary et al., (2014) asserted that educational research questions are direct, practical, and aimed at solving specific problems that the researcher has. Research questions begin from one's imagination and experiences about issues related to human existence and interactions with themselves and the environment in general. Human beings are always curious about the nature of things around them and are always thinking about solutions to existing questions. Generally, these research questions are clear and focused and can be classified as theoretical (having to do with fundamental principles) or practical (designed to solve immediate problems of everyday situations) (Ary, et.al., 2014). The research questions that guided this study were mostly practical. They were as follows:

1. How has the mentoring program supported first year college students to continue in college?
2. What do first year college students perceive as integral in a mentoring program to increase retention in college?

3. What are faculty mentors' perceptions of the impact of mentoring program on retention?

Sampling

The sampling procedures for this multiple case study on mentoring and retention of first year college students were done using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a deliberate effort by the researcher to identify those participants within the specific settings who will be able to provide the data that will enable conceptual understanding of the topic being investigated. According to Benoot, Hannes, and Bilsen (2016), purposeful sampling enables the researcher to glean “information-rich cases from whom one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry... Studying information-rich cases yield insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalization” (p. 2). Ary, et al., (2014) identified 14 types of purposeful sampling procedures. Chief among them is criterion sampling, which I used for this research. Criterion sampling involves setting the criterion and includes all cases that meet that criterion. In this case, all first year college students who were enrolled and participating in the mentoring program at BCC and faculty members who provide mentoring service for them were eligible to participate in this study. However, I was interested in recruiting a total of 10 students and their two mentors (i.e., one faculty member/professor, and one mentoring director). There was the likelihood that there were more than 20 first year students in the mentoring program at BCC. Therefore, I applied a second sampling procedure called random purposeful sampling (Ary, et al., 2014) to identify the research participants. As Ary et al. noted, “Random purposeful sampling is

utilized when the potential purposeful sample is too large” (p. 20). This process enhanced the credibility of the study. Once the sampling procedures were finalized, the participants were interviewed in their natural environment at BCC.

Participants

As mentioned earlier, a purposeful sampling technique (Ary, et al., 2014) was used to select the participants for this study. Given the unique nature of this study, the aim was to identify participants who were able to provide quality data that yielded credibility and trustworthiness of the data collection process (Cope, 2014; Creswell, 2013). I shared my training certificate about protecting the rights of the participants so that they felt comfortable to share information. I began by identifying the pool of participants through the administrator of the mentoring program at BCC. The process of participant selection began by first contacting BCC’s administrator to obtain that office’s assistance in the process. Once approval of this proposal was given from my Project Study Committee, I made an appointment with the administrator of BCC mentoring program (the gatekeeper) to share the purpose of my study and asked for assistance in gaining access to the teachers who taught the students as well as the students in the mentoring program. Once this list was obtained, I used the contact information to invite students and their faculty mentors to participate in the study. This was done through an invitation letter via email to the faculty mentors and the students to take part in the research through personal interviews lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. The appropriate wait period for the reply was two weeks following which reminder emails were sent until the total of 10 students and their teachers were identified. Once the participants were

identified, they were sent follow-up emails to invite them to participate in the study. Those who were selected were given instructions to read and sign an electronic version of the consent form. The email confirmed the date, time and location of the interview. A schedule of interviews was created for the participants' interviews that were conducted within their natural settings. The consent forms were again reviewed before the interviews began.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Structured interviews were used to garner data from the descriptions of the participants' responses (Creswell, 2012). The study utilized purposeful sampling techniques (Creswell, 2012) to select a small group of first year college students with their faculty mentors to participate in the interviews. I used face-to-face interviews and informal observations of the participants in their natural setting (Creswell, 2012). The face-to-face interviews were approximately one and half hours in duration at the participants' college (BCC). All interviews were done face-to-face so there was no need to utilize Skype as another option. The interview process was informal, open-ended interviews, focus interviews, and field notes from the observation of body cues. The interviews were recorded to enable accurate transcription of data for member checking and inter-coder reliability check to identify initial themes and patterns (Creswell, 2012; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) which achieved verification of the findings. The interview protocols for mentees and mentors are outlined in Appendix C, and Appendix D. All the data were triangulated, checked, and rechecked for accuracy. Students responded to the following questions:

- Describe your mentoring experiences at BCC.
- What do you perceive as integral for the mentoring program to increase persistence in your program of study?

The faculty mentors will respond to the following question:

- What are the perceptions of the mentoring program for retention of first year college students at BCC?

Role of the Researcher

Undoubtedly, the researcher's role in the research process is crucial to determine the level of involvement in the research setting, the extent of the secrecy as it relates to how well the participants are informed, and the amount of time and duration (intensiveness) spent in the setting (Ary, et al., 2014). The researcher is an elementary school teacher in the private sector with 10 years of service at the present site. Therefore, I had no direct connection with the research site or the subjects who were recruited for this study. However, in order to collect the data, I assumed the *observer as participant* stance where I interacted with the subjects in order to establish rapport but did not become involved in the activities of the group (Ary, et al., 2014). I observed the participants in their natural settings to get a better understanding of how they utilize their academic environment to enhance the study. This became a part of the field notes that I captured during the interviews.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research utilizes a bottom-up approach to data analysis to identify themes and sub-themes through coding frames. Ideally, the researcher looks for themes or

concepts within the data from which inferences can be made that can produce the thick description that will give meaning to the phenomenon being studied. Ary et al. (2014) added the importance of the process of inductive reasoning which begins at the point of data collection. This means that the researcher does not have to wait until all the data are in before beginning preliminary interpretation of them. The researcher can begin to reflect on the meaning of the data from the first observation or interview and use these meanings to confirm, disconfirm, or reconstruct subsequent meanings as the data collection process continues. Based on these recommendations, preliminary data analysis began by identifying and isolating the themes evident in the interview transcriptions by using different colored highlighters. Ary, et al. (2014) described this as content analysis that refers to identifying “data from written or visual materials for the purpose of identifying specified characteristics of the materials” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2014, p. 488). The benefits of using content analysis are that the researcher does not influence what is observed (unobtrusiveness) and the analysis is replicable. Inductive reasoning and content analysis were applicable to this current study since I was able to begin preliminary data analysis from the initial onset of the data collection as well as generating themes and patterns from the interview transcripts and field observation notes.

Creswell (2012) and Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) recommended that research establish main themes through axial coding. Bearing this in mind, I rechecked the initial coding of the data and further analyzed to establish main themes through axial coding. After the main themes were identified, I again utilized inter-rater reliability check to verify and ensure credibility of the findings. The results from the data analysis were

used to write the narrative for the multiple case study report which will illuminate the answers to the research questions. During the study, this researcher will utilize a password protected computer where online data will be stored in addition to storing on-going analysis.

Establishing Credibility and Trustworthiness

Merriam (2016) noted that trustworthiness is all about how well a particular study does what it sets out to accomplish. Creswell (2013) explained trustworthiness as those strategies that the researcher employs to ensure prolonged engagement and persistent observation during the data collection process and methods either by data triangulation, peer debriefing, thick description, member checking, and external audits (experts' services). Creswell recommended that the qualitative researcher utilizes at least two of the methods. Additionally, Cope (2014) described five major perspectives to achieve credibility and trustworthiness in qualitative research. These are: *credibility*, *dependability*, *confirmability*, *transferability*, and *authenticity*.

Credibility refers to the truthfulness of the data or the participants' views and interpretations, and how well the researcher captures their representations in the data collection process. Cope (2014) asserts that credibility can be achieved by "how well the researcher describes his or her experiences as a researcher and verifying the research findings with the participants" (p. 89). In this study on mentoring of first year college students, *credibility* was addressed by employing multiple data collection sources, (i.e., open-ended interviews, focus interviews, and field notes from the observation of body cues), which will be triangulated to confirm the findings, the use of member checking of

the interview transcripts, and by enlisting colleagues with qualitative expertise (inter-rater reliability) (Merriam, 2016).

Dependability is determined when there is consistency and constancy of the data is obvious in similar conditions or across time and researchers if study is replicated (Cope, 2014; Hays, Wood, Dahl, & Kirk-Jenkins, 2014). When applied to this study on mentoring and retention of first year college students, I endeavored to ensure that the narrative descriptions of my study are clearly articulated based on the detailed analyses that were done so that the findings can be replicated with similar participants in similar conditions (Cope, 2014). Additionally, Ary, et al. (2014) suggested the researcher consider the benefits of using interrater and inter-rater agreement in the code-recode strategy. This means that the data can be revisited multiple times by the researcher and other experts for assessing dependability. The researcher and the inter-rater can code independently of each other using the coding labels identified by the researcher.

Confirmability refers to accuracy of the participants' perspectives which is highly dependent on the researcher's ability to represent the data without biases or viewpoints (Cope, 2014; Hays, et al., 2014). *Confirmability* can be achieved in the way how the researcher articulates in the narrative the descriptions of the interpretations and conclusions and justify that the findings were generated exclusively from the data collected (Cope, 2014). Ary, et al. (2014) referred to the importance of obtaining neutrality in qualitative research which is the extent to which the research is free of biases. Cognizant of the importance of *confirmability*, I ensured that the thick descriptions (Creswell, 2013) were evident in the narrative as represented by the

participants' perspectives. This will be done by the coding of the data to generate themes, categories, and patterns from the participants' responses.

Transferability speaks to the generalizability of the findings that can be applied to the participants, settings, and experiences. In essence, if the study has meaning to individuals not involved in the study and readers can connect the findings to their own experiences, *transferability* is evident. Cope (2014) recommended that researchers provide sufficient information on the participants and the contexts so that readers may be able to fit or transfer the information.

Finally, *authenticity* refers to how well the researcher is able to communicate the feelings and emotions of the participants' experiences in a faithful manner drawing on the specific excerpts verbatim when writing the narrative (Cope, 2014). Excerpts of the participants' experiences or perspectives can be selected during the initial coding period as the researcher examines the script to determine the themes and patterns that are inherent. Ary, et al. (2014) recommended that the researcher also make a reflective log to capture their thoughts during the reading of the participants' transcriptions. At this point, the selected excerpts from the participants' responses can be color-coded and later used to write the thick descriptions in the narrative to achieve credibility and trustworthiness of the research.

Cope (2014) emphasized the importance of credibility and trustworthiness as essential through the entire phases of the research and encourages the researcher to utilize triangulation of multiple sources to draw conclusions. Triangulation is the method of using multiple methods of data collection processes which can be generated from a

combination of interviews, observations, researchers' notes, and reflective journals. By using these multiple methods of data collection instruments, the researcher can confirm whether the data collected by one instrument confirms that which is collected by another. Patterns that are obvious from multiple data collection instruments enhance credibility of the findings. Additionally, triangulation can also be achieved when the researcher engages multiple experts (peer debriefing) through interrater or inter-observer agreement. Maintaining audits and including member checking during the data analysis period are also important as these ensure that the researcher identifies the necessary evidences that will be needed to provide the thick, rich description of the inquiry.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases are those cases that might challenge the theoretical proposition of a study (Yin 2014). In this multiple case study, the theoretical basis for understanding the phenomenon was dependent on the perceptions of the participants as they shared their lived experiences of the BCC's mentoring program. By using these multiple methods of data collection instruments, the researcher confirms whether the data collected by one instrument confirms that which is collected by another, using member checking, and the use of inter-rater reliability measures which eliminated or minimized any discrepant cases. However, no discrepant cases were identified hence all participants' transcripts were utilized in the data analyses.

Strengths and Limitations

The researcher used member checks to ensure that my own biases did not interfere or influence how narration of the students' perspectives is constructed. Creswell

(2012) stated that researchers check their findings with participants in the study to determine if their findings are accurate. Member checking is a process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account. The checking involved taking the findings back to the participants and asking them about the accuracy of the report. A journal was used to monitor and write thoughts down about the perspectives of the selected participants. Results from the study illustrated changes in administration of the mentoring program at BCC, and the college could be used as a model for other colleges to help first year students to complete their first year of college and eventually graduate from college. Good mentoring is important for success in any college setting especially students who do not have support from anyone.

Data Analysis Results

This multiple case study explored a mentoring and retention program for first year college students at BCC's using three main research questions. The research questions were used to understand what was considered as integral in the mentoring program that enabled the first year college students to persistence until completion of their program of study. Specific focus was also on how the faculty mentors perceive the impact of mentoring program on retention. Qualitative data analyses were done identify themes and sub-themes through coding frames (Ary, et al., 2014; Creswell, 2013). The upcoming sections illustrate how I analyzed the data by first using manual coding and NVivo qualitative software.

The results of the study include interviews with two mentors and 10 mentees from BCC. The college provides community college education to students from various countries. It serves students who are newly graduated from high schools, transfer students from other institutions, and students who decide to continue their education. In this qualitative study, participants were recruited by the faculty (mentors). Audio taped and note-taking interviews were conducted on site. As participants answered the questions, I took notes during the interview process. The information was organized that allowed for tracking of all data and emerging codes. I included transcribing, coding, developing themes, and writing up the results to analyze the data.

Data reporting is a narrative discussion that I have used to articulate the outcome of this report. According to Purba (2018), narrative has a powerful social role beyond that of being medium for entertainment. Narrative is also a powerful medium for changing social opinion and attitudes. To begin the data analysis, the statements from each interview were compared and classified and put in themes according to the three research questions:

1. How has the mentoring program supported first year college students to continue in college?
2. What do first year college students perceive as integral in a mentoring program to increase retention in college?
3. What are faculty members' perceptions of the impact of mentoring program on retention?

Data Analysis Collection and Procedures

After I received Walden's Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval (researcher #07-13-0375198) to begin the study, I submitted an application to the BBC's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to gain access to the participants. After receiving this permission from BBC's IRB, I began my study. An informed consent form for mentors and mentees was developed to aid in the protection of the rights of the participants. According to Vitak, Proferes, Shilton, and Ashktora (2018), one of the key components of IRBs is the informed consent process put in place to minimize participant risk. The participants signed the document and returned to me via email acknowledging the protection of their rights, and enforcing that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time. The participants' names are not used in the reporting of data but instead a pseudonym was assigned to each participant. Allen and Wiles (2016) purported that the use of pseudonyms is a well-established tenet of good research practice, with researchers held accountable for maintaining anonymity and confidentiality.

I used the interview guide with the list of questions (Appendix C & Appendix D) which was designed to gain insights in the study's research questions. The interview dates and times were established by each participant. I was provided with an office space at the study site, to conduct the face-to-face interviews as the data collection phase proceeded. Due to the fact that we were conducting the interviews at the participants' natural setting, they appeared at ease to express the responses to the questions. According to Schober (2018), face-to-face interviewing has been the mainstay of social

and economic measurement used for building portraits of people's life circumstances and opinions that can inform public policy for quite some time. Before each interview began, the consent form was again discussed with each participant. The two faculty mentors were first interviewed and then the 10 mentees were interviewed. I sought permission to do an audio recording to ensure that answers could be reviewed for accuracy. I began the interview by reintroducing myself and reminding participants of the confidentiality of his or her responses.

I used the interview protocols for both mentees and mentors as outlined in Appendix C and Appendix D. The participant responses were categorized according to themes using NVIVO. The interviews were transcribed by a transcriber who received the interviews via email. These audio emails were transcribed and returned to me electronically. I reviewed the transcripts for accuracy, creditability, and reliability. After I completed reviewing process, I emailed a copy of the transcript individually to the participants for member checking. Each participant returned the transcript and informed me that the material was correct with some minor corrections made by three of the participants. Each transcript was again reviewed for accuracy.

Contextual and analytical procedures were employed during the manual coding of each individual transcript to identify patterns and develop themes that were pertinent to write the results. The findings were derived from interviews and are summarized within this chapter in relationship to the specific themes they support. The data collection efforts in this study revealed that community college education with a mentoring program supports persistence and helps students gain access to programs and resources that help

them quickly assimilate into their college environment. Participants' experiences and feedback provided me with information and insight to the research questions posed in this study. By listening to the participants, and analyzing their responses, valuable information was obtained about the mentoring program in the college and the perceptions of the program. The research questions are addressed with supporting evidence, portrayed through feedback from the participants. Throughout the data collection process, a number of themes emerged, each of which provide information tied to the research questions.

