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Mapping a Course to Success: The Relationship of a College to Career Navigation Exploratory Course to Academic Success

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Mapping a Course to Success: The Relationship of a College to Career Navigation Exploratory Course to Academic Success

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by

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ABSTRACT

Mapping a Course to Success: The Relationship of a College to Career Navigation Exploratory Course to Academic Success

by

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The purpose of this quantitative, comparative study was to determine the relationship between retention and academic success of students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course at a rural, community college serving a 14-county area in the Southeast U. S.

Archival data were collected from the participating community college's student information system. Other data examined for this study included the student's gender, at-risk status, and age. Retention data of the first-year, full-time students were collected and measured in accordance with the enrollment requirements of the community college's governing board. Data for academic success were collected and measured by student's cumulative final GPA.

Chi-square tests of independence and independent sample *t* tests were used to analyze the relationship of the College to Career Navigation exploration course with outcomes that measured student success. Overall findings from the chi-square tests indicated, that participants of the College to Career Navigation exploration course had significantly higher retention rates than those students who did not participate in the College to Career Navigation exploration course. The independent sample *t* tests indicated students who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course at significantly higher cumulative GPAs than those who did not participate in the course.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Shannon, my children, Imani and Patrick Jr., the Davis and the Currie families in appreciation of their unwavering love and support through this academic journey. If not for their love, support, and understanding this would have never been possible. Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

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A simple "Thank you" does not scratch the surface to show the magnitude of my appreciation I have for my wife who provided enduring patience, personal sacrifice, and emotional support though this journey. If were not for your infinite love and steadfastness I would not have endured this process. I am blessed and highly favored to have you always by my side! You traversed this journey with me, too! Psalms 121:1 (NKJV) I will lift up my eyes to the hills—

From whence comes my help?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1. Introduction

Community colleges are designed to be open-door institutions and historically serve a much more diverse, varied population of students than most baccalaureate-granting colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). Over 40% of first-time freshman are enrolled in community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2016). As open-door institutions (any student who has earned a high school diploma or General Educational Development certificate may attend), community colleges traditionally serve groups of individuals that may necessitate some type of academic accommodation, remediation as they begin higher education. First-generation college students, students of color, students with lower levels of academic achievement in high school requiring learning support, and students from low-income families are all demographic subgroups that are significantly overrepresented in community colleges when compared with similar demographic subgroup enrollment in baccalaureate-granting institutions (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005). As such, community colleges play an important role in providing access to higher education.

According to Tinto (1993) the first year is one of the most critical times for forming a basis for student success and persistence; the retention of a student from the first year to the second year is a constant gauge of success. Many incoming freshmen lack satisfactory academic or social skills that may preclude them from accomplishing their degrees. Administrators of higher education institutions, including community colleges, must be equipped to deliver the support and direction needed as they navigate their initial college experience on to their career. To help address these issues, many institutional officials have implemented a first-year experience, exploratory program. Gardner (1986) wrote, “The first-year experience is based on the concept that success during the first year provides the foundation on which the rest of college

experience is based" (p. 262). Exploratory programs, with varying names, are aimed to help students transition to higher education and explore scholastic, career, and co-curricular opportunities. Furthermore, Hunter (2006) advocated additional facets of an exploratory program including recruitment and admissions efforts, new student orientation programs, welcome week activities, service learning, common reading programs, first-year seminars, academic advising, academic support centers, supplemental instruction, undergraduate research initiatives, and learning communities educational initiatives to support with the transition to college life.

Statement of the Problem

Lower than expected academic performance and retention of students is an issue that many community colleges are presented with annually. Many administrators have implemented interventions to support student success in these areas. Zeidenberg et al., (2007) asserted officials of higher education should assess internal policies and procedures to understand administratively what can be accomplished to bring about change to improve student success. The academic faculty at a small southwestern community college in Tennessee has developed an experience exploratory program with concentrations around college success and career exploration to address the issues of academic performance and retention rates. The research specifically to community college that focuses on the college orientation and career exploratory courses is limited (e.g. Glass & Garrett, 1995; O'Gara et al., 2009; Zeidenberg et al., 2007).

Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative comparative study was to determine the differences in retention and the academic success between students who participated in a college experience and career exploration course, College to Career Navigation (CCN) exploratory course and students who did not participate in a CCN course at the participating community college in the fall semesters of 2017 and 2018.