The Participants/Mentors

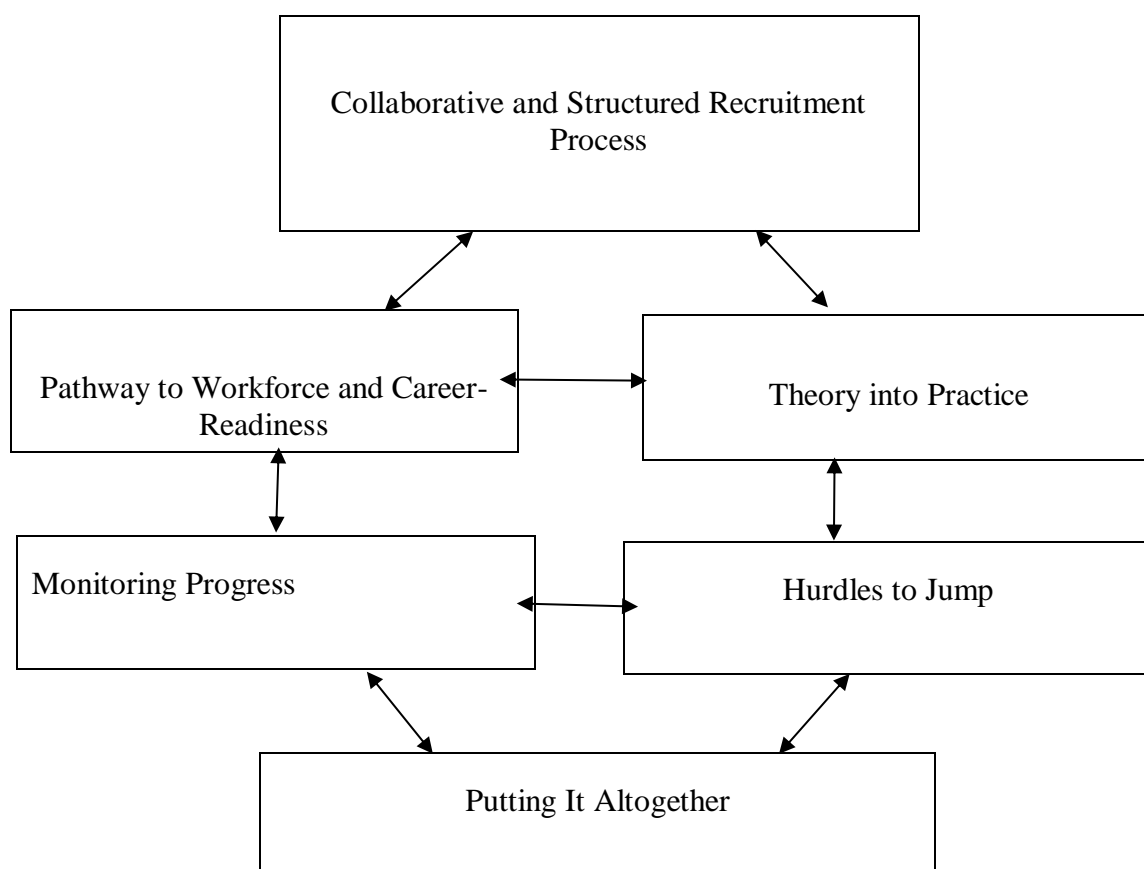
The two faculty mentors were interviewed separately using the 10 interview questions (Appendix D) approved as the protocol for the study. Both mentors seemed relaxed and opened to discuss the questions that were asked. The biographic data provided by the faculty mentors revealed information that I considered pivotal for understanding the mentoring phenomenon from their perspectives. Both mentors have significant experiences pertaining to their respective responsibilities for retention and recruitment through the mentoring program. Faculty (Mentor One) has a master's degree in management in higher education and has been at the college for five years. However, her active involvement in the mentoring service began in 2016. In this capacity, she assists students by providing services through screening, and matching them with financial coaches and mental health counselors. Her academic training and experience received through the college over the years, have equipped her well to assist first year college students as they begin their college journey at BCC. Faculty (Mentor One) has been working at the college for 12 years and has skills in certain initiatives such as

enrolment, access services, and career services. Mentor Two has a master's degree in public administration and her involvement with the mentoring program began in 2011. This extensive college experience has helped her to make an impact on the lives of the students she guides.

Student Enrolment in the Mentoring Program

Both faculty mentors were asked separately to provide the appropriate number of first year college students you mentored per semester and/or academic year. Faculty Mentor One indicated that she encountered a minimum of 200 students in the mentoring program since its inception and approximately 25-30 each semester with a graduation rate of 50%. The mentoring program collaborates with advisors and retention-based programs such as Year Up, Educate Tomorrow at Single Stop, TRiO, and Stars Hope to recruit students. Faculty Mentor Two data corroborated this but added specifically that the 200 mentors came from two campuses through the college's revamped i-Mentor program which hones mentor/mentees' relationships for strengthening career-readiness skills. Further data analyses for the remaining core interview questions numbers two to 10, revealed several significant themes which emerged as: *collaborative and structured recruitment process, pathway to workforce and career-readiness, mentoring progress, theory in practice, hurdles to jump, and putting it altogether*. Figure 1 represents a display of the themes and their relationships to what constitutes the mentoring program at BCC. Each will be discussed in details in the forthcoming sections.

Figure 1.



Relationships of the Major Themes

Collaborative and Structured Recruitment Process

Throughout the data that were generated from the interviews with both faculty mentors, I discovered similar patterns in the responses provided for the core questions on mentors' mentoring experience. Excerpts and essences from the two faculty mentors' responses for question three on the process of enrolment in BCC's mentoring program and Question Four on the components of their mentoring program revealed a *collaborative and structured recruitment process* with a *workforce and career-readiness* focus. These two themes provide much information to understand exactly how the

mentoring program works at BCC. According to both faculty mentors, direct recruitments are done by their respective departments via emails to the first year college students once they have been admitted into the institution. New students who are interested in enrolling in the mentorship program, must submit an application and attend a mandatory Mentoring Power Hour orientation. Faculty Mentor Two who has direct responsibility as the Director of Retention and Transition Services, offered more specifics data by describing some targeted recruitments done by other faculty and staff. According to Faculty Mentor Two:

...we work closely with our colleagues, our faculty members, our staff members, [and] senior advisors. We do have one of our senior advisors who has been instrumental in helping us to recruit students from the mentoring program. What makes the relationship with the senior advisors instrumental, is the fact that, all students who are entering the college have to undergo a mandatory orientation. So, once they participate in orientation, they are assigned to a senior advisor. Each senior advisor at any time has a caseload in excess of 600 or so students. Therefore, having the relationship with the senior advisors really provides us with the platform of getting the students...Overall a combination of faculty, staff, advisors, and their own recruitments (Faculty Mentor Two, July 2018).

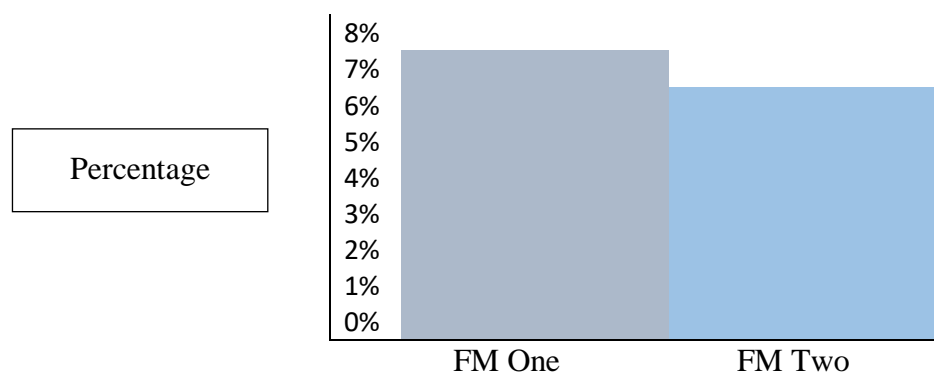
These statements describe explicitly the *collaborative and structured* framework employed by all involved faculty and staff to reach the first year college students to educate them about the services available to them. These conscious efforts are to ensure that the students experience a successful program of study.

Pathway to Workforce and Career-Readiness

When I asked about the components of their mentoring program, both faculty mentors emphasized the major objective of preparing the first year college students for becoming productive citizens through the mentoring program. Faculty Mentor Two spoke about revamping the program to more career-readiness that includes teaching soft skills and other skills for career paths. These life skills can be developed inside and outside of the college that help the students to persist thus leading to retention. Faculty Mentor One also confirmed workforce and career-readiness through the teaching soft skills like, job-seeking skills, interviews, dressing for an interview, dining etiquette, [or] legal issues as important skills taught in the mentoring program. Other services provided include; financial and personal issues. According to Faculty Mentor One if the students say, “I am not sure how to manage my money”, we [mentors] have the resources so that the student can focus on his education and graduate.” Faculty Mentor One highlighted further, the monthly interactions with students, the multiple emails sent to them, and the efforts to match faculty mentors with the students as major components that focus on *workforce and career-readiness*.

The foregoing analysis for the components of BCC’s mentoring program is illustrated in Figure 2 which compares the percentage of information coverage by both faculty mentors.

Figure 2.



Comparison of Data Coverage for Workforce and Career-Readiness

Faculty Mentor One provided at least 1 % more details about the mentoring program than Faculty Mentor Two. This is significant as I was able to gain a better understanding of the other services provided as soft skills and other personal and legal issues. This faculty mentor summed it up in this way: “In terms of our component, what we’re really trying to do in terms of the mentoring program is to help our students not only to persist and complete but when they are persisting and completing”. This extended explanation strengthens the objective and focus of embedding the mentoring program in a workforce and career-readiness framework.

Theory to Practice

When asked about what theory drives their mentoring program, both faculty mentors confirmed Vince Tinto’s Model that explains how to move from *theory to practice* when building institutional action for student success. “Tinto, he’s the man! ... that’s what we utilized”, chuckled Faculty Mentor One. Tinto’s model is a renowned theoretical lens through which this mentoring inquiry is conceptualized. Analytical examination of Tinto’s model helps to explain the process these faculty members

employed in crafting their objectives and focus for the components of BCC's mentoring program. Throughout the interviewing process, I observed the high level of confidence and enthusiasm inherent in the way the faculty mentors described the program and accomplishments since its inception.

Monitoring Progress

The theme, *Mentoring Progress*, is linked with Questions Seven, Eight and 10. Question Seven generated a wealth of information on the level of impact the mentoring program has on the students' academic success. For instance, Faculty Mentor Two provided many details in her reply:

Based on the preliminary data from our recent satisfaction surveys, our students felt that they had a very high, over 80% satisfaction, when they participated in the program in terms of impact and level of satisfaction. More specifically, **84%** felt they had made good progress on the event topics with their mentee; **93%** indicated the PC responded to them in a timely manner; **92%** indicated they knew what it takes to be a good mentor, and **94%** indicated they are receiving the support they need to have a successful mentor/mentee relationship. The students felt that they were better prepared to persist to the next semester in terms of impact. We also pulled some of our students regarding just basic knowledge about resources and services. The felt they had increased awareness of resources and services. The mentors were very involved. The program provided us with the platform to provide students with reminders of the different resources available to them. So definitely, if we are talking about impact, increased awareness increased

knowledge of resources and services on and off campus and that ability to connect (Faculty Mentor Two, July, 2018).

Some of the students' comments on the surveys were: One way the BBC Single Stop Mentoring Program is helping me strengthen my relationship with my mentee is by arranging the special events has been the most helpful (Mentee Two, July 2017). The things that Single Stop does in general are extraordinary, when I need their assistance, they are always available for me or my mentee. They are the BEST! (Mentee Five, July 2017). BCC's Single Stop is highly supportive and persistent. They are doing a wonderful job and are fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated staff working for the students in the program (Mentee Three, July 2017).

Faculty Mentor One established similar data sources from which she was able to retrieve statistical evidence to justify the level of impact the mentoring program was having on the students. These data sources were from focus groups throughout the semester and towards the end, to find out what was working or not working for them. She also examined student surveys, and reports obtained from BBC's Institutional Research department. In a less formal way, she stated that, "I ask students general questions as well throughout during the mentoring hour to see what they have learned, just where they are." Generally, Faculty Mentor One believed that:

The mentoring program helps the students because of the connections between faculty and staff. If they have issues in terms of attending or preparing for a class, you know they have connections, in a variety of ways that apply to best practices.

They have faculties that teach classes so students might not have known that this particular faculty teaches a class that they need. It helps make that connection. I would say overall, in terms of academic success or impact on the students, and because of our case management we are able to stay on top of things to help them figure out their needs from semester to semester, which helps them to graduate, which goes back to the whole purpose of this program (Faculty Mentor One, July 2018).

Interview Question Eight sought answers pertaining to how the faculty mentors ensure that the experience the students gain from their mentoring program is successful. Interestingly, both faculty mentors took different paths in the responses provided. Faculty Mentor One alluded to the mandatory attendance policy in place; doing informal check-ins to find out how the program was helping the students; maintained ongoing interactions and frequent phone calls. Faculty Mentor [2] relied on the students' surveys and focus group interviews, and the college's 10 learning outcomes which includes appreciation for the aesthetics (i.e., art gallery, art appreciation); information literacy that focuses on introducing technologies, careers with technologies, and oral and written communication. It is important that BBC's students learn to express themselves in written form to explain how they feel about the impact of the programs and how the initiative is working.

After conducting multiple reduction of the data through contextual techniques, I decided that questions nine and ten could also be linked with the theme *monitoring progress*. Question Nine has to do with how the mentoring program helps students develop social skills. Both faculty mentors expressed the similar thoughts that the students participated in

after-school events and interact with peers. The mentors helped the students to keep abreast of all co-curricular activities that enhance social interactions, interactive stimulations, and intentional conversation to develop communication skills. The mentors applauded the strengths of their Networking 101 which helps the students to connect with the wider community. This community-based change-making service component was enacted by students who went into the community regularly to make use of community services available to them. In terms of social interactions, the mentors and mentees engaged in community activities like the Rotary Clubs that allowed the students to have more conversations.

In regard to Question 10 on the graduation rate of the students who were enrolled in the mentoring program graduate and how this data is reported, both responses capped the graduation rate at approximately 52%. The data was available through BBC's Institutional Research department. This statistical information solidifies the extent to which the faculty mentors use data to assess the feasibility of the mentoring program and impact it has on the students. In essence, there is strong evidence to suggest that the mentoring faculty have a structured system in place to monitor students' progress. However, there are a few areas that need to be reviewed as evident in the upcoming section.

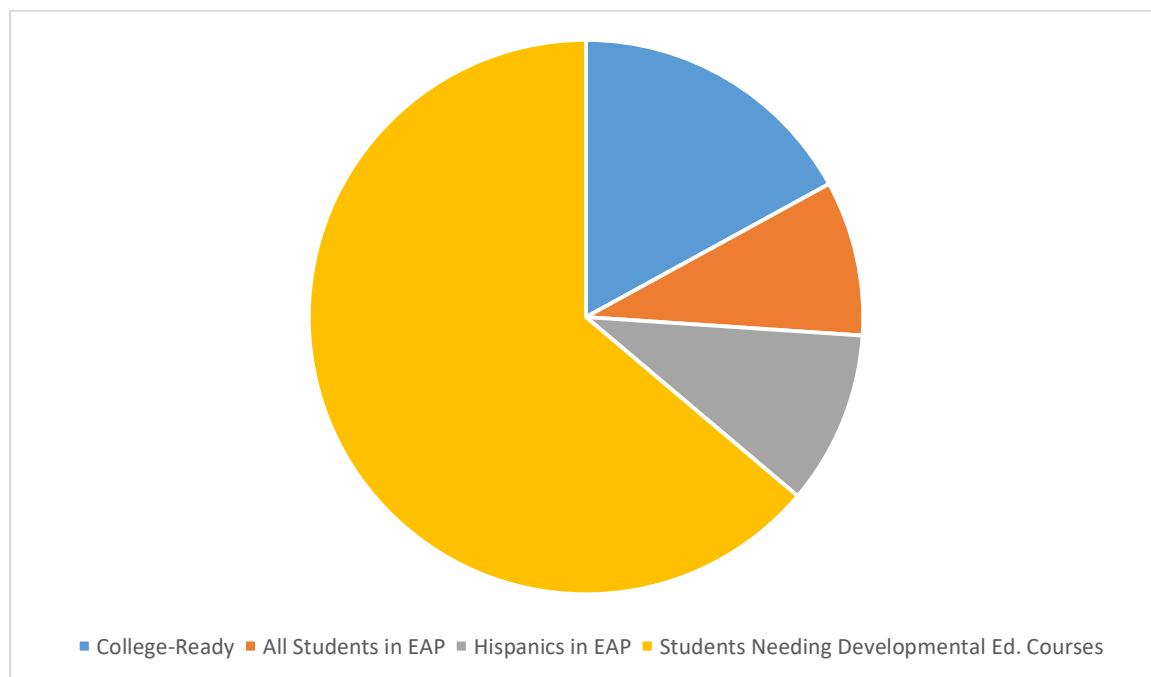
Hurdles to Jump

As noted in the previous section that only approximately 52% graduate. Question 11 provided a follow-up for me to inquire about the others who did not graduate and what factors contributed to it. Based on the responses from both faculty mentors, several

factors impeded students' ability to graduate. Faculty Mentor One thought that at BCC, the institution prides itself in ensuring that everyone receives quality education. Because the college serves a large group of underprepared students, many of the students face a variety of challenges and are often not college-ready. Consequently, these underprepared students will take longer to complete.

Interestingly, Faculty Mentor Two provided some glaring statistics as illustrated in Figure 3. She stated that at BCC, the following factors influence the graduation rates and timelines of most of BCC's students including, but not limited to, those in the mentoring students:

Figure 3.



Factors Affecting Graduation Rate of BCC's First Year Students

Figure 3 illustrates that 32% of incoming students test as college ready; 17% of all students and 19% of Hispanics test into EAP coursework (English for Academic

purposes), and 51% of all students need developmental education coursework in reading, writing or algebra, or some combinations. The aforementioned statistics seemed to clarify why there is this large group of underprepared students that affect the college's overall graduation rate. According to Faculty Mentor One, more specific factors stem from:

Lack of students' needs and issues. Students that have not graduated or taking a little longer to graduate is because of a job or any other fulltime job, which is taking over the desire or need for education. Some have to do with the students' academic path as well, because of their grades. Even if it is a program that supports or focuses on students' resources, there is that small percentages of students who just have a hard time. It may not be their thing; hmm, in graduating so it is that (Faculty Mentor One, July 2018).

Putting It Altogether

The final question that I asked the faculty mentors was: Is there anything else you would like to share about your mentoring experience or your mentoring program? The resounding voices of the mentors were in one accord as they endorsed mentoring as an essential wealth of knowledge to build the professional life skills of the mentees when they engaged with their respective assigned mentors. This kind of professional mentoring plays an important part in preparing their students for their first year of college so that they can continue successfully to the completion of their program. The mentors created a relationship that guides the students in a pathway to workforce and career readiness through professional socialization and personal support to foster success in future academic studies and beyond.

Data Analysis for Mentees' Interview

The mentees' interviews took place over an extended timeframe of two weeks due to individualized schedules based on availability of time. The Walden IRB's approved interview protocol (Appendix B) was used precisely as documented to ensure that all participants' rights were honored and protected. Ten participants were interviewed to derive data that could answer any or all of the research questions:

1. How has the BCC's mentoring program supported first year college students to continue in college?
2. What do first year college students perceive as integral in a mentoring program to increase retention in college?
3. What are faculty members' perceptions of the impact of mentoring program on retention?

All 10 mentees were interviewed in their school setting in a private room selected by their mentors to avoid distractions but more so to allow the mentees to feel comfortable throughout the interview process. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consents and the informed consent read and acknowledged by the participants' signatures. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour. Following the completion of all the interviews, the audio-recorded versions were emailed to the same transcriber who transcribed the faculty mentors' transcripts. The transcriber typed them into Microsoft word documents then returned all transcriptions in Microsoft word files to me via email. Upon receipt of the electronic files, I sent each participant his/her transcript to review and confirm for accuracy of the information (member checking). Each

participant checked the transcript then returned it electronically to me. Thereafter, I proceeded to conduct preliminary analyses of the data on all 10 transcripts. The next sections will discuss the data analysis procedures and the findings.

Data analysis and Procedures for Mentees' Interviews

The contextual data analyses for the mentees' transcripts were done first by manual coding to identify patterns, essences, and themes. The themes were used to help craft nodes in the NVIVO qualitative software to conduct further contextual analyses. The following themes emerged from the coding; *career roadmap*, *getting out of comfort zone*, *building interpersonal skill*, *improving self-efficacy/self-image*, and *learning life skills*. I will discuss each theme according to responses from some of the participants.

The Participants/Mentees

Ten mentees participated in the interviewing process. The biographic questions from the interview protocol (Appendix B) provided biographic data about the mentees' year of enrolment at BBC and the specific programs, the type of transferred school to BCC, and the year enrolled in the mentoring program. Table 1 illustrates that nine of the mentees began their academic journey at BCC between 2015 and 2016 with the exception of one who began in 2012. Their program of study includes: pre-veterinarian, management (business/music), pre-nursing and emergency management (EMT), criminal justice, arts, graphic/commercial art, sonography, business administration, and graphic designing. Eight mentees transferred from various Florida high schools while one came from a senior high school and another from a State college.

Table 1
Mentees' Biographic Information

Mentee	Year enrolled at BCC	Program of study	Transfer school	Years enrolled in BCC's mentor program
1	2016	From Engineering to Pre-veterinarian	Senior High school	2
2	2016	Management/ business-music	State college	1.5
3	2015	Associate/Pre-nursing & EMT Science	High school-fire academy	3
4	2012	Criminal Justice	High school	2
5	2014	Graphic or Commercial Art	High school	4
6	2015	Sonography	High school	3
7	2015	Criminal Justice	High school	3
8	2016	Assoc. in Arts	High school	2
9	2015	Business Admin	High school	3
10	2015	Graphic Design	High school	3

Interview Questions 1-10 sought information about the mentees' mentoring experience which is pertinent for answering the research questions through the eyes of the mentees. Interview question 1 that asked about their length of time in the mentoring program is reflected on Table 1 which shows their enrolment years in BCC's mentoring program range from 1/2 – 4 years. In response to the Interview Question Two, "How did you learn about the mentoring program, Mentee Eight stated that, "I got connected with Single Stop, which is one of the programs here on campus." This participant added, "I was interested to see what kind of information that I could get, you know, in the

mentoring program since I was fairly new to the college and new to a lot of people on campus.” All the mentees mentioned that they learned about the mentoring program through the program called Single Stop. This information confirms that which was provided by Faculty Mentor One who stated that, “Single Stop Mentoring Program is an innovative initiative at the College, placing students in mentoring relationships to provide them with the additional support needed to persist toward a college degree.” The mentees’ responses corresponded with their mentors’ recruitment process that includes attending faculty-mentoring meetings and registering. Although mentees mentioned the mediums through which communications took place, (i.e., faculty emails; advisors/counselors, and friends; service providers like, Trio (a college up-bound program for first generation college students), Stars Hope Scholarship, and the Department of Children and Family’s (DCF) tuition waiver program), all of these entities are connected with Single Stop.

After careful examination of the information for questions three, four, and six, on what motivated them to enroll in the mentoring program, what their experiences were, and how their social skills were being enhanced, the analysis yielded the themes, *Career Roadmaps*, *Positive Encounters*, *Getting Out of Comfort Zone*, *Keeping Eyes on the Ball*, *Connecting Students’ Services*, and *Greenlight Accolades*. Each theme will be discussed accordingly using specific excerpts to strengthen the discussion and providing the rich, thick description of the live experiences. Each participant will be identified as Mentee One, Mentee Two, accordingly, as pseudonyms based on the IRB protocol to conduct research with human participants.

Career Roadmaps

The 10 mentees reported their need for someone to support or guide them through the career path and the benefits that they reaped from having close interactions with faculty mentors in their area of interest. For instance, the benefits of getting expert advice enabled them to become more knowledgeable about their field so that they can set personal goals, choose the appropriate degree options, and creating a bond with these experts throughout their tenure. Mentee Five summed what motivated her in this way:

I felt like I needed some support that would be a way for me to connect me with different people in different occupations and just to learn about a little bit about using my craft that I didn't know. I thought that this would be a way for me to open up to people, and kinda spread my wings, ahm be a social butterfly. That's why that was there for me to enroll in a mentoring program.

Others like Mentee Six, Mentee Eight, and Mentee Nine had similar motivational goals to seek mentorship for guidance in completing their degrees. Mentee Six response was:

... you have somebody there to help you throughout college. They help you set a goal for yourself and get you done in the timeframe that you need but if you need a little longer, they'll still go along with you and help you with your (pause) journey through college.

Mentee Eight, a first-generation college student, was quite frank with her thoughts:

Well, you know, just being a first year college student, it's really hard and especially because like I don't have anybody around me that has been to college.

Everybody as you know have working jobs and so that wasn't the way I wanted to go personally. So, I knew that if I found a mentor and somebody who's been there in art, is doing the same thing that I am trying to do, I would have the motivation and they could talk to me about what I can do and what I should do.

Mentee Nine was somewhat skeptical about her study focus and thought that it was important to connect with someone in her field:

I wanted a mentor especially from Business Administration. I wanted somebody that's already doing something in that field and, um, I didn't know what to do with that degree yet, and that's why I needed someone to guide me and tell me different things that I can do with my degree and tell me how can I be better-yeah!

The aforementioned excerpts indicate that these mentees knew the benefits of enrolling in the mentorship program. All of the responses expressed the vision and desire to complete their degrees.

Positive Encounters

In regard to their personal experiences, there was nothing short of a positive experience for all the mentees. Their responses included phrases like; *good experience, holds interest, interesting, great so far, great connections, wonderful, nice meetings, enjoyable, learned a lot about people, and build self-confidence*. Mentee Three was very grateful for the assistance provided and found the program interesting. His feelings were articulated as:

I don't know; I just found it interesting. Faculty Mentor One helped me out a lot. She helped me do my financial aid; like do the processes. I didn't always understand it. I'd never done financial aid. I started working; she also helped me with my taxes. If I was struggling with something, she'd find the right person to help me out.

Getting Out of Comfort Zone

Question six sought their perspectives on how the mentoring program help them develop their social skills. All 10 mentees felt more empowered due to development in their interpersonal skills. Mentee Three also expressed feeling confident because he overcame shyness through the faculty tutoring. He was communicating more and learning from others. Mentee Two brought out the fact that he was more open-minded, considerate, and non-judgmental. Mentee Eight was overly appreciative in his thoughts as enunciated below:

It was a great way to not only learn about other people but to find out so much more about themselves. It brings a better person out of you and I'm considered a nontraditional student. Although I am a little bit older than most of the students in the mentoring program, it helps me to learn how to network with other people, and how to deal with other people and not be shy and not be afraid. You know how to speak or if I have ideas to let my ideas flow. I learnt that there is just so much information, business wise, it's great, it's great, I love it!

Mentee Seven learned to “get out of shell and interact more with people”, while Mentee Five thought it helped him to “not be afraid to speak...the mentoring program is a ladder

against fear.” Mentee Nine alluded to the benefits of the workshops attained through the mentoring program. He replied:

Well, we have different workshops. We have workshop about etiquette and how to manage money and different things that really help me with personal development and social development. I learn how to talk in front of people and how to interact with people and network, so that really helped me. We have different session where we have to network with people and that kind of helped me get out of my comfort zone and actually talk to different people from different places. That’s not similar to my major or the people that I would talk to in the norm.

Keeping Eyes on the Ball

The mentees were asked to describe how the mentoring program helped with academic transition in college which represented interview question five. All 10 responses provided similar essences which were delineated towards the high level of faculty mentors and staff’s support they received. They expressed appreciation for the two faculty mentors’ guidance on choosing career paths, tutoring services, providing bus passes, and connecting them with experts in their field. They illustrated their feeling using words like; *smooth, focused, amazing experience, facilitating work balance, and goal-oriented*. Mentee One spoke about the personal growth gained from being taught how to do interviews, budget personal finances, and dining etiquette. Mentee Six was exuberant because of the faculty’s help to ease frustration and excelling in academic status as a member of Phi Beta Kappa and making the Dean’s list. He felt better because of the mentoring

program. His final words were; “It’s a good support program; very helpful all year round.” With all of these different types of support in place, I deduced that the assistance the mentees received were beneficial in assisting them to make the academic transition smooth thus my theme, *Keeping Eyes on the Ball*.

Connecting Students’ Services

The researcher asked the mentees question seven, “How would you describe the assistance you received from faculty members in the mentoring program?” Mentee Four responded, “Amazing; great support; faculty help out in everything; keeps abreast like finding scholarships; hiring opportunities; and faculty emails to stay in touch.” Others echoed previous sentiments about networking opportunities, building professional bonds with experts in their field and capitalizing on the numerous college resources available through the mentoring program. All of the mentees seemed excited about the assistance they received from their mentors. Mentee Five made no qualms about this by stating, “Amazing 100%! I have their contact information in case I need them [faculty mentors]. They are dedicated. Wonderful staff! Really awesome!”

Mentoring is a two-way opportunity for learning and growth between the mentor and the mentee. The mentee gains knowledge, skills, experience, support, guidance and assistance. The mentor gains experience and insight into how he or she can employ new mentoring techniques and approaches (Mathipa & Matlabe, 2016). With this in mind, I will include question eight and nine in this section because after multiple examination of the data, I felt that the data connects with student services. Interview question eight was: How has the mentoring program helped you in finding resources to make your learning

experience successful? If not, please say why. Question nine was: How useful is the mentoring program in providing assistance even when off campus?

Based on the mentees' responses to question eight, all affirmed the assistance they received in locating the various campus resources like, *scholarships, learning disability services, registrations, academic programs, transportations, childcare facilities, housing, lab access, tutoring, financial aid, and time management seminars*. The responses also highlight the school community connections that assist them in finding *internship opportunities*, and access to *internet resources* and *email* communications. Knowledge about most of these services would not have been possible without the assistance of the mentoring program. Mentee One puts it this way; "If I need scholarships I'll go to the mentoring program and ask if there are scholarships, schooling, finance, and internship, I'll ask Miss X [Faculty Mentor One] then she'll see what she can do about that as well." Mentee Nine was like-minded:

Well like I said, I got to meet different people from different departments. So maybe if I was a normal student without really being involved on my campus, I wouldn't know about opportunities that this school had to offer. There are many and a lot of people don't know about them. So, with the mentoring program and a few others I got to really get to know my campus, I really use all, use everything that they have to offer, the resources...uh, yes!

Obviously, the mentees were elated with having close interactions with the faculty mentors, academic advisors, and staff that helped them to locate the needed resources to help them in their academic journey.

Interview question nine was about the extent to which the mentoring program helps in providing assistance even when off campus. The responses were unanimous about the faculty ongoing support they received on the physical site and online communications. Mentee One talked about using the mentoring program as reference when seeking employment. Eighty percent of the mentees alluded to ongoing communications from the faculty mentors to keep them abreast of students' resources and services, like finding jobs, scholarships, tutoring, and workshops. Mentee Three spoke about faculty's going beyond the call of duty to assist while Mentee Eight embraced the fact that contact door to faculty mentors are always opened to gain assistance.

Green Light Accolades

Based on the analyses for the last two interview questions, I thought that the data points to the theme, *Green Light Accolades*. Question 10 sought recommendations from the mentees to improve future mentoring program for first year college students. These recommendations were categorized as maintain services and improve services. Sixty percent of the mentees opted to maintain services because everything was right there in the mentoring program and the new students need only to ask. They also suggested promoting the mentoring program and the resources that were available. One mentee mentioned that the program was doing great in educating new students. Another thought that the mentors were instrumental in keeping them abreast of their progress. If they were failing the mentors alerted them and helped them get back on track.

The other 40% who suggested that the program be improved gave recommendations for hosting more mentoring power house meetings. Another thought

that providing certification training would be helpful to enable the students to become more technologically savvy when they use the computers for this purpose. The recommendations also included the call for more off campus experience to see different organizations and to increase internship opportunities. Finally, there was the suggestion to increase the number of mentors by expanding to other disciplines. This would allow the students to get connected quickly with another mentor should the previously assigned mentor leave the college or become unavailable to continue in the mentoring program.

To put the icing on the cake, so to speak, I asked question 11 to get additional information that the mentees might have about their mentoring program. This question reinforced some of the previous sentiments that the mentees articulated throughout the interview. Some had praises for the program and the positive experiences that they encountered. Mentee Five was all over in smiles as he spoke:

Amazing mentoring experience! I learned a lot for self-development. My mentors encourage them [mentees] to not be afraid of change or adapt to change and encourage new students to take advantage of it. They encourage us to keep the communication links with mentors. Wonderful experience!

Others felt the mentoring program eliminates stress through the opportunities to network.

The mentor-mentee relationship was a way to listen and find solutions together as the faculty coaches went beyond the norm to help. Mentee Nine encouraged others to join the program to avoid pitfalls. It will be helpful in future. Overall, all 10 mentees thought it was a good program and they had some amazing experiences.

Summary of the Outcomes

The previous sections provided detailed descriptions and explanations of the faculty mentors and mentees' experiences as participants of BBC's mentoring program. The data analyses were conducted both manually and with the use of the NVIVO qualitative software to generate patterns, essences, and excerpts that were coded into relevant themes and sub-themes. The main data sources came from individual interviews with the faculty mentors and mentees which underwent member checking for confirmability of the data. Once this member checking was completed the transcripts were coded and triangulated to identify areas where both the mentors and mentees' responses corroborated in explaining the phenomenon. I also took field notes which were utilized in crafting the narrative for the analysis to better explain how the respondents felt or what posture they adapted as they answered the interview questions.

The previous sections also discussed all the relevant themes that were generated in accordance with specific interview questions and carefully selected excerpts that help illuminate the participants' perceptions. Six major themes respectively, were generated from the mentors and mentees' interview data. The forthcoming sections will summarize the outcomes logically and systematically in relation to the problem and the three research questions. This discussion will be cemented in the larger body of literature on mentoring and incorporate the Tinto's theoretical framework that undergirds this study.

Review of the Problem and Research Questions

The problem in this qualitative multiple case study inquiry at this research site a mentoring program has been instituted to offset student drop-out rate. However, no

research has been done to find out the success of mentoring service on the retention of first year college students. The fact that students in most Florida colleges continue to drop out due to frustration and loss of interest even when they are equipped with advisors to guide new students, the drop-out rate continues because there is a need for one-to-one attention to students (DiMaria, 2016). First year college students may need more than advisors as well as mentors to guide them through their first year experience for them to successfully complete their program of study. It was against this background that this inquiry was conceptualized within Tinto's (1999) theoretical framework. Tinto's academic and social model is a re-known and most influential model that identifies factors that lead to, and predict student's academic success and persistence to college completion.

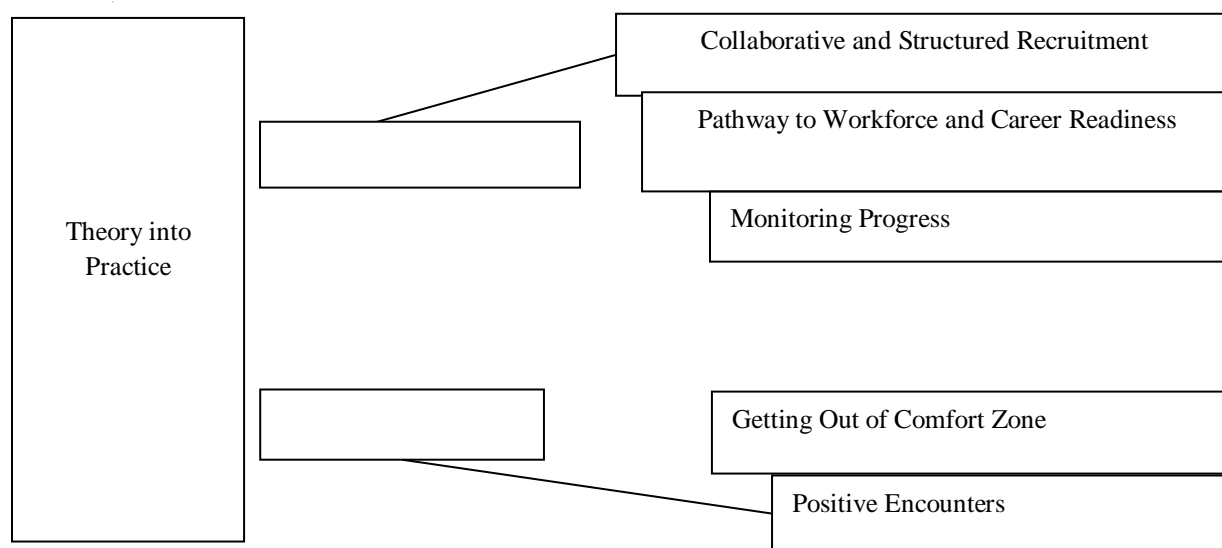
To investigate the problem at BBC, I explored three research questions which were embodied within the theoretical framework. The three questions were:

1. How has the BCC's mentoring program supported first year college students to continue in college?
2. What do first year college students perceive as integral in a mentoring program to increase persistence until completion of their program of study?
3. What are faculty mentors' perceptions of the impact of mentoring program on retention?