Research Questions

To determine if there were relationships between retention and academic success after a first-year seminar course at a participating community college, 14 research questions were examined.

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 2: For students designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 3: For students not designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 4: For traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 5: For non-traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 6: For male students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 7: For female students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 8: Is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 9: For students designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 10: For students not designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 11: For traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 12: For non-traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 13: For male students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Research Question 14: For female students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Significance of the Study

This was a study of the implementation of a mandatory new college orientation and career exploratory program at a small, rural, open-access community college in the Southwest United States and its impact on the GPA, retention status, and graduation status of students who entered as degree-seeking, first-time freshmen. In addition, the study examined the findings among the same student group (participants and nonparticipants) and graduation status among their age and sex. This study will add to the existing body of research about connecting college orientation and career exploration.

Community college administrators and leaders must create policies and curriculum, which address the issues of student retention and academic success in their institution. Program development, such as the career exploration course, have the potential to support academic persistence, retention and graduation of students. The results of this study may provide higher education executives and administrators who are responsible for the experiential courses with data to support a more informed view of the impact of an exploratory program.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms used within the framework of this study are defined here to offer clarification:

1. Academic Success – “academic achievement, satisfaction, acquisition of skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of learning objectives, and career success” (Kuh et al., 2010 p. 10). In this study, academic success is measured by cumulative grade point average (GPA).
2. At-Risk Student – Students who are enrolled in two or more learning support, co-requisite laboratory classes placing them at a higher probability of academic failure and not persisting to graduation (Abbott, 2013).
3. College to Career Navigation Exploration Course – “The purpose of the course is to help students navigate college with their career and life goals in mind. The course is designed to develop a student's understanding of personal aptitudes, interests, and values and to provide effective strategies for the challenges students may face in making successful college and career decisions.” (Jackson State Community College 2017-2018 College Catalog and Student Handbook, p. 155).
4. First-Time, Full-Time Student – A student attending a higher education, postsecondary institution for the first time and who enrolls in 12 or more semester credit hours (NCES, 2016).
5. Learning Support – “The academic support needed by a student to be successful in college level general education courses and/or to meet minimum reading, writing, and mathematics competencies as required by faculty in programs that do not require general educations courses in reading, writing and/or mathematics” (Tennessee Board of Regents, n.d., para 2). This term has been adopted by the participating community college to describe remedial and development, non-college credit courses.
6. Non-Traditional Age Student – Students at a minimum of 25 years of age (NCES, 2016).

7. Persistence – The continuous enrollment from semester to semester until completing degree requirements for graduation (Hagedorn, 1999).
8. Retention – Students who persisted from fall to fall and fall to spring semesters (NCES, 2016).

Limitations and Delimitations

The focus of this quantitative study was limited geographically to the 14-county service delivery area for the participating community college and chronologically to two fall semesters, Fall 2017 and Fall 2018. The data gathered may not be representative of other community college or other time periods.

Students enrolled in career certificate programs are not required to take the College to Career Navigation exploration course. While the course is mandatory for degree programs, students are not required to take the course in their first year, but are strongly encouraged.

A minimum of three delimitations apply to this study. The participating community college was the only institution which provided data for this research study. Therefore, the results of are applicable to this institution and may not be applicable to other institutions. Only first-time, full-time students who participated were included in this study. Transfer students with previous college credits or students with fewer than 12 credit hours of course work were excluded.

Overview of Study

Chapter 1 focused on the introduction to the problem at the participating community college and research questions which form the framework of this research. The chapter proposed the significance of the study including, definition of terms, limitations and delimitations. Chapter 2 provided the literature review of the community colleges with information covering at-risk

students, non-traditional age students, student persistence, student retention theories, and information concerning academic exploratory courses. Chapter 3 outlined the research and methods proposed to address the research questions. Chapter 4 was a report of the outcomes and results of the proposed research questions. Chapter 5 contains the summary, conclusion, and recommendations for future areas of research.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