The discussion of the findings will focus on these three research questions while incorporating relevant literature to solidify the outcomes. The overall findings of the

study orchestrate BBC's mentoring program in a positive light where there is a strong mentor-mentee relationship that yield successful student outcomes towards retention and attrition. Therefore, research question one that asks: 'How has the mentoring program supported first year college students to continue in college?' is confirmed by both the faculty mentors and mentees' data as illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4.



Impact of BCC's Mentoring Program on Student Retention

Figure 4 illustrates themes generated from two data sets that are pivotal in answering research question one. Based on the faculty mentors' responses it can be surmised that BBC's mentoring program has supported the students' retention due to the strong emphasis on application of the Tinto's theoretical model that guided their practice. Both mentors attested that their mentoring model relies on this theory which illuminated why they solicited others in collaborative efforts to initiate a structured recruitment

process. Noteworthy is the fact that the student advisors and other staff members organized their own methods of ensuring that all first year students are sensitized about the mentoring program and the numerous resources available through Single Stop.

Reference is made to Faculty Mentor's Two statement:

...we work closely with our colleagues, our faculty members, our staff members, [and] senior advisors...What makes the relationship with the senior advisors instrumental, is the fact that, all students who are entering the college have to undergo a mandatory orientation...So, having the relationship with the senior advisors really provides us with the platform of getting the students...Overall a combination of faculty, staff, advisors, and their own recruitments (Faculty Mentor Two, July, 2017).

This is strong evidence to support the existing literature that promotes mentoring from a relational perspective where mentoring describes a specific type of coaching, collaborating, or consulting in an environment that enhances growth through discussions (Weinstein, 2016). Principally, the high level of BBC's faculty and staff input in the recruitment process, demonstrates the extent to which they were prepared to ensure that their students achieve success. Because of this, several other studies are apposite (e.g., Christie's (2014) study which found benefits in initiating a first year mentoring program was instituted to support new students to make the transition to university, to help them integrate into college, and to refer them to other sources of support when needed. Nolte, Bruce, and Becker's (2015) study showed how strong mentoring relationships helped doctoral students complete their degrees in a collaborative community environment.

The findings of this inquiry also juxtapose a collaborative, structured recruitment process with the efforts to ensure that the mentees acquire pertinent workforce and career-readiness skills from the very beginning when they enroll in the college. This is an important aspect of the components of BBC's mentoring program as both data sets had evidences that authenticate this fact. Faculty Mentor One confirmed workforce and career-readiness as a major objective and focus of the mentoring program. She noted the importance of "teaching soft skills like, job-seeking skills, interviews, dressing for an interview, dining etiquette, [or] legal issues, budgeting/money management" as important skills taught in the mentoring program. Similarly, Mentee Two, Mentee Seven, Mentee Eight and Mentee Nine attested to the benefits of the mentoring program in developing their personas and equip them with interpersonal skills so they can overcome fear when interacting with people.

These findings are consistent with Hurtado, Cuellar, and Guillermo-Wan's (2013) study that examine two constructs the Diverse Learning Survey to understand students' sense of validation for understanding college student retention and success. The two validation constructs were students' perception of academics in the classroom and general interpersonal information. Hurtado, et al. (2013) emphasized student diversity which plays a major role in attainments that embody a variety of multicultural competencies for effective leadership and lifelong learning (p. 7). The study on BBC's mentoring program is cognizant of the diversity of the students in the mentoring program and that they would have different cultural habits and norms. By allowing them to be inculcated through the mentoring program workforce and career-readiness activities they

would develop the appropriate dispositions to fit into the general work environment and becoming productive citizens.

Research Question One is further answered by the data that yielded the themes *monitoring progress* and *positive encounters*. The data sets have strong evidence to support how BBC is support first year college retention. Faculty Mentor Two provided statistics to justify the extent to which the program supports the students. For instance, their preliminary data was significant as gleaned from students' satisfaction surveys (i.e., over 80% satisfaction, when they participated in the program in terms of impact and level of satisfaction; **84%** felt they had made good progress on the event topics with their mentee; **93%** indicated the PC responded to them in a timely manner; **92%** indicated they knew what it takes to be a good mentor, and **94%** indicated they were receiving the support they need to have a successful mentor/mentee relationship). These statistics speak volume to the students' perceptions about the mentoring program. Undoubtedly, they have good reasons to want to persist until completion.

The positive encounters that the mentees attested to help to confirm the statistics highlighted. All of the mentees were enthusiastically frank in their responses when they described their experiences as, *good experience, hold interest, interesting, great so far, great connections, wonderful, nice meetings, enjoyable, learned a lot about people, and build self-confidence*. Bearing in mind that no study was ever conducted on BBC's mentoring program, these findings are significant because it will increase the scant literature on successful mentoring models. The existing literature shows that students are generally less prepared for higher education studies and are more at risk of dropping out

or taking longer to complete their qualifications (Visser & van Zyl, 2013). However, proponents of strong mentoring programs (Demitriadis et al., 2102; McGuire, 2013) embraced mentoring relationships between students and faculty as a well-established practice for helping individuals successfully negotiate new or unfamiliar territory.

Research Question Two sought answers on what first year college students perceive as integral in a mentoring program to increase persistence until completion of their program of study. The findings revealed that students value the *positive experiences* derived from faculty support and the variety of *student services* available to them. These two essential components were reinforced by the strong evidences articulated in the *green light accolades* verbalized by all mentees. The fact that they also saw the *career-readiness* goals or focus of the mentoring program as essential suggests how integral these are to enable them to persist until completion.

The findings suggest that there were concerted views about the positive impact that faculty mentors had on their academic and personal development. All mentees were in one accord as evident by the similarities in their responses of, “Good experience, great so far, enjoyable, interesting, wonderful, nice meetings, great interactions, holds our interest”. These phrases promote strong mentor-mentee relationships that can be considered integral in a mentoring program to increase persistence until completion.

Remarkably was the extent to which mentees applauded the accessible student services at BCC. For instance, notice the similarity in these two responses that came from two mentees who were interviewed separately: “Amazing; great support; faculty help out in everything; keeps abreast like finding scholarships; hiring opportunities; and faculty

emails to stay in touch” (Mentee Four) and “Amazing 100%! I have their contact information in case I need them [*faculty mentors*]. They are dedicated! Wonderful staff! Really awesome!” (Mentee Five). This data is significant to support the value they place on having access to the resources and faculty mentors through the mentoring program. According to Greenfield, Keup, and Gardner (2013), colleges should provide resources for students related to the first year experience of college students. Additionally, students come from high schools into college and need some time to settle down in their first year so teachers should help them to feel comfortable in their new environment. Based on the mentees’ testimonials, it can be confirmed that they appreciated the assistance provided to them.

With the foregoing elucidations, it can be reasoned without any doubts that the accolades that were extended to the faculty mentors at BCC were well-earned. The mentees felt 100% positive about the mentoring program. While 60% wanted no changes to the current structure, there was 40% who offered recommendations for extending what was already in place. None of the mentees offered any negative views. Among the recommendations were a call for more mentoring power house meetings; computerized certification training; increase off campus experiences; and expanding the mentoring program to other disciplines. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the mentoring program is meeting the students’ needs in its current structure.

The final section will discuss the findings in light of research question three that states: What are faculty mentors’ perceptions of the impact of mentoring program on retention? Based on the research findings, both faculty mentors felt that the mentoring

program was impactful for retention. The evidences include the statistical data accomplished through the focus group and satisfaction surveys conducted, the informal interactions with the students, and the opportunities to strengthen school and community partnerships. When both faculty mentors were asked to provide additional information deemed necessary to promote the mentorship program, they acknowledged the strong relational bonds they have existing in the college. This suggests that they embraced shared visions and skills in implementing the mentoring program despite the 52% graduation rate mentioned by both faculty mentors. I noted also that Faculty Mentor One asserted that overall the impact on the students was due to their case management strategy that allowed them to stay on top of things and figure out students' needs on a semester basis. This will help them to graduate thus fulfilling the purpose of the mentoring program.

Conclusion

In summary, this section provides a logical and systematic discussion of the findings in light of the research problem and the three research questions that were coined to investigate the problem. Included also, is a brief description of the data analysis procedures that generated the themes that are used to discuss the findings pertaining to each research questions. The consensus among the participants in this study is that BBCs' mentoring program is productive and beneficial to sustain students' retention. The next section will discuss the project deliverable as an outcome of the results.

Section 3: The Project

In this section, I offer policy recommendations with details including background of existing policy, a summary of findings, and a literature review. I also describe a position paper with details to be presented to the mentors of BCC. The faculty members (mentors) and students (mentees) as participants all agreed that the mentoring program is essential to increasing retention of first year college students. The data analysis generated themes that could help increase the retention rates of students.

Background to Existing Problem

The literature I reviewed for this project provided evidence that first year college students who enter college after they graduate from high school tend to face several problems once they enter into the college environment. Juho (2016) purported that students have to work hard to gain success in their studies, sometimes with study skills that are far from optimal. To reduce the amount of drop-outs and to enhance student's learning, special efforts should be made to keep students on the track. First year college students struggle to adjust to the learning environment and face difficulty with starting a new curriculum. The college pace is faster than high school, and the responsibility is placed on students to be more accountable for academic growth within this new environment. DiMaria (2016) noted that the transition from high school to college can overwhelm many first year college students; hence, they often undergo a stressful induction into their new environments (Fullick, Smith-Jentsch, & Cielzo, 2012). This stress is likely due to result from a struggle with new academic structures, classroom expectation, uncertainty, and exam performance pressures. Wright, Jenkins-Guarnieri,

and Murdock (2012) believed that decisions about persistence play an integral role in career development goals. Mentoring at the student level typical of desired outcomes include persistence, commitment to a field as major, and retention from year to year resulting to graduation (Baker, 2015; Davidson, Feldman, & Margalit, 2012). Therefore, it is important that first year college students get help from their faculty mentors to adjust to the new college settings.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study showed that a mentoring program at BCC could help students to stay in college until the end of their studies. The participants interviewed all support the mentoring program that was instituted on the campus. They all voiced how the program was beneficial to them and clearly allowed them to acclimatize into their new environment. The study confirmed that stakeholders should continue to offer the mentoring program for first year college students entering college. Based on these findings, I will discuss additional literature in support this study.

Impact of Mentoring on Students' Retention

There are many mentoring guidelines targeting students' retention and encouraging participant motivation towards mentoring programs. O'Shea, Bennett, and Delahunty (2017) mentioned several guidelines to develop a structured mentoring program in an organization. The first guideline is to develop clear objectives within the organization. The second guideline is to ensure that administrators develop a meaningful culture within the school and orient the participants. The third guideline is to evaluate and match mentors' personal skills with the needs of the mentees. The fourth guideline is to

train mentors to increase the effectiveness and value gained from the mentoring program. The fifth guideline requires the mentor to work with the mentee on the college journey (O'Shea, Bennett & Delahunty, 2017). I address each of these five guidelines in the following pages.

Students who I interviewed felt that the mentoring program at BCC helped them continue their journey in college. When I asked Mentee Four about how the mentoring program helped with her academic transition in this college, she responded,

It helped, well, first, when I first started, I was thinking about getting an AS but when I met my mentor, she encouraged me to go in this program where I would get three degrees all in the course of six years, so she helped to put me on the right path, because I wasn't sure what I wanted to do yet and I was going about it the wrong way (Mentee Four, July 2017).

This mentee's response corroborated Faculty Mentor Two response that, The mentoring program was established on Tinto's Model and that he talked so much about different ways to retain, from institutional support to reviewing how to be holistic with the students, those different things that help to retain students in a school, so those are the components. We have the Single Stop program as well, where the students have the resources to get the help. So, if is any specific issues from the families that hindering the student from continuing in school, that's what we were established for. For discretional things, I can't. We have a school counselor that can assist with these, hmm, I'm looking for a job, we connect them with the advisement of career services specialist who specializes in

helping students with finding a job; we have the school mentoring host program that if they don't know how to talk to a classroom professor we have a BCC professor or faculty staff who work with students and connect you with a variety of resources (Faculty Mentor Two, July 2017).

These participants' observations demonstrate O'Shea, Bennett, and Delahunty (2017) first mentoring guideline that the mentoring program should have clear objectives. The mentoring process was instituted to help the students acclimatize within institutional backgrounds. Weisling, and Gardiner (2018) posited that most mentors are experienced teachers who have a demonstrated track record of classroom success as evident by professional evaluations and student achievement data. Being effective in the classroom, however, does not automatically translate to success as a mentor. Rather, like any new skill, mentoring has its own skills, knowledge, and practices, all of which must be developed and practiced with feedback.

Mentors are valuable members of an institution. Peer mentors may be especially good candidates for facilitating mentees' academic and social integration. As I noted in findings, they may not only provide direct academic assistance but they also help mentees develop a sense of belonging at the institution by connecting them with other students and campus-based resources and activities (Holt & Fifer, 2016). HwaTiew, Koh Creden, and Tamwas (2017) evaluated the mentoring of graduate nurses. The findings revealed that graduate nurses often face difficulties in the transition to practice in highly complex, dynamic, and intense healthcare environments. Induction, orientation, mentorship, and preceptorship programs are often developed and implemented to help graduates in their

professional and workplace transition. These findings are opposite to this study on first year college students because Faculty Mentor One explained that mentoring works as a roadmap to students' academic success. Specifically, Faculty Mentor One stated,

Mentoring works; we also, as much as we have generations that think they know it all; they don't know it all and they still need that guidance. We still do have students who are looking for someone to kind of show them the rope. I think it's about relationships. At the end of the day some students are connected to someone or something. It is the same way that students' pursuit if they have connection to someone are likely to graduate versus someone who have no connections at all and that's part of the premise of a mentoring program. I would say that mentoring works; we also, as much as we have generations that think they know it all; they don't know it all and they still need that guidance. We still do have students who are looking for someone to kind of show them the rope. I think it's about relationships. At the end of the day some students are connected to someone or something. It is the same way that students have connection to someone are likely to graduate versus someone who have no connections at all and that's part of the premise of a mentoring program (Faculty Mentor One, July 2018)

Description and Goals

My intention was to use a multiple case study approach to explore the mentoring and retention process at BCC. Interviewing was the method used to gather information individually from two mentors and 10 mentees. The study was to understand the extent to which mentoring of first year college students reduces the number of students who drop

out of college. The mentoring program at BCC was instituted to assist the college's first year students to integrate into college life and remain until completion of their academic program. All first year college students were expected to enroll in the program during the recruitment stage, which was done through various methods with faculty input in the recruitment process. The BCC mentoring program is a structured collaborative process that seeks to enroll first year students in a system that provides numerous services and support to ensure retention and increase the institution's graduation rate. Therefore, the study, which I described in Section 2, provided findings specifically related to BCC's mentoring program and what both faculty mentors and mentees perceive were integral in helping their students succeed in college. I found that BCC's mentoring program had three main goals, which were to:

- Develop a support system that enabled first year students (mentees) to successfully complete their program of study under the guidance of competent faculty mentors who were experts in the mentees' area of interest or study.
- Provide opportunities for the mentees to develop career-readiness skills through social interactions with faculty mentors, peers, and community partners.
- Increase the institution's overall retention and graduation rates.

The findings from this study on BCC's mentoring program are consistent with the literature I reviewed for this study, which showed that mentoring models that exist at the college level provide great support that motivates students to remain in college until completion of their academic program. Therefore, based on the scholarly literature and

the findings of this study, I determined that the policy recommendation position paper was a suitable genre for this project. This position paper acknowledges that the setting up of mentorship programs should allow students to receive assistance geared toward reducing attrition that will subsequently help students and society. This research supports professional and educational practice in the sense that stakeholders have been exploring methods to prevent student drop out. As such, this paper examines mentoring as one of the many methods to alleviate or minimize this problem.

Project Rationale

I chose a paper with policy recommendations with detail to address the problem in the study because it brings to attention the fact that a mentoring program could address the retention situation at BCC. It is anticipated that the paper can be used as a form of documentation that BCC and other institutions might consider to design a structured or goal-oriented mentoring program. The recommendations include, but not limited to the following:

- Long term human resources to support the students, through a mentoring handbook that will guide both faculty mentors and mentees
- Creating strategic goals geared towards:
 - Student retention and sustainability of the mentoring program to include community partnerships.
 - Curriculum integration with community service initiatives that facilitate mentoring and promote career readiness opportunities.

As a result of instituting a mentorship program for all first year students, through the adoption of this policy document, BCC would be required to invest the necessary fiscal and human resources into a long term commitment to support first year college students. First year college students would enroll for the program at BCC as a priority and strategy for increasing retention. Current research, consistent with my study results, have supported the idea that providing on-going mentoring for first year college students leads to more effective adjustment to college life. O'Sullivan, Mulligan, Kuster, Smith, and Hannon (2017) stated that the frequency of mentoring has proven important in terms of the quality of the mentoring relationship.

The data analysis revealed several themes that were consistent across both the mentors and the mentees that were discussed earlier. However, for the college to become aware of the study, the results and recommendations must be shared with the college, on the issues surrounding student retention in the mentoring program. The researcher will share the paper with committee of shareholders of the college in a presentation. Results of the findings will be presented and the recommendations, hopefully, will be useful in the mentoring program at the college and other colleges in the nation. However, before discussing the proposed recommendations, the paper will outline several outcomes from the interviews that were conducted. These outcomes include:

- A written survey to assess the needs of students as they enter the college.
- Administrators working with mentors to utilize survey results of students' needs and place them with mentors accordingly.

- Once mentors receive the information about their mentees, they should meet with them and help them set goals for the first semester.
- Mentors should set a schedule for mentees to meet with them whether once per week or once per month.
- Allow mentors and mentees to continue to have rallies to motivate one another to network.

The faculty mentors attested to using the data collected from the written surveys done by the first year college students when they entered the college to match them with the appropriate mentors who can assist them. This practice enables them to achieve their retention goals. When mentors and mentees successfully achieve the goals, retention at the college may increase and so will graduation rates. The practice of making meeting schedules with the mentees to help them set academic goals will help the students to discover an increase in engagement and academic success. The consistent meetings and ongoing mentor-mentee collaborations throughout the semesters can be perceived as the most instrumental practice that kept the mentees' motivational level intact as they progress throughout their program of study. This policy recommendation paper will enable them to have written documentations on their mentoring program. The documented recommendations may be used to enhance their mentoring program. In the forthcoming section, each recommendation will be discussed in light of the findings and include relevant literature that supports the positions articulated.

Review of the Literature

The literature review was done to identify ways that the mentoring program can be utilized as a beneficial service offered to first year college students to help them to continue on their educational pathway to completion of their programs. A wide search of the databases such as SAGE, ERIC, and Education Research Complete were used. The search terms used were retention, mentoring, self-efficacy, student learning, funding, policy, student engagement, mentoring and service learning and mentoring and community-based learning. Several books, data reports, and journal articles used to support the literature review and findings from the data collection. The forthcoming sections will discuss two of the major themes that will form the core of my policy recommendations. There will also be discussions on the project proposal and implementation including a timeline, the roles of faculty mentors and mentees, project implications with possible social change implications.

Pathway to Workforce and Career Readiness

Question nine on the Mentors' interview question states, "How would you describe assistance provided to the students to enhance their social experience? Faculty Mentor One answered, "After school events; informal check-ins on how the program is helping mentees, interaction ongoing, and phone reminders." Faculty Mentor Two responded:

Mentors help students to keep abreast with all co-curricular activities that enhance social interactions; interactive simulations; intentional conversation to develop intercommunication skills. Other services that are provided are networking 101;

change-making service component by going into the community more to make use of community services in terms of social interactions like engagement activities. These activities allow students the opportunity to have more conversations. Students engage in Rotary Clubs, Ronald McDonald House helping disadvantaged families and students. Students also engage in community work and help at local food banks (Faculty Mentor Two, July 2018).

All of the activities mentioned seem to help prepare students for the workforce and open up avenues to allow them to discover their career readiness path. Antonelli, O'Mally and Steverson (2018) noted that mentoring allows experienced professionals to share knowledge and advice young jobseekers facing barriers to employment. Mentoring relationships are beneficial for college-aged populations. The academic and social integration framework proposed by Tinto (1993) emphasized the importance of faculty and student interaction to achieve the ultimate purpose of retention. However, long term human resources are needed to support the students, which was evident to some extent from the findings of this BCC study. The findings from this study did not reveal if there were documentations of a college-wide mentoring policy, for example, a mentoring handbook that guides both faculty mentors and mentees. This form of documentation would provide a roadmap for the faculty and students and yield a more structured model that could make it easy for revisions and amendments as needed, to provide better mentoring services.

BCC seems to provide many avenues for students to be well rounded and engaged in learning through various on campus and community-based activities. Holt and Fifer

(2018) discussed that mentors could be encouraged to schedule social events and individual meetings with mentees early in the semester, when mentees might be more responsive to their outreach efforts. The early interactions and contacts could provide mentees with early mastery experiences. The findings on BCC's mentoring program revealed that the mentors and mentees have opportunities to link with community partners within the surrounding communities. However, neither the mentors nor the mentees provided any clearly defined goals or guidelines that describe their school-community partnerships. Therefore, the institution could benefit from creating strategic goals geared towards student retention and sustainability of the mentoring program that include community partnerships. These strategic goals could be integrated into the various program curriculums through a service learning or experiential learning lens.

The literature on service learning for college-level students are emerging rapidly, because educational institutions are now developing various models of service learning, embedded in the social change and transformational learning and leadership theories, for their curricula activities. I highlight here two of the service-learning studies that have been conducted with successful outcomes. Bosman, Chelberg & Winn (2017), conducted a study where pre-engineering education college students experienced positive social change as a result of participating in a mentoring program that included service learning components. Lopez (2018), examined what constituted value or lack thereof of obtaining a college degree for first-generation college students who were from low socio-economic background and lacked role models at home. Of relevance in Lopez's study was the role of mentors who serve as support structure to assist students in their quests for a degree.

The BCC Mentoring program can strengthen their career-readiness focus through collaborative input as a college mentoring committee. This mentoring committee's responsibility will be to develop clear strategic goals to guide the mentoring services they provide to their mentees. These strategic goals should incorporate opportunities to build strong college and community partnerships. Hastings (2016) advocate for service-learning as an intersecting of asset-based service where community members work in partnership with other entities, including colleges/universities to pool social capital to build the community. Service learning helps to create strong relationships as individuals from these entities utilize their knowledge, talents, and strengths to build the community.

Collaborative and Structured Recruitment Process

The question, "What is the process of enrolling in the mentor program" was asked. Faculty Mentor One responded, "Utilized a recruitment process whereby students can complete application followed by an orientation into the Mentoring Power Hour." Faculty Mentor Two answered, "Faculty and staff, senior advisors recruit students via mandatory orientation. Advisors contact leads to the students, and do enrolment by sending emails to students. Sometimes they do their own orientation." The process of enrollment should be attractive for college freshmen so that they immediately are motivated to sign up for the program. Dorner and Kumar (2017) stated that similar to other learning situations, collaborative mentoring processes are largely determined by mentees' perceived satisfaction while they receive mentoring. Mentors can guide first year college students on the path to success if they guide them well on the journey to success. Likewise, Plaskett, Bali, Nakkulu, Harris (2018), concurred that providing

models and mentors can help students see the path ahead before they take the next steps to make it easier for them to choose those steps with care. Mentors should take the responsibility of mentoring their mentees well. Trusted mentors can give mentees the opportunities to learn, experience, and mature in knowledge through participation and discussion. Ruiz-Ferrandez, Ortega, and Roca-Piera (2018) posited that mentoring consists of guiding the students in their learning route, supporting them in the comprehension of some difficult concepts. This necessitates retaining the same mentors across the mentees' first year upon enrolment (Hurd, Tan & Loed, 2016). According to Hurd and colleagues, retaining natural mentoring relationships can help underrepresented college students who may be vulnerable to psychological distress which may result in poor academic performance. Mentors can identify the main challenges students face and prevent them from becoming blocked in a theoretical notion that affect their progression. The extent to which students become self-confident about their progress is linked with Sharma and Writer (2015) promulgations about understanding mentorship framework from a cognitive-psychological perspective. Sharma and colleague believe that one's behavior resolves around self and personality which are pre-requisites for personal effectiveness. At BCC, the mentors embraced a collaborative recruitment process but the extent to which they were aware of the psychological needs were not evident from the data.

It is vital that good mentoring takes place at the beginning of the first year college student's formative process. At BCC, the structure of their Mentoring Power Hour and some of the topics of discussion were provided during the interview to enable me to have

an idea of or how they conduct the sessions or utilize their time. However, their structure could benefit from the outcome of having clearly defined goals of what mentoring roles, responsibilities, and expectations are, and being able to review these goals periodically to see the progress they are making. The students' feedback and testimonials that were generated can continue to provide some data for reviewing their strategic goals.

Mentoring Progress

In any program, such as the mentoring program, it is important for those involved to determine the academic impact. It is wise for stakeholders to monitor progress for accountability to ensure that the program is working or not working. The researcher asked the question, "What level of impact does your mentoring program have on students' academic success? Faculty Mentor One replied, "Recent satisfaction survey revealed 80% satisfaction. Students felt they were equipped to go another semester, and had increased self-awareness of resources and services with the involvement of faculty mentors." She continued to give some percentages about the first year college students which are:

- 84% feel they have made good progress on the event topics with their mentee.
- 92% indicate they know what it takes to be a good mentor
- 94% indicate they are receiving the support they need to have a successful mentor/mentee relationship.

The surveys provided the mentors with documentations they can use to evaluate how effective the mentoring program is effective in the lives of the first year college students. In a pilot study of the Peraj Mentoring Program, done in Mexico, Moreno-

Candil and Garza (2017) discussed that the model incorporated and how the program implementation was monitored. Of relevance was the screening prospective mentors, matching mentors and mentees based on the information gathered regarding personality and interests, mentor training, and an established frequency of contact of the mentoring relationship. These processes mirror the BCC Mentoring program; however, the specific methods of documentation of mentor training and frequency of contact of the mentoring relationship provide a framework that could improve BCC's mentoring program. Faculty Mentor Two at BCC commented, "Faculty mentors connect with first year college students through case management that enables her to stay on top of things that help them figure out their needs from semester to semester which help them to graduate." This response provides some insights in their descriptions of their mentoring program, but it does not confirm that the mentors were trained or if they kept any record of their frequency of contacts with the mentees. Therefore, I recommend the idea of a policy documentation mentioned earlier, as an avenue wherein BCC could stipulate some of these requirements to guide both mentors and mentees.

Project Needs

Needed Resources. In order to achieve any of the recommendations described, there will be need for total college-wide buy-in to collaborate and provide expertise in developing a mentoring handbook that describes exactly what their goals, roles, and responsibilities are for both the faculty mentors and the mentees. I also recommend developing a blueprint of a strategic plan that will complement or strengthen any existing college-wide strategic plan already in place. This strategic plan will serve as the leverage

for integrating learning beyond the classroom and ultimately lay the foundation for career-readiness and workforce. To achieve these needed resources faculty commitment time will be needed to offer the professional input to develop these resources.

Existing Support. Based on the research findings, BCC already has a mentoring program which is highly supported by faculty members, staff, and personnel who supervise the multiple services offered to the students. Therefore, these support personnel will be at advantage if BCC decides to embrace the policy recommendations herein. There is the likelihood that because of diversity of expertise within the institution, there will be the possibility of enacting the timeline and achieving the proposed recommendations within the specified timeframe.

Potential Barriers. Within an organization, there is always the risk of resistance, which can present itself as barriers, whether for a short term or long term. While it may not be easy to determine the potential barriers that this research project might initiate, I envisage minimum resistance because the faculty mentors and mentees are enthusiastic about the program. However, since no research was conducted on their mentoring program, they might welcome the recommendations towards improvement. If they do, then I think that the buy-in needed to develop the mentoring handbook and design strategic goals to guide the mentoring program towards the institution's overall retention goals, might trigger potential barriers at the onset. If this barrier happens, I anticipate it to be short term.

Potential Solutions to Barriers. I intend to assist the BCC faculty and staff to implement the recommendations inherent in this section. It is my intention to seek a

forum at BCC where I can share my research findings and offer the recommendations towards improvement. Being present, will enable them to ask questions about the study and clarify anything pertaining to the recommendations. I will also try to find out what they already have as documentations that guide what they do in the mentoring program. I will use this information to explain to them the value of the resources they have and the existing support mechanisms they could tap into, to develop the strategic goals and create the mentoring handbook. I believe that when they realize that they already have something to build on it will minimize any potential barriers that might be evident.

Proposal for Implementation

The literature reviewed for this policy recommendation paper provides a framework for developing a more structured mentoring program at BCC. Tinto's (1993) mentoring model promotes an integration of academic and social interactions as a medium for institutional retention and departure. The integral aspects are related to the efforts made between faculty and students to create the kind of learning community that fosters relationship building where the students feel a sense of belonging. Once this sense of belonging is achieved, the students are more likely to persist. It is against this backdrop that this proposal is developed, where I anticipate that a more structured mentoring program that might yield greater benefits than what is currently being experienced at BCC. Therefore, I recommend that the faculty mentors at BCC seek to develop a mentoring handbook for both faculty mentors and mentees. With clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and expectations documented in the form of a mentoring handbook, both mentors and mentees will have a guide for better mentoring outcomes. I

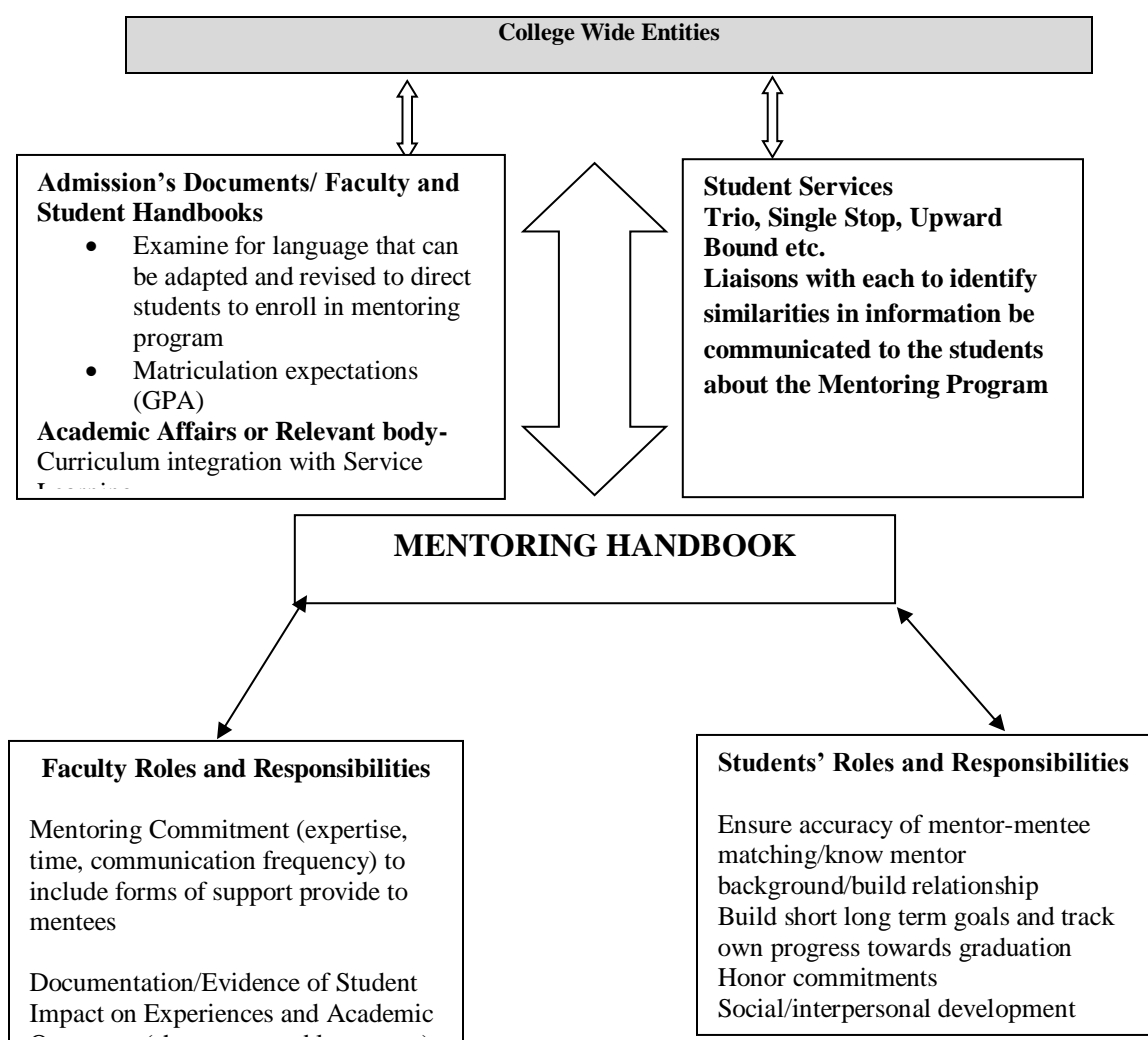
believe also that in the mentoring framework, there should be opportunities for peer mentoring where senior students who have been in the mentoring program for more than a year could work alongside faculty mentors to mentor freshmen.

The literature on peer mentoring documented successful innovations among students. Faucette and Nugent (2017) explored peer mentoring in a teacher education where physical education faculty provided support to students who acted as senior peer mentors for junior mentees. Faucette and colleague concurred to the benefits of having experience students serve as mentors for less experience colleagues. Similarly, Morales, Ambrose-Roman and Perez-Maldonado (2015) assessed the effectiveness of a peer mentoring program for students in developmental mathematics program. The findings revealed increased academic performance in mathematics and affective dispositions especially related their self-efficacy and on campus social integration and engagement. Therefore, I believe that these studies strongly support this proposal which seeks to articulate how BCC can develop mentoring handbook to enhance their mentoring framework.