Overview of Colleges

Community colleges are a dynamic part of the larger higher education community in the United States and increasingly around the world. The more than 1,100 U.S. community colleges--not to mention the hundreds of like institutions internationally--have progressed into vigorous, inclusive institutions that are often known for their resourcefulness in using any accessible tool or method to advance and increase learning (Shi & Tindall, 2016). From the early days of correspondence courses to the "colleges without walls" movement of the 1970s and 1980s, community college educators have demonstrated a commitment to extending the reach of education in their continuing efforts to make a difference for students and communities (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Through the first decades of the 20th century, a major population shift took place in the United States. By 1920, more Americans lived in cities than in rural areas for the first time in the nation's history (Shi & Tindall, 2016), and that geographic transformation had far-reaching implications in many sectors of American daily life. President Truman (Edmund and Gleazer That Commission) published a report addressing not only the need for general education, but providing adults a federal supported education in the local community (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). In 1901, Joliet Junior College in Joliet, Illinois was founded as a means to reduce the number of students from attending the University of Chicago, many of whom were not prepared to succeed academically at such a prestigious university (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). University of Chicago President William Rainey Harper believed that, without the burden of educating freshman and sophomore students, the university could attend to the business of teaching more serious upperclassmen, and faculty could invest more time to research. Whether or not the origins of the

American community college are noble or not, the junior college model created at Joliet has since transformed into a uniquely American institution, the comprehensive community college (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Community college early administrators firmly established their place in higher education by offering numerous vocational degree programs and certifications to students unable to attend or begin their academic careers at four-year colleges and universities (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). While many celebrate the utility and function of American community colleges as open access institutions available to all, some have criticized community colleges for low transfer rates (Clark, 1960), and the belief that community college faculty and administration systematically lower student expectations (Brint & Karabel, 1989).

In today's higher education world asynchronous learning is the power tool. Moreover, the associated techniques for using asynchronous learning to support in-class and online instruction are bringing learning to life in new and exciting ways. This edition of the Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks examines the role of these anytime, anyplace tools with a special focus on the characteristics of the community college movement--particularly the access, affordability, and outreach elements (Lytle, 1999). Readers are treated to explorations of demographic trends, technological tools, and change-management strategies from well-known researchers and practitioners. The conversation often ranges beyond community college, and that is with purpose. Community colleges are part of the broader family of education as well as a piece of the social and political fabric of the communities that they serve and thus deserve to be explored in this more complete context.

Community colleges bridge cultures and educational gaps by offering students a chance to become college students regardless of past academic performance. For many, community

colleges are the first step towards earning a college degree, as they are inexpensive and close to home. The curriculum and the community orientation of community colleges provide them with a unique and important role in American society as these colleges are a melting pot in which people coming from diverse backgrounds come together for the purpose of learning (Attewell et al., 2006).

The impact of community colleges has been the academic development of the students it serves and the type of missions which, include long and short-certificates, liberal arts education aimed at skills development (or self-colleges have expanded their roll developmental education), and adult coursework for high school. This multiplicity of functions greatly influenced the need for community colleges and their academic divisions in serving their students. The structure of community college academic standards remains fundamental. Academic preparation has shifted from investigating the outcomes to looking at the role community colleges serve in the delivery of degrees or certificates (Attewell et al., 2006).

Access to Post-Secondary Education

For millions of Americans, the decision to attend to a 4-year or a 2-year institution is challenging, especially if it involves living away from home, tackling rigorous courses in the first semester, or taking on loans. Community colleges offer students a chance to experience college close to home, with the possibility of taking courses either part-time or as a full-time student. Students who go to community colleges tend to take out fewer loans. Many are reluctant to take on debt that is necessary today even at the lowest-cost public institutions, until they are confident that they can choose the right major and succeed academically. The lower fees and open-access policies at community colleges have broadened access to postsecondary education for students

facing such barriers to entry as poor academic performance in high school, limited English-language skills or other basic skill deficiencies, or financial hardship (Grubb 1999).

Recent scrutiny over low graduation rates and other success measures have fueled calls for increased student success in order to maintain the pace of student access (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). Research findings may be used to support a position that exploratory programs positively encourage student success (Mayo, 2013; Porter & Swing, 2006). An overview of the most frequently used exploratory programs will be analyzed, along with specific attention to the most popular, college to career readiness seminars.

Community colleges are regarded for their open admissions policy, which expands opportunities to everyone, regardless of prior advantages or disadvantages. Working learners are welcomed - more than half of 2-year college students are employed, compared with only 37% of 4-year college students. Because prior academic success is not a prerequisite for admission, 61% of students at community colleges take at least one remedial course while in college, and 25% take two or more remedial courses. This means that community college faculty members often take on the hard but necessary task of meeting students where they are and helping to move them to the next academic level (Mclntosh & Rouse, 2009; U.S. Department of Education 2008).

Community College Students

Community and technical college students tend to be older, with 46% over the age of 24. In addition, 63% of these students attend part time as compared to 22% at four-year colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Likewise, community college students are disproportionately members of racial and ethnic minorities and have lower family incomes than those attending four-year institutions (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Community colleges also serve students seeking additional job skills, technical certification, and enrichment opportunities. However, while access to

community colleges is easily attained, research has shown that a significant number of students who enter community colleges do not complete a formal credential (Horn et al., 2019). Community college students are less likely to be academically prepared for college as indicated by their rate of participation in developmental education courses upon entry into college. While 20% of students entering public 4-year institutions in 2000 required developmental education in reading, writing, or math, 42% of students entering public 2-year colleges required developmental education in one or more subject areas (Parsad & Lewis, 2003).

Developmental education serves an essential function in a country where substantial numbers of poor and minority students leave high school without a diploma and even more often without developing strong writing, reading, and math skills. Many of these students focus their college search process on community colleges, constructing a decision between attending that institution or not attending college at all (Roderick et al., 2009). Fully 58% of all African-American undergraduates and 66% of all Hispanic undergraduates are enrolled in community colleges (Katsinas & Tollefson, 2009). As a result, "there are, for example, more low-income African American and Hispanic students at Bronx Community College alone than there are in the entire Ivy League" (Bailey, 2009, para. 3). Diversity in both the student population and institutional mission creates challenges for measuring success.

In 2009, the Obama Administration established a national goal to have the highest proportion of adults, ages 25-64, with postsecondary degrees by 2020 (The White House, 2009). The Lumina Foundation, an organization influential in shaping U.S. higher education policy, worked to develop a similar goal by targeting a 60% higher education completion rate by 2025 (Lumina Foundation, 2019). Despite the additional emphasis on college completion, persistence through postsecondary education continues to be an issue. Postsecondary attainment rates ranked

the U.S. number two with 32% of the population obtaining a college degree, particularly when compared with the rest of the world (Lumina Foundation, 2019).

At-Risk Community College Students

Many students who begin postsecondary education drop out before completing a degree. According to the Lumina Foundation (2019), an estimated 60% of students at public institutions fail to complete degrees within five years, and half of these students leave during the freshman year. As shown by research by the Policy Center on the First Year of College at Brevard College, the first year of college is the most critical to a college student's success toward degree completion (Lumina Foundation, 2019).

Successful completion of introductory courses is critical for first-year students, but failure rates in these courses contribute heavily to overall institutional drop-out between the first and second year. Although success rates vary by institutional type and by subject matter, Research I universities commonly cite a 15% drop-failure-withdrawal (DFW) rate in introductory courses. Comprehensive universities' DFW rates range from 22% to 45% in these courses. Community colleges frequently experience DFW rates of 40% to 50% or more (Lumina Foundation, 2019).

A report by the National Center for Education Statistics (2005), added a factor to being academically at-risk is belonging to "the first generation in the family to attend college" (p. 30). At-risk students usually other obstacles including: Their families live below the poverty line, they are Black or Hispanic, they come from single-parent homes, their mothers have less than a high-school education, the primary language spoken at home is not English. In 2011, Lee referenced a 2009 article in the National Education Association's Higher Education Journal explains the impediments first generation college students can face: "parental ambivalence, lack of understanding, and even hostility to [the] child's college plans" (para. 3). Often, the majority

of the students enrolled at a community college are academically, economically, and socially disadvantaged (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Cohen & Brawer, 2008). For example, 30% of community college students are Black or Hispanic as compared to 20% of students at 4-year institutions (Horn & Nevill, 2006). Moreover, 25% of community college students come from low-income families compared to 20% of 4-year college students (Horn & Nevill, 2006). Additionally, many first-year community college students need at least one remedial course and take a longer time to complete the course than their peers (NCES, 2016).