As shown in Figure 5, is a model that could be used as the sources of information for developing the mentoring handbook. As reflected in the model, the admission's brochures, program recruitment catalogs, and college-wide student and faculty handbooks are good sources of information that inform the students and faculty members about the college. Therefore, these documents could be examined for possibilities of identifying phrases and/or statements that could be adapted or revised to develop this mentoring handbook. Additionally, examination of the various documentations of

students' services that are already in place (e.g., Single Stop, Trio, Upward Bound) might have information that could be included in the mentoring handbook. These faculty members and staff from these student services could also be involved in the actual writing process of this mentoring handbook that would identify and describe the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the mentoring program as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5



Model for Identifying Sources for Developing a Mentoring Handbook

I am also proposing that the faculty members involved with the mentoring program develop some strategic goals for the mentoring program that support the overall college mission. These strategic goals can help them keep track of the student impact and outcomes annually. These goals will also enhance BCC's mentoring data collection mechanisms that are already in place. Either the Academic Affairs Committee or other relevant body should be able to review these mentoring goals and accomplishments, especially in the case when periodical changes in curriculum integration via the service learning components are requested. These service learning activities are their strongest links to help the students to acquire skills geared towards workforce and career readiness. The strategic goals will also provide an avenue to revise or develop syllabi in the students' program so that they can be properly awarded credits for their efforts. When the students can see clearly the connections between their academic programs and the activities that they engage in, they will be more inclined to do their best. Ferrell (2016) referred to this integration as involvement or engagement in the academic environment which is important during the first year of study.

Crisp, Vicki, Griffin, Lunsford and Pifer (2017) suggested that when designing mentoring program activities, it is important to consider the interrelated forms of support offered to the mentees. In this sense, considerations should be given to "the psychological and emotional support; degree and career support; academic subject knowledge support; and the presence of the role model" (p. 87). Further, the activities that might be promoted from these supports should be aligned with the goals and structure of the mentoring program. The findings from the BCC's mentoring research

indicated that there are students' services and activities already in place. Therefore, these could be developed further and aligned with the goals. With this structure or framework, it will make it easier to identify if goals are being achieved and inform faculty about students who might be disengaged (Pruett & Absher, 2015). Ensuring that all students achieve success is integral for retention and graduation. Once students are admitted, the onus is on faculty and staff to be committed to providing the support that will promote successful outcomes (Ferrell & DeCrane 2016).

Timeline: Based on the foregoing descriptions of my proposal geared towards improving BCC's mentoring program, I am assuming that it would take approximately two months from the initial introductory session to the compilation of this mentoring handbook and creating strategic goals. This could be done during the summer months of 2019 when there is likely to be more time to reflect on the previous year and plan for the next. The process will involve setting up an initial meeting with the mentoring faculty and administrators to share the findings of the study. Table 2 illustrates the proposed timeline that I would use to achieve the purpose of this proposal implementation.

Table 2. *Proposed Project Timeline*

Date	Persons to be Involved	Activity
Starts June 2019	Researcher (convenes meeting	Shares Study Report/Findings
Ends of June 2019	with BCC's Faculty and Administrators)	and Proposal
	Administrator and Mentoring team	Discuss the proposal and set up dates for planning sessions Identify a planning committee
	Researcher and designated planning committee	Researcher to guide the committee in developing the contents of the Mentoring Handbook Faculty work on this in a timely manner Draft of Mentoring Handbook
Starts July 2019	Researcher and Designated	
Ends July	team/faculty members	Develop strategic goals based on overall college mission

Students Role/Faculty Role

Tinto's (2012) model describes the dynamic interactions between both faculty, staff, and students to facilitate academic and social integration. Therefore, the students

have a responsibility to ensure that they set expectations for themselves. In this proposal, the students' data provided the information to help determine how successful the mentoring program was and how they perceived the process. While they do not have a physical role in this proposal implementation, they will be involved in the future when they receive their mentoring handbook as their guide. However, their data will be part of the report which will be used during the discussion of developing a mentoring handbook. Once the mentoring handbook is developed their roles will be to use the materials and provide timely feedback about how the handbook enables positive mentoring experience.

The faculty's role is key to a successful implementation of this proposal. Their role involves researching and committing to several meetings to develop the mentoring handbook and creating strategic goals to guide the mentoring process annually. They will be instrumental in assisting with communicating the changes in the mentoring program to the college-wide population to ensure full faculty and student buy-ins. Additionally, they will assist with curriculum revisions or development that can reflect greater coherency with the strategic goals to enable the service learning components of their community-based initiatives.

Project Implications

Possible Social Change Implications

Ferrell and DeCrane (2016) stated that in order to improve retention and graduation, colleges should create the conditions that promote these outcomes. Ferrell and DeCrane also noted that programs need to explain to the students the high expectations placed on them before they enroll. This will help them to succeed. In Tinto's

model, the academic and social integration components help to conceptualize these expectations which are likely to yield the outcome of social change. The mentoring program at BCC seeks to nurture the mentees' academic and social attributes to enable them to develop into productive adults who are capable of finding their rightful place in the workplace. Wills, Elder and Molina (2018) concurred that Tinto's (1987) seminal papers provided explanations of how common courses or shared experiences can improve students' success. However, through the various engagement opportunities the students themselves are expected to demonstrate personal change in their behavior and motivation to achieve among other personal attributes (Morales, Ambrose-Roman & Perez-Maldonado, 2015; Wills, Elder & Molina).

Faculty members, especially those directly involved in the mentoring program at BCC, are cognizant of the importance of their commitments to students' success. The findings confirmed this fact for the faculty mentees. They attested to Tinto's model as the framework they used to guide the mentoring process. Therefore, the possible social change for them could be inherent in participating in the training sessions to develop the mentoring handbook and create the strategic goals. Through this collaborative process, there is the likelihood that they will embrace the mentoring program better and be motivated to commit to its cause. Crisp and colleagues (2017) claimed that mentoring relationships enable faculty mentors to become more competent thus increasing their overall expertise.

Stakeholders/Larger Contexts

The idea of college-readiness came about because of the renewed focus on minorities, low-income, and first-generation students who were performing lower than their counterparts in their baccalaureate studies (Le¹, Mariano & Faxon-Mills, 2016). Limited social support was among the numerous factors that negatively influenced these students. Therefore, colleges have since begun to implement programs that can help retain these students while improving their graduation rates. At BCC, the mentoring program was instituted to help students succeed and graduate with the academic and social skills that make them employable upon graduation. This proposal will facilitate some of the social changes needed that can benefit stakeholders and the larger workforce contexts. Primarily, by having a more structured mentoring program, the students will be motivated to persist and institution's graduation rate will increase. By persisting, they will achieve their goal of workforce and career readiness. Secondly, with better prepared graduates in the workplace, there is a likelihood that the social environment will be more conducive to production. Workers will demonstrate better social behaviors and will be more inclined or motivated to work and remain for longer time with an employer thus reducing staff turnovers.

Section 4: Reflection and Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the mentoring and retention process at BCC. Prior to conducting this study, no previous research was done on BCC's mentoring program. Data collection was done through face-to-face interviews with two faculty mentors and their 10 mentees. The study was conducted to gain an understanding of the extent to which mentoring of first year college students reduced the number of students who drop out of college. Tinto's theory was used to guide its development. I explored literature on mentoring best practices and used other researchers' findings throughout the study to both justify the problem and substantiate the findings of this study to determine the direction for the BCC mentoring program. During the literature review, I also focused on emerging themes from the study findings to help address the identified gaps in the mentoring program that participants shared regarding their experiences. Based on the findings of the study, I concluded that a policy recommendation paper would offer BCC and its stakeholders a model on best practices to develop and implement a more structured mentoring program.

As I have articulated in various sections of this study, a mentoring program that is embedded within a theoretically-structured retention model, such as Tinto's interactionalist model (Carson & Reed, 2015; Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016; O'Shea, Bennett & Delahunty, 2017), is likely to yield better success. Scholars have also noted the positive impact of mentoring programs in building strong and lasting relationships between mentors and mentees, which increase academic performance and overall career development (Dimitriadis, von der Borch, Stormann, Meinel, Moder, Reincke, & Fischer,

2012). It was against this background, which corroborated the findings of this study that I sought to ground the discussion for this section. Therefore, in Section 4, I discuss strengths and limitations of this project study and suggest alternative definitions of the problem. I identify alternative solutions to the local problem and provide a reflection on lessons learned, my personal growth as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. I conclude with an overall discussion on the importance of this study.

Project Strengths and Limitations

This project describes BCC's model that was guided by Tinto's theory, which is a widely studied, tested, and critiqued model. This can be considered as a significant strength that had positive implications, as indicated by the strong mentoring relationship that the participants attested to. Therefore, the project deliverable will provide the faculty mentors at BCC with evidence for their claim that their mentoring program fosters a positive environment wherein the mentees develop a sense of belonging through their strong mentor-mentee relationship. This bonding relationship is a good way of helping students to adjust in college (Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2011).

The mentees at BCC unanimously voiced that the mentoring program was beneficial to them and it clearly allowed them to acclimatize into their new environment. Acclimatization in their new environment played an integral role especially because all, except one of the mentees, were transitioning from high school into college, a factor that could have posed challenges for these students (DiMaria, 2016; Fullick, Smith-Jentsch, & Cielzo, 2012; Whissemore, 2014). Notably also, was the fact that among the services provided to the mentees were assistance to find scholarships, hiring opportunities, and

financial aid, which indicated that these mentees might have come from low-income families (Witte, 2013). In this case, the project deliverable proves instrumental in providing research evidence that BCC's faculty can utilize to explore future research initiatives.

Throughout the literature reviewed for this project, there was strong support for mentoring as a means of increasing retention in educational institutions. This project also confirms these findings and expands the literature. All of the mentees in BCC's mentoring program found the mentoring program beneficial for their academic success and retention. The fact that they recommended that the stakeholders should continue to offer the mentoring program for first year college students entering college can be considered one of the strengths of the project. Additionally, the faculty mentors mentioned that their mentoring program at BCC was instituted to assist the college's first year students to integrate into college life and remain until completion of their academic program. Based on these findings, I conclude that the goals of BCC's mentoring program were to increase the institution's overall retention and graduation rates, and provide opportunities for the mentees to develop career-readiness skills through social interactions with faculty mentors, peers, and community partners. The project deliverable validates that the BCC mentoring program had clear objectives that were consistent with O'Shea, Bennett, and Delahunty's (2017) recommendations that a mentoring program should have clear objectives as guidelines. In this vein, the faculty mentors of BCC's mentoring program would have established the directions for their mentoring program.

Included as part of this project deliverable is a policy recommendation paper, which describes the rationale to address the problem highlighted in the project. The recommendations were developed after carefully analyzing the findings to identify how BCC could improve the mentoring program to address the needs of its first year students. I also considered what would be needed to facilitate the suggested recommendations. In developing these recommendations, I drew from Wesling and Gardiner's (2018) assertion that mentors must demonstrate a track record of classroom success as evident by professional evaluations and student achievement data. I also cogitated on O'Sullivan, Mulligan, Kuster, Smith, and Hannon's (2017) suggestion that the frequency of mentoring contacts is essential to enable the quality of the mentoring relationship. These scholarly attestations strengthen the foundations of this project and provide reasonable justifications for proposing positive change to the existing structure or framework of BCC's mentoring program and others in general.

There were two significant limitations pertaining to this study. First, the findings revealed that only 32% of incoming students tested as college ready; 17% of all students and 19% of Hispanics tested into English for academic purposes (EAP) coursework, and 51% of all students needed developmental education coursework in reading, writing, algebra, or some combination. While these statistics are very glaring, this study did not explore how having such a large group of underprepared students affected the college's overall graduation rate. Therefore, further studies could determine the extent to which incoming students with limited English proficiency affect college-readiness and the overall graduation rate at BCC.

Second, is that I have discussed the benefits of faculty academic expertise as integral to provide the roadmap for the students' tenure while under their mentoring charge. Professional literature highlighted that, while faculty expertise is commendable, training in mentoring practices would yield better outcome when mentors have both expertise and training (Wesling & Gardiner, 2018). This project did not provide a professional development model to facilitate this training. Therefore, further studies would have to be done in order to design a professional development model to support the mentoring program.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The problem identified in Section 1 of this study, focused on the challenges that first year college students faced when transitioning from high schools to college (DiMaria, 2016; Fullick, Smith-Jentsch, & Cielzo, 2012). However, the problem descriptions did not include how peer mentoring and faculty training in mentoring skills would help to minimize the problems that freshmen encountered when they began their college journey. The project focused primarily on understanding how mentoring was used as a means of decreasing the attrition rate and promoting college retention. Based on the findings from this study and other scholarly work, I found that a structured mentoring program is beneficial to promoting student retention. However, to achieve this, BCC will need to factor in mentorship training for faculty mentors wherein they can develop the necessary skills needed for effective mentoring. I recommend that this professional development model includes opportunities for mentors to apply the mentoring skills they

acquire by training senior mentees who could then peer mentor their juniors—similar to a modified version of the train the trainer model.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

This study was my first research experience. Therefore, I have gained a wealth of knowledge about conducting qualitative research using a case study design. The entire research process, from the conceptualization of the research questions to development of the project afforded much professional and academic growth. Being in the role of the researcher, I understood the benefits of exploring the study through a qualitative lens which I believe was the most appropriate design to investigate the impact BCC's mentoring program had on student retention. Although I had to adhere to Walden University's project study format, I had to apply my own unique writing style to articulate the contents of this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) discussed the importance of the language qualitative researchers use to encode their writings because the word choice conveys how we perceive the needs of the audiences for whom we write. Therefore, by writing this narrative report, my scholarship has emerged, as I anticipate publication of this study. Additionally, being a teacher who never taught at the college level, I had no clue about the challenges that these freshmen face and how the college addresses these challenges. By conducting this study, it has increased my understanding to the extent that I can make connections with how mentoring at the elementary level might have implications for the students when they get to high school and then to the college level.

Project Development

One of the requirements for this study was to develop a project that would meet the needs of the mentoring program at BCC. Initially, I thought about developing a professional development model but later switched to a policy recommendation paper after carefully considering and evaluating the outcome of the study. I believe that the policy recommendation paper would provide a better roadmap to improve the structure of BCC's mentoring program, because such a structure was needed before exploring professional development options. This struggle between developing a professional development model or a policy recommendation paper mirrors some of the decisions that qualitative researchers have to make considering the outcome of their studies and writing for multiple audiences. Creswell and Poth (2018) highlighted this challenge by stating that, as qualitative researchers engage in the process of writing the qualitative study, they may not realize the path of their writing process until the final written report is completed. I concur with Creswell and colleague because as I began writing the project development, ideas first appeared fuzzy but the writing gradually took form after several revisions. I believe that the development of the policy recommendation paper provides a better focus for the readers to interpret the project development.

Reflection on the Importance of Work

When I started this dissertation journey, I saw no end in view for completing this project, mainly because I lacked the scholarly skills for academic writing. I was daunted by numerous attempts to achieve approval from my dissertation committee and Walden's

University Research Review Board. Looking back, I am now extremely impressed by the final product of my efforts. Not only have I seen improvement in my academic writing but I can see the importance of conducting this research, especially since it will become the first of its kind for BCC's mentoring program. This study will provide valuable resource for BCC and other institutions that seek to develop or improve their mentoring program. Generally, this project will expand the existing literature on college mentoring programs.

From personal perspective, I concede to the importance of this work that I have excelled in my understanding of qualitative research. I feel confident about my ability to teach a course or to mentor others in conducting qualitative research. I applaud my dissertation mentors for their patience and guidance throughout the process. The patience and guidance are attributes that I will transfer to my future practice as a researcher or mentor for others. Finally, my quest to conduct future qualitative research studies remains high, as this scholarly work has equipped me with the knowledge and skills to become an effective qualitative researcher.

Implications

This study provides findings in regard to the mentoring program at BCC which has implications for understanding how having a structured mentoring program in an institution supports student retention. Therefore, the study findings and proposed policy recommendation paper can provide insights into how educational institutions that set up a structured mentoring program or improve existing ones. By conducting this project, it

adds to the existing literature by providing another approach to developing a mentorship framework.

Social Change

The assumption drawn from this project is that when the students enroll in BCC's mentoring program, they will experience social change in the way they perceive themselves as learners with aspirations for success. They are more likely to strive to reach the finishing line, and while pursuing this goal, they will acquire pertinent life skills that will make them better citizens within the workforce and communities. In essence, the institution would have achieved its organizational goal of preparing and graduating students who are ready for the workforce or chosen careers.

Future Research

This study has potentials to extend the existing literature on college mentoring programs. However, the scope of the study was confined to the specific research topic, methods, and methodology. Therefore, I recommend that future study be done using a grounded theory approach with the possibility of developing a theory for understanding the mentoring phenomenon. I also mentioned the two possibilities for future research: First was the unpreparedness of college freshmen at BCC. By exploring the extent to which freshmen with limited English proficiency affect college-readiness and overall graduation rate at BCC, using quantitative approach is worthy of investigation. Second has to do with understanding how developing a professional development model could impact mentors and mentees' mentoring skills which can be a modified version of the train the trainer model using other qualitative designs.

Conclusion

The findings of this study on the mentoring program at BCC unveiled evidences that are consistent with the literature on mentoring in colleges and other higher education institutions, where having a structured mentorship program fosters students' academic growth, retention, and professional development. The mentors and mentees at BCC provided corroborated evidences that supported the need to maintain their mentoring program. The study findings revealed that faculty mentors had clear objectives and a theoretical framework that guided their mentoring practices. The findings from the mentees' data highlighted strong mentor-mentee relationship that motivated them to persist with their program of study. Notwithstanding the success of BCC's mentoring program, the study findings revealed areas that could be improved to enable a more structured mentoring program. Based on the need for improvement, a policy recommendation paper was developed to address the retention situation at BCC. The recommendations include, making long-term investment in the fiscal and human resources to support first year college students through the development of strategic goals aimed at student retention, community partnerships, and curriculum integration. These long-term commitments and charting of a more structured mentoring program are more feasible to increase retention and the overall workforce and career-readiness goals.