Higher education research on Black males continues to revolve around issues of preparation, access, retention, and persistence (Fleming, 1984; Flowers, 2004; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998; Palmer et al., 2014; Wood, 2013). Important to these experiences, and efforts to enhance their success, are how Black males experience the campus climate and their engagement on campus (Brooms, 2016, 2017, 2018; Brooms & Davis, 2017; Wood & Newman, 2017). Examining campus climate provides an important view of the institutional factors that impact students' college experience, from peer-to-peer bonding, student in-class and out-of-class experiences, and the academic and social milieu. Importantly, investigating student engagement on campus through out-of-class experiences provides an important window for better understanding how they experience college beyond the academic realm (Bonner & Bailey, 2006; Dancy & Hotchkins, 2015; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015).

Researchers contend that Black males face a number of obstacles in higher education, many of which often (re)position them as outsiders on campus primarily because of the continued anti-Blackness that they face. In particular, their Black maleness (Lewis et al., 2008; Mutua, 2006), or the combined impact of their race and gender identity, manifests itself in gendered racism as they are stereotyped, profiled, policed and denigrated constantly on campus,

especially at historically White institutions (HWI, Brooms, 2017; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; Smith et al., 2007; Wood & Palmer, 2015). As an example, in examining the experiences of 28 Black male students at a community college, Wood (2013) found that the reasons for student in-class disengagement were multifaceted. While surface level readings might diminish Black male student seriousness about their educational endeavors or even how (or if) they valued education Wood found that their disengagement was due to lowered educational expectations, faculty dissonance, and abrasiveness from their White counterparts in class. Similarly, in investigating the college experiences of 36 Black male students across five different universities, Smith et al. (2007) found that students experienced persistent anti-Black male stereotyping and marginality (Black misandry), which caused extreme hyper-surveillance and control both on and off campus. In particular, students identified a hostile campus climate with campus-academic, campus-social, and campus-public spaces as domains rife with racial microaggressions. Ultimately, the combined effect of policing served to question their status and belonging on campus and increased their racial battle fatigue—psychosocial stress that included frustration, anger, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, and fear (Smith et al., 2007).

These obstacles are important to note because they complicate previous and on-going notions and rhetoric that Black males do not care about education. This stance often ignores the structural forces that impact Black male educational experiences and how schools act on them, limit their access to information and resources that can support their efforts, and ignores their resilience and persistence in the face of such challenges. In fact, as their testimonials continue to reveal, many Black male students succeed in spite of campus climate at many HWI not because of it. Given the challenges outlined here and elsewhere, research has indicated the need for academic, social, and personal support for Black male college efforts (Bonner & Bailey, 2006;

Brooms & Davis, 2017; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Wood & Palmer, 2015). In particular, researchers have identified the benefits of peer groups and peer relationships (Brooms, 2016, 2018; Strayhorn, 2008), authentic, caring, and invested faculty members (Guiffrida, 2006; Palmer & Gasman, 2008), and student organizations (Guiffrida, 2003) on their college experiences. Additionally, investigating student personal characteristics, such as drive and motivation, along with their identity constructs and educational aspirations are fruitful as well (Brooms, 2017; Dancy, 2012; Davis, 1994; Griffin & Romm, 2008). Each of these research domains is important for understanding how Black males experience and navigate schooling for academic and personal success.

Investigating how students might benefit from their engagement in programs and activities designed for their benefit, such as Black male initiatives or student-centered organizations, is especially helpful in identifying possible venues to support their success. For instance, Grier-Reed et al.'s (2008) investigation of the African American Student Network (AFAM) is informative. Started by two faculty members to address low Black student retention at a predominantly White campus, AFAM incorporated participation from university faculty and staff, was open to Black college and graduate students, and provided students with access to upperclassmen in a supportive atmosphere. They found that AFAM provided students with a unique space to address, understand, and cope with stressors through connectedness, validation, and empowerment, thereby effectively enhancing their on-campus experiences. Paying closer attention to the experiences, opportunities, and activities that Black males believe help engender their success may help colleges and universities develop programs to enhance—or even broaden—the range of resources available to them. Within the current educational environment, African American Male Initiative programs have shown positive results in retention and

academic success. Programs like My Brothers Keeper's Initiative in places like Arkansas and Georgia, demonstrate a critical need to chronicle and assess student experiences in these efforts. Therefore, as one complicates the understanding of the plight of Black males in higher education, more attention is also needed in understanding how they experience and make meaning from experiences engaged in activities and programs specifically designed to improve their college experiences (Grier-Reed et al., 2008).