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Appendix A: The Project

In this section, I offer policy recommendations with details including background of existing policy, a summary of findings, and a literature review. I also describe a position paper with details to be presented to the mentors of BCC. The faculty members (mentors) and students (mentees) as participants all agreed that the mentoring program is essential to increasing retention of first year college students. The data analysis generated themes that could help increase the retention rates of students.

Background to Existing Problem

The literature I reviewed for this project provided evidence that first year college students who enter college after they graduate from high school tend to face several problems once they enter into the college environment. Juho (2016) purported that students have to work hard to gain success in their studies, sometimes with study skills that are far from optimal. To reduce the amount of drop-outs and to enhance student's learning, special efforts should be made to keep students on the track. First year college students struggle to adjust to the learning environment and face difficulty with starting a new curriculum. The college pace is faster than high school, and the responsibility is placed on students to be more accountable for academic growth within this new environment. DiMaria (2016) noted that the transition from high school to college can overwhelm many first year college students; hence, they often undergo a stressful induction into their new environments (Fullick, Smith-Jentsch, & Cielzo, 2012). This stress is likely due to result from a struggle with new academic structures, classroom expectation, uncertainty, and exam performance pressures. Wright, Jenkins-Guarnieri,

and Murdock (2012) believed that decisions about persistence play an integral role in career development goals. Mentoring at the student level typical of desired outcomes include persistence, commitment to a field as major, and retention from year to year resulting to graduation (Baker, 2015; Davidson, Feldman, & Margalit, 2012). Therefore, it is important that first year college students get help from their faculty mentors to adjust to the new college settings.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study showed that a mentoring program at BCC could help students to stay in college until the end of their studies. The participants interviewed all support the mentoring program that was instituted on the campus. They all voiced how the program was beneficial to them and clearly allowed them to acclimatize into their new environment. The study confirmed that stakeholders should continue to offer the mentoring program for first year college students entering college. Based on these findings, I will discuss additional literature in support this study.

Impact of Mentoring on Students' Retention

There are many mentoring guidelines targeting students' retention and encouraging participant motivation towards mentoring programs. O'Shea, Bennett, and Delahunty (2017) mentioned several guidelines to develop a structured mentoring program in an organization. The first guideline is to develop clear objectives within the organization. The second guideline is to ensure that administrators develop a meaningful culture within the school and orient the participants. The third guideline is to evaluate and match mentors' personal skills with the needs of the mentees. The fourth guideline is to

train mentors to increase the effectiveness and value gained from the mentoring program. The fifth guideline requires that the mentor to work with the mentee on the college journey (O'Shea, Bennett & Delahunty, 2017). I address each of these five guidelines in the following pages.

Students who I interviewed felt that the mentoring program at BCC helped them continue their journey in college. When I asked Mentee Four about how the mentoring program helped with her academic transition in this college, she responded,

It helped, well, first, when I first started, I was thinking about getting an AS but when I met my mentor, she encouraged me to go in this program where I would get three degrees all in the course of six years, so she helped to put me on the right path, because I wasn't sure what I wanted to do yet and I was going about it the wrong way (Mentee Four, July 2017).

Mentee's Four response corroborated Faculty Mentor's Two response that:

The mentoring program was established on Tinto's Model and that he talked so much about different ways to retain, from institutional support to reviewing how to be holistic with the students, those different things that help to retain students in a school, so those are the components. We have the Single Stop program as well, where the students have the resources to get the help. So, if is any specific issues from the families that hindering the student from continuing in school, that's what we were established for. For discretional things, I can't. We have a school counselor that can assist with these, hmm, I'm looking for a job, we connect them with the advisement of career services specialist who specializes in

helping students with finding a job; we have the school mentoring host program that if they don't know how to talk to a classroom professor we have a BCC professor or faculty staff who work with students and connect you with a variety of resources (Faculty Mentor Two, July 2018).

These participants' observations demonstrate O'Shea, Bennett, and Delahunty (2017) first mentoring guideline that the mentoring program should have clear objectives. The mentoring process was instituted to help the students acclimatize within institutional backgrounds. Weisling, and Gardiner (2018) posited that most mentors are experienced teachers who have a demonstrated track record of classroom success as evident by professional evaluations and student achievement data. Being effective in the classroom, however, does not automatically translate to success as a mentor. Rather, like any new skill, mentoring has its own skills, knowledge, and practices, all of which must be developed and practiced with feedback.

Mentors are valuable members of an institution. Peer mentors may be especially good candidates for facilitating mentees' academic and social integration. As I noted in findings, they may not only provide direct academic assistance but they also help mentees develop a sense of belonging at the institution by connecting them with other students and campus-based resources and activities (Holt & Fifer, 2016). HwaTiew, Koh Credy, and Tam (2017) evaluated the mentoring of graduate nurses. The findings revealed that graduate nurses often face difficulties in the transition to practice in highly complex, dynamic, and intense healthcare environments. Induction, orientation, mentorship, and preceptorship programs are often developed and implemented to help graduates in their

professional and workplace transition. These findings are opposite to this study on first year college students because Faculty Mentor One explained that mentoring works as a roadmap to students' academic success. Specifically, Faculty Mentor One stated,

Mentoring works; we also, as much as we have generations that think they know it all; they don't know it all and they still need that guidance. We still do have students who are looking for someone to kind of show them the rope. I think it's about relationships. At the end of the day some students are connected to someone or something. It is the same way that students' pursuit if they have connection to someone are likely to graduate versus someone who have no connections at all and that's part of the premise of a mentoring program. I would say that mentoring works; we also, as much as we have generations that think they know it all; they don't know it all and they still need that guidance. We still do have students who are looking for someone to kind of show them the rope. I think it's about relationships. At the end of the day some students are connected to someone or something. It is the same way that students have connection to someone are likely to graduate versus someone who have no connections at all and that's part of the premise of a mentoring program (Faculty Mentor One, July 2018)

Description and Goals

My intention was to use a multiple case study approach to explore the mentoring and retention process at BCC. Interviewing was the method used to gather information individually from two mentors and 10 mentees. The study was to understand the extent to

which mentoring of first year college students reduces the number of students who drop out of college. The mentoring program at BCC was instituted to assist the college's first year students to integrate into college life and remain until completion of their academic program. All first year college students were expected to enroll in the program during the recruitment stage, which was done through various methods with faculty input in the recruitment process. The BCC mentoring program is a structured collaborative process that seeks to enroll first year students in a system that provides numerous services and support to ensure retention and increase the institution's graduation rate. Therefore, the study, which I described in Section 2, provided findings specifically related to BCC's mentoring program and what both faculty mentors and mentees perceive were integral in helping their students succeed in college. I found that BCC's mentoring program had three main goals, which were to:

- Develop a support system that enabled first year students (mentees) to successfully complete their program of study under the guidance of competent faculty mentors who were experts in the mentees area of interest or study.
- Provide opportunities for the mentees to develop career-readiness skills through social interactions with faculty mentors, peers, and community partners.
- Increase the institution's overall retention and graduation rates.

The findings from this study on BCC's mentoring program are consistent with the literature I reviewed for this study, which showed that mentoring models that exist at the college level provide great support that motivates students to remain in college until

completion of their academic program. Therefore, based on the scholarly literature and the findings of this study, I determined that the policy recommendation position paper was a suitable genre for this project. This position paper acknowledges that the setting up of a mentorship programs should allow students to receive assistance geared toward reducing attrition that will subsequently help students and society. This research supports professional and educational practice in the sense that stakeholders have been exploring methods to prevent student drop out. As such, this paper examines mentoring as one of the many methods to alleviate or minimize this problem.

Project Rationale

I chose a paper with policy recommendations with detail to address the problem in the study because it brings to attention the fact that a mentoring program could address the retention situation at BCC. It is anticipated that the paper can be used as a form of documentation that BCC and other institutions might consider to design a structured or goal-oriented mentoring program. The recommendations include, but not limited to the following:

- Long term human resources to support the students, through a mentoring handbook that will guide both faculty mentors and mentees
- Creating strategic goals geared towards:
 - Student retention and sustainability of the mentoring program to include community partnerships.
 - Curriculum integration with community service initiatives that facilitate mentoring and promote career readiness opportunities.

As a result of instituting a mentorship program for all first year students, through the adoption of this policy document, BCC would be required to invest the necessary fiscal and human resources into a long term commitment to support first year college students. First year college students would enroll for the program at BCC as a priority and strategy for increasing retention. Current research, consistent with my study results, have supported the idea that providing on-going mentoring for first year college students leads to more effective adjustment to college life. O'Sullivan, Mulligan, Kuster, Smith, and Hannon (2017) stated that the frequency of mentoring has proven important in terms of the quality of the mentoring relationship.

The data analysis revealed several themes that were consistent across both the mentors and the mentees that were discussed earlier. However, for the college to become aware of the study, the results and recommendations must be shared with the college, on the issues surrounding student retention in the mentoring program. The researcher will share the paper with committee of shareholders of the college in a presentation. Results of the findings will be presented and the recommendations, hopefully, will be useful in the mentoring program at the college and other colleges in the nation. However, before discussing the proposed recommendations, the paper will outline several outcomes from the interviews that were conducted. These outcomes include:

- A written survey to assess the needs of students as they enter the college.
- Administrators working with mentors to utilize survey results of students' needs and place them with mentors accordingly.

- Once mentors receive the information about their mentees, they should meet with them and help them set goals for the first semester.
- Mentors should set a schedule for mentees to meet with them whether once per week or once per month.
- Allow mentors and mentees to continue to have rallies to motivate one another to network.

The faculty mentors attested to using the data collected from the written surveys done by the first year college students when they entered the college to match them with the appropriate mentors who can assist them. This practice enables them to achieve their retention goals. When mentors and mentees successfully achieve the goals, retention at the college may increase and so will graduation rates. The practice of making meeting schedules with the mentees to help them set academic goals will help the students to discover an increase in engagement and academic success. The consistent meetings and ongoing mentor-mentee collaborations throughout the semesters can be perceived as the most instrumental practice that kept the mentees' motivational level intact as they progress throughout their program of study. This policy recommendation paper will enable them to have written documentations on their mentoring program. The documented recommendations may be used to enhance their mentoring program. In the forthcoming section, each recommendation will be discussed in light of the findings and include relevant literature that supports the positions articulated.

Review of the Literature

The literature review was done to identify ways that the mentoring program can be utilized as a beneficial service offered to first year college students to help them to continue on their educational pathway to completion of their programs. A wide search of the databases such as SAGE, ERIC, and Education Research Complete were used. The search terms used were retention, mentoring, self-efficacy, student learning, funding, policy, student engagement, mentoring and service learning and mentoring and community-based learning. Several books, data reports, and journal articles used to support the literature review and findings from the data collection. The forthcoming sections will discuss two of the major themes that will form the core of my policy recommendations. There will also be discussions on the project proposal and implementation including a timeline, the roles of faculty mentors and mentees, project implications with possible social change implications.

Pathway to Workforce and Career Readiness

Question nine on the Mentors' interview question states, "How would you describe assistance provided to the students to enhance their social experience? Faculty Mentor One answered, "After school events; informal check-ins on how the program is helping mentees, interaction ongoing, and phone reminders." Faculty Mentor Two responded:

Mentors help students to keep abreast with all co-curricular activities that enhance social interactions; interactive simulations; intentional conversation to develop intercommunication skills. Other services that are provided are networking 101;

change-making service component by going into the community more to make use of community services in terms of social interactions like engagement activities. These activities allow students the opportunity to have more conversations. Students engage in Rotary Clubs, Ronald McDonald House helping disadvantaged families and students. Students also engage in community work and help at local food banks (Faculty Mentor Two, July 2018).

All of the activities mentioned seem to help prepare students for the workforce and open up avenues to allow them to discover their career readiness path. Antonelli, O'Mally and Steverson (2018) noted that mentoring allows experienced professionals to share knowledge and advice young jobseekers facing barriers to employment. Mentoring relationships are beneficial for college-aged populations. The academic and social integration framework proposed by Tinto (1993) emphasized the importance of faculty and student interaction to achieve the ultimate purpose of retention. However, long term human resources are needed to support the students, which was evident to some extent from the findings of this BCC study. The findings from this study did not reveal if there were documentations of a college-wide mentoring policy, for example, a mentoring handbook that guides both faculty mentors and mentees. This form of documentation would provide a roadmap for the faculty and students and yield a more structured model that could make it easy for revisions and amendments as needed, to provide better mentoring services.

BCC seems to provide many avenues for students to be well rounded and engaged in learning through various on campus and community-based activities. Holt and Fifer

(2018) discussed that mentors could be encouraged to schedule social events and individual meetings with mentees early in the semester, when mentees might be more responsive to their outreach efforts. The early interactions and contacts could provide mentees with early mastery experiences. The findings on BCC's mentoring program revealed that the mentors and mentees have opportunities to link with community partners within the surrounding communities. However, neither the mentors nor the mentees provided any clearly defined goals or guidelines that describe their school-community partnerships. Therefore, the institution could benefit from creating strategic goals geared towards student retention and sustainability of the mentoring program that include community partnerships. These strategic goals could be integrated into the various program curriculums through a service learning or experiential learning lens.

The literature on service learning for college-level students are emerging rapidly, because educational institutions are now developing various models of service learning, embedded in the social change and transformational learning and leadership theories, for their curricula activities. I highlight here two of the service-learning studies that have been conducted with successful outcomes. Bosman, Chelberg & Winn (2017), conducted a study where pre-engineering education college students experienced positive social change as a result of participating in a mentoring program that included service learning components. Lopez (2018), examined what constituted value or lack thereof of obtaining a college degree for first-generation college students who were from low socio-economic background and lacked role models at home. Of relevance in Lopez's study was the role of mentors who serve as support structure to assist students in their quests for a degree.

The BCC Mentoring program can strengthen their career-readiness focus through collaborative input as a college mentoring committee. This mentoring committee's responsibility will be to develop clear strategic goals to guide the mentoring services they provide to their mentees. These strategic goals should incorporate opportunities to build strong college and community partnerships. Hastings (2016) advocate for service-learning as an intersecting of asset-based service where community members work in partnership with other entities, including colleges/universities to pool social capital to build the community. Service learning helps to create strong relationships as individuals from these entities utilize their knowledge, talents, and strengths to build the community.

Collaborative and Structured Recruitment Process

The question, "What is the process of enrolling in the mentor program," was asked. Faculty Mentor One responded, "Utilized a recruitment process whereby students can complete application followed by an orientation into the Mentoring Power Hour." Faculty Mentor Two answered, "Faculty and staff, senior advisors recruit students via mandatory orientation. Advisors contact leads to the students, and do enrolment by sending emails to students. Sometimes they do their own orientation." The process of enrollment should be attractive for college freshmen so that they immediately are motivated to sign up for the program. Dorner and Kumar (2017) stated that similar to other learning situations, collaborative mentoring processes are largely determined by mentees' perceived satisfaction while they receive mentoring. Mentors can guide first year college students on the path to success if they guide them well on the journey to success. Likewise, Plaskett, Bali, Nakkulu, Harris (2018), concurred that providing

models and mentors can help students see the path ahead before they take the next steps to make it easier for them to choose those steps with care. Mentors should take the responsibility of mentoring their mentees well. Trusted mentors can give mentees the opportunities to learn, experience, and mature in knowledge through participation and discussion. Ruiz-Ferrandez, Ortega, and Roca-Piera (2018) posited that mentoring consists of guiding the students in their learning route, supporting them in the comprehension of some difficult concepts. This necessitates retaining the same mentors across the mentees' first year upon enrolment (Hurd, Tan & Loed, 2016). According to Hurd and colleagues, retaining natural mentoring relationships can help underrepresented college students who may be vulnerable to psychological distress which may result in poor academic performance. Mentors can identify the main challenges students face and prevent them from becoming blocked in a theoretical notion that affect their progression. The extent to which students become self-confident about their progress is linked with Sharma and Writer (2015) promulgations about understanding mentorship framework from a cognitive-psychological perspective. Sharma and colleague believe that one's behavior resolves around self and personality which are pre-requisites for personal effectiveness. At BCC, the mentors embraced a collaborative recruitment process but the extent to which they were aware of the psychological needs were not evident from the data.

It is vital that good mentoring takes place at the beginning of the first year college student's formative process. At BCC, the structure of their Mentoring Power Hour and some of the topics of discussion were provided during the interview to enable me to have

an idea of or how they conduct the sessions or utilize their time. However, their structure could benefit from the outcome of having clearly defined goals of what mentoring roles, responsibilities, and expectations are, and being able to review these goals periodically to see the progress they are making. The students' feedback and testimonials that were generated can continue to provide some data for reviewing their strategic goals.

Mentoring Progress

In any program, such as the mentoring program, it is important for those involved to determine the academic impact. It is wise for stakeholders to monitor progress for accountability to ensure that the program is working or not working. The researcher asked the question, "What level of impact does your mentoring program have on students' academic success? Faculty Mentor One replied, "Recent satisfaction survey revealed 80% satisfaction. Students felt they were equipped to go another semester, and had increased self-awareness of resources and services with the involvement of faculty mentors." She continued to give some percentages about the first year college students which were:

- 84% felt they had made good progress on the event topics with their mentees.
- 92% that indicated they knew what it takes to be a good mentor
- 94% indicated they were receiving the support they needed to have a successful mentor/mentee relationship.

The surveys provided the mentors with documentations they can use to evaluate how effective the mentoring program is effective in the lives of the first year college students. In a pilot study of the Peraj Mentoring Program, done in Mexico, Moreno-

Candil and Garza (2017) discussed that the model incorporated and how the program implementation was monitored. Of relevance was the screening prospective mentors, matching mentors and mentees based on the information gathered regarding personality and interests, mentor training, and an established frequency of contact of the mentoring relationship. These processes mirror the BCC Mentoring program; however, the specific methods of documentation of mentor training and frequency of contact of the mentoring relationship provide a framework that could improve BCC's mentoring program. Faculty Mentor Two at BCC commented, "Faculty mentors connect with first year college students through case management that enables her to stay on top of things that help them figure out their needs from semester to semester which help them to graduate." This response provides some insights in their descriptions of their mentoring program, but it does not confirm that the mentors were trained or if they kept any record of their frequency of contacts with the mentees. Therefore, I recommend the idea of a policy documentation mentioned earlier, as an avenue wherein BCC could stipulate some of these requirements to guide both mentors and mentees.

Project Needs

Needed Resources. In order to achieve any of the recommendations described, there will be need for total college-wide buy-in to collaborate and provide expertise in developing a mentoring handbook that describes exactly what their goals, roles, and responsibilities are for both the faculty mentors and the mentees. I also recommend developing a blueprint of a strategic plan that will complement or strengthen any existing college-wide strategic plan already in place. This strategic plan will serve as the leverage

for integrating learning beyond the classroom and ultimately lay the foundation for career-readiness and workforce. To achieve these needed resources faculty commitment time will be needed to offer the professional input to develop these resources.

Existing Support. Based on the research findings, BCC already has a mentoring program which is highly supported by faculty members, staff, and personnel who supervise the multiple services offered to the students. Therefore, these support personnel will be at advantage if BCC decides to embrace the policy recommendations herein. There is the likelihood that because of diversity of expertise within the institution, there will be the possibility of enacting the timeline and achieving the proposed recommendations within the specified timeframe.

Potential Barriers. Within an organization, there is always the risk of resistance, which can present itself as barriers, whether for a short term or long term. While it may not be easy to determine the potential barriers that this research project might initiate, I envisage minimum resistance because the faculty mentors and mentees are enthusiastic about the program. However, since no research was conducted on their mentoring program, they might welcome the recommendations towards improvement. If they do, then I think that the buy-in needed to develop the mentoring handbook and design strategic goals to guide the mentoring program towards the institution's overall retention goals, might trigger potential barriers at the onset. If this barrier happens, I anticipate it to be short term.

Potential Solutions to Barriers. I intend to assist the BCC faculty and staff to implement the recommendations inherent in this section. It is my intention to seek a

forum at BCC where I can share my research findings and offer the recommendations towards improvement. Being present, will enable them to ask questions about the study and clarify anything pertaining to the recommendations. I will also try to find out what they already have as documentations that guide what they do in the mentoring program. I will use this information to explain to them the value of the resources they have and the existing support mechanisms they could tap into, to develop the strategic goals and create the mentoring handbook. I believe that when they realize that they already have something to build on it will minimize any potential barriers that might be evident.

Proposal for Implementation

The literature reviewed for this policy recommendation paper provides a framework for developing a more structured mentoring program at BCC. Tinto's (1993) mentoring model promotes an integration of academic and social interactions as a medium for institutional retention and departure. The integral aspects are related to the efforts made between faculty and students to create the kind of learning community that fosters relationship building where the students feel a sense of belonging. Once this sense of belonging is achieved, the students are more likely to persist. It is against this backdrop that this proposal is developed, where I anticipate that a more structured mentoring program that might yield greater benefits than what is currently being experienced at BCC. Therefore, I recommend that the faculty mentors at BCC seek to develop a mentoring handbook for both faculty mentors and mentees. With clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and expectations documented in the form of a mentoring handbook, both mentors and mentees will have a guide for better mentoring outcomes. I

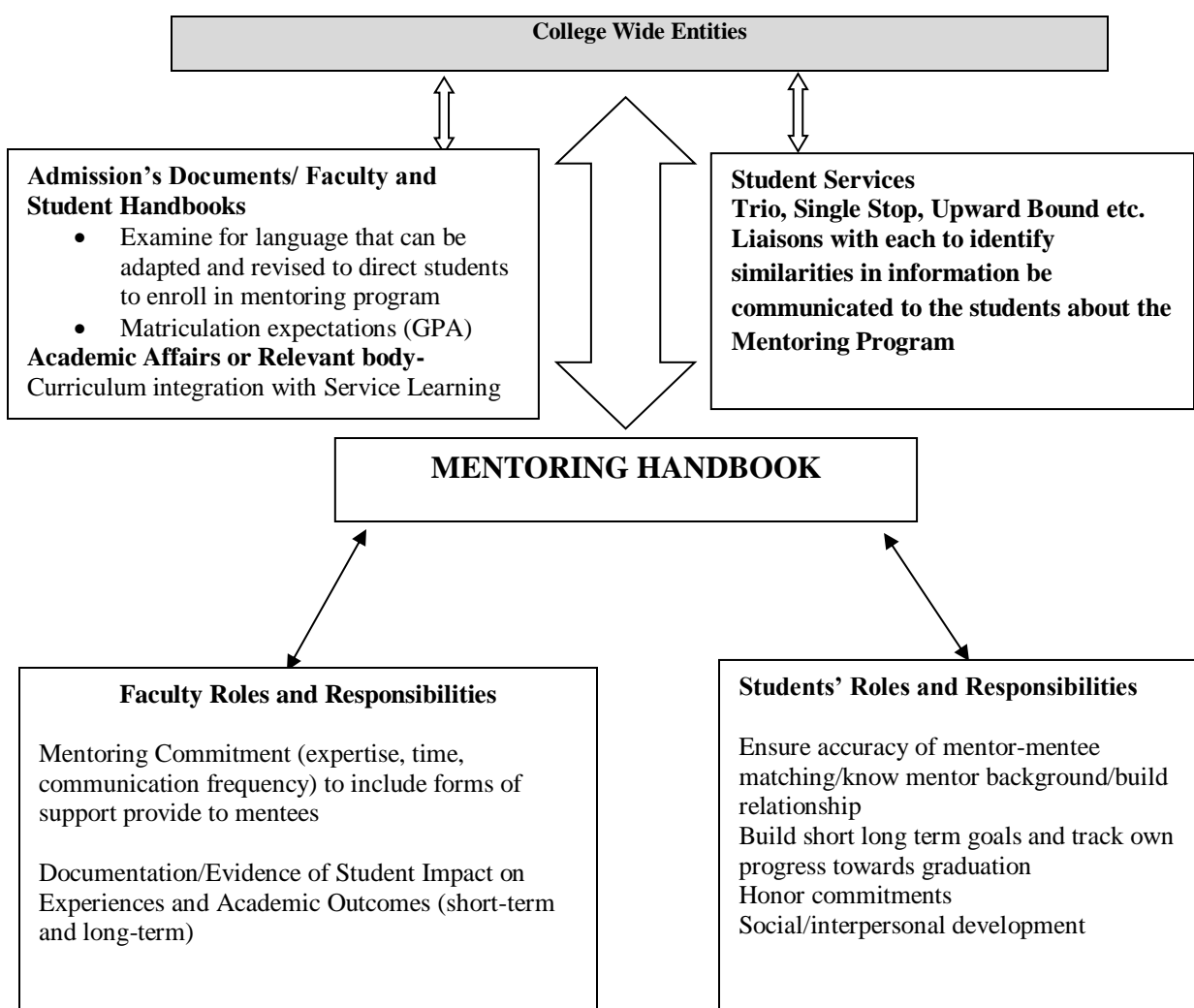
believe also that in the mentoring framework, there should be opportunities for peer mentoring where senior students who have been in the mentoring program for more than a year could work alongside faculty mentors to mentor freshmen.

The literature on peer mentoring documented successful innovations among students. Faucette and Nugent (2017) explored peer mentoring in a teacher education where physical education faculty provided support to students who acted as senior peer mentors for junior mentees. Faucette and colleague concurred to the benefits of having experience students serve as mentors for less experience colleagues. Similarly, Morales, Ambrose-Roman and Perez-Maldonado (2015) assessed the effectiveness of a peer mentoring program for students in developmental mathematics program. The findings revealed increased academic performance in mathematics and affective dispositions especially related their self-efficacy and on campus social integration and engagement. Therefore, I believe that these studies strongly support this proposal which seeks to articulate how BCC can develop mentoring handbook to enhance their mentoring framework.

As shown in Figure 5, is a model that could be used as the sources of information for developing the mentoring handbook. As reflected in the model, the admission's brochures, program recruitment catalogs, and college-wide student and faculty handbooks are good sources of information that inform the students and faculty members about the college. Therefore, these documents could be examined for possibilities of identifying phrases and/or statements that could be adapted or revised to develop this mentoring handbook. Additionally, examination of the various documentations of

students' services that are already in place (e.g., Single Stop, Trio, Upward Bound) might have information that could be included in the mentoring handbook. These faculty members and staff from these student services could also be involved in the actual writing process of this mentoring handbook that would identify and describe the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the mentoring program as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5



Model for Identifying Sources for Developing a Mentoring Handbook

I am also proposing that the faculty members involved with the mentoring program develop some strategic goals for the mentoring program that support the overall college mission. These strategic goals can help them keep track of the student impact and outcomes annually. These goals will also enhance BCC's mentoring data collection mechanisms that are already in place. Either the Academic Affairs Committee or other relevant body should be able to review these mentoring goals and accomplishments, especially in the case when periodical changes in curriculum integration via the service learning components are requested. These service learning activities are their strongest links to help the students to acquire skills geared towards workforce and career readiness. The strategic goals will also provide an avenue to revise or develop syllabi in the students' program so that they can be properly awarded credits for their efforts. When the students can see clearly the connections between their academic programs and the activities that they engage in, they will be more inclined to do their best. Ferrell (2016) referred to this integration as involvement or engagement in the academic environment which is important during the first year of study.

Crisp, Vicki, Griffin, Lunsford and Pifer (2017) suggested that when designing mentoring program activities, it is important to consider the interrelated forms of support offered to the mentees. In this sense, considerations should be given to "the psychological and emotional support; degree and career support; academic subject knowledge support; and the presence of the role model" (p. 87). Further, the activities that might be promoted from these supports should be aligned with the goals and structure of the mentoring program. The findings from the BCC's mentoring research indicated that there are

students' services and activities already in place. Therefore, these could be developed further and aligned with the goals. With this structure or framework, it will make it easier to identify if goals are being achieved and inform faculty about students who might be disengaged (Pruett & Absher, 2015). Ensuring that all students achieve success is integral for retention and graduation. Once students are admitted, the onus is on faculty and staff to be committed to providing the support that will promote successful outcomes (Ferrell & DeCrane 2016).

Timeline: Based on the foregoing descriptions of my proposal geared towards improving BCCs mentoring program, I am assuming that it would take approximately two months from the initial introductory session to the compilation of this mentoring handbook and creating strategic goals. This could be done during the summer months of 2018 when there is likely to be more time to reflect on the previous year and plan for the next. The process will involve setting up an initial meeting with the mentoring faculty and administrators to share the findings of the study. Table 2 illustrates the proposed timeline that I would use to achieve the purpose of this proposal implementation.

Table 2. *Proposed Project Timeline*

Date	Persons to be Involved	Activity
Starts June 2018	Researcher (convenes meeting	Shares Study Report/Findings
Ends of June 2018	with BCC's Faculty and Administrators)	and Proposal
	Administrator and Mentoring team	Discuss the proposal and set up dates for planning sessions Identify a planning committee
	Researcher and designated planning committee	Researcher to guide the committee in developing the contents of the Mentoring Handbook Faculty work on this in a timely manner Draft of Mentoring Handbook
Starts July 2018	Researcher and Designated	Develop strategic goals based on
Ends July	team/faculty members	overall college mission

Students Role/Faculty Role

Tinto's (2012) model describes the dynamic interactions between both faculty, staff, and students to facilitate academic and social integration. Therefore, the students have a responsibility to ensure that they set expectations for themselves. In this proposal,

the students' data provided the information to help determine how successful the mentoring program was and how they perceived the process. While they do not have a physical role in this proposal implementation, they will be involved in the future when they receive their mentoring handbook as their guide. However, their data will be part of the report which will be used during the discussion of developing a mentoring handbook. Once the mentoring handbook is developed their roles will be to use the materials and provide timely feedback about how the handbook enables positive mentoring experience.

The faculty's role is key to a successful implementation of this proposal. Their role involves researching and committing to several meetings to develop the mentoring handbook and creating strategic goals to guide the mentoring process annually. They will be instrumental in assisting with communicating the changes in the mentoring program to the college-wide population to ensure full faculty and student buy-ins. Additionally, they will assist with curriculum revisions or development that can reflect greater coherency with the strategic goals to enable the service learning components of their community-based initiatives.

Project Implications

Possible Social Change Implications

Ferrell and DeCrane (2016) stated that in order to improve retention and graduation, colleges should create the conditions that promote these outcomes. Ferrell and DeCrane also noted that programs need to explain to the students the high expectations placed on them before they enroll. This will help them to succeed. In Tinto's model, the academic and social integration components help to conceptualize these

expectations which are likely to yield the outcome of social change. The mentoring program at BCC seeks to nurture the mentees' academic and social attributes to enable them to develop into productive adults who are capable of finding their rightful place in the workplace. Wills, Elder and Molina (2018) concurred that Tinto's (1987) seminal papers provided explanations of how common courses or shared experiences can improve students' success. However, through the various engagement opportunities the students themselves are expected to demonstrate personal change in their behavior and motivation to achieve among other personal attributes (Morales, Ambrose-Roman & Perez-Maldonado, 2015; Wills, Elder & Molina).

Faculty members, especially those directly involved in the mentoring program at BCC, are cognizant of the importance of their commitments to students' success. The findings confirmed this fact for the faculty mentees. They attested to Tinto's model as the framework they used to guide the mentoring process. Therefore, the possible social change for them could be inherent in participating in the training sessions to develop the mentoring handbook and create the strategic goals. Through this collaborative process, there is the likelihood that they will embrace the mentoring program better and be motivated to commit to its cause. Crisp and colleagues (2017) claimed that mentoring relationships enable faculty mentors to become more competent thus increasing their overall expertise.

Stakeholders/Larger Contexts

The idea of college-readiness came about because of the renewed focus on minorities, low-income, and first-generation students who were performing lower than

their counterparts in their baccalaureate studies (Le¹, Mariano & Faxon-Mills, 2016). Limited social support was among the numerous factors that negatively influenced these students. Therefore, colleges have since begun to implement programs that can help retain these students while improving their graduation rates. At BCC, the mentoring program was instituted to help students succeed and graduate with the academic and social skills that make them employable upon graduation. This proposal will facilitate some of the social changes needed that can benefit stakeholders and the larger workforce contexts. Primarily, by having a more structured mentoring program, the students will be motivated to persist and institution's graduation rate will increase. By persisting they will achieve their goal of workforce and career readiness. Secondly, with better prepared graduates in the workplace, there is a likelihood that the social environment will be more conducive to production. Workers will demonstrate better social behaviors and will be more inclined or motivated to work and remain for longer time with an employer thus reducing staff turnovers.

Appendix B: Researcher's Protocol

I have followed Walden University's Project Study Manual closely. It stipulated certain sections that I have adhered to in the following ways:

- In the outline annotations, I have added clarity.
- I followed the procedure to enhance the formatting for better presentation.
- I have followed the Project Study Guide with all the required steps.
- My Proposal topic is, "Mentoring and Retention of First Year College Students at BCC." I have included all the sections of the Proposal. The Manual outlines: Title Page, Title, Problem Statement, Purpose, Significance, Background Literature, Framework, Research Question, Research Methodology and Design, and Possible Types and Sources of Information or Data.

Appendix C: Researcher Designed Interview Protocol- Mentee

RESEARCHER DESIGNED INTERVIEW PTOTOCOL FOR FIRST YEAR COLLEGE
STUDENT (MENTEE)*Participant's Biographic Information*

When did you enroll at this college?

What is your academic program?

Did you transfer from another institution to this college?

Are you currently enrolled in the college's mentoring program? (If yes, proceed to the next question. If No, the participant will not be allowed to proceed any further with the research).

When did you start?

Mentoring Experience

Please provide as much details as possible for each of the following questions.

1. How long have you been in the mentoring program at this college?
2. How did you learn about the mentoring program?
3. What motivated you to enroll in the mentoring program?
4. How would you describe your experience in the mentoring program so far?
5. How beneficial is the mentoring program for increasing academic transition in college?
6. How important is your mentoring program in your social development?
7. How would you describe the assistance you receive from faculty member(s) in the mentoring program?

8. How has the mentoring program helped you in finding resources to make your learning experience successful? If not, please say why?
9. How useful is the mentoring program in providing assistance even when off-campus?
10. What recommendations would you give to make the mentoring experience more meaningful for future first year students?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share about your mentoring experience?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix D: Researcher Designed Interview Protocol-Faculty

RESEARCHER DESIGNED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR FACULTY (MENTOR)

Participant Biographic Information

How long have you been at this college?

Please describe your position or status at this college.

Please describe your educational background and area of expertise.

Mentoring Experience

1. How long have you been in the mentoring program?
2. What is the appropriate number of first year college students you mentored per semester and/or academic year?
3. What is the process of enrolling in the mentoring program?
4. Please describe, with much detail, the components of your mentoring program?
5. What theory guides your mentoring practices?
6. What level of impact does your mentoring program have on students' academic success?
7. How do you know?
8. How do you ensure that the experience that the students gain from their mentoring program is successful?
9. How would you describe assistance provided to the students to enhance their social experience?
10. What is the graduation rate of the students who enroll in the mentoring program graduate? How is this data reported?

11. If all of the students who participate in your mentoring program do not graduate, what factors do you think contribute to it?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share about your mentoring experience or your mentoring program?

Thank you for your time! *

Researcher #07-13-0375198

Expiration date: 7-12-18

Appendix E: Completion Certificate