Non-Traditional Community College Students

Adult students have been participants in higher education since the early beginnings of the United States. In Colonial America, colleges offered access to all qualified entrants, including adult (older) undergraduate students. Adult participation diminished with the Civil War and post-Civil War era, based in part upon fewer numbers of adult learners having discretionary time and funds to participate in higher education. Although select adults continued to participate in collegiate institutions from the late 1800s to approximately 1940s, there was significant creative growth of specialized units to serve adult learners beyond daytime, residential offerings. Leaders created adult specific learning spaces and operational frameworks focused on access and flexibility and adults were typically segregated from the day-to-day, youth-oriented academic structures. With designated academic leadership and specific offices (extension, continuing education, or evening schools/colleges), these segregated units were established with extended academic learning in off-campus sites.

Administrators developed adult student-oriented units specialized in outreach programs, including women's programs, teacher institutes, summer school, labor education courses, and credentialed industrial or vocational training for adults. As noted in one of the first national discussions, Bittner observed these programs and activities were offered to "a large group of

students who are generally more mature than students in residence at a college seat and who studied somewhat irregularly at 'unconventional times and places' (Bittner, 1934, p. 275). Nationally, adult access to higher education was also significantly enhanced by the development of junior/community colleges, as well as by the national advocacy of several professional adult education groups, including the Association of University and Evening Colleges (precursor to ACHE) and its member activities.

According to Adelman (2005), adult students were relatively easy to identify because of the age gap between full-time on-campus young undergraduates and part-time adult undergraduate enrollments. Furthermore, there was typically a division between residential daytime offerings (denying access to adult students who typically work during the day). Because adult undergraduates accessed non-daytime programs, this regulated their enrollment status to part-time, or enrolled in stylized cohort adult degree offerings. However, collegiate enrollment based upon innovative outreach, technology, and program designs, adult students are now able to participate in a wide variety of daytime, nighttime, weekend, and Internet offerings. Moreover, a growing number of young adults (ages 17 to 25) are now participating as non-residential, non-daytime, and often episodic involvements while also participating in work and parenting roles. The simple bifurcation of young and adult students is no longer a viable paradigm for research on student participation patterns and related phenomena in higher education (Adelman, 2005).

Grouping for adult undergraduates have typically been based on the notion of select age parameters, adult roles, and enrollment patterns. The frame of analysis and discussion had been historically focused upon undergraduate degree completion (Jeffreys, 2007). The new reality is that pivotal adult learning experiences have shifted from solely a formal education base to a more complex interactive environment of formal and informal learning throughout the life span

and across a number of institutions. An increasing number of adult learners are cycling through a number of learning environments because an undergraduate degree is no longer sufficient, and the new knowledge generation and specialization of application demand lifelong learning involvements (Jeffreys, 2007).

Significant issues have been raised regarding current assumptions guiding national metrics for undergraduate collegiate student participation, focused upon completion of an undergraduate degree and the efficiencies of full-time, continuous participation. However, the clear majority of adult students do not participate in full-time studies, nor do they continuously enroll, and often do not attend the same institution throughout their degree program. Rather than dictating one path, there is significant value in metrics based in tracking of individual learners across many institutions often in episodic attendance, in a variety of adult roles, and in both formal and informal programs (Adelman, 2005). It is equally valuable to do tracking of individual learners across the life span to better understand the varied patterns of lifelong learning for adults. Adult student participation can offer important new insights into rethinking collegiate participation, not as a finite end after a 2- or 4-year degree, but rather as part of an ongoing journey in lifelong learning across adult roles, across institutions, and across formal and informal programs (Fike & Fike, 2008).

Community College Student Progression Theory

Understanding why students choose to leave or choose to stay is essential to those wanting to make a difference in student lives. A number of theories exist regarding student retention. One is the student development theory (student integration model) attributed to Tinto (1993). Tinto suggested that students' progress through stages as they make the transition from being a FTIC student to being a mature student. These stages are influenced by academic and

social integration; working together, both lead to the student's decision to remain in or to leave college. Another retention expert, Bean (2015), is known for his psychological model of retention (student attrition model), which posits that background variables influence the way a student interacts with the college or university.

Though it costs more to recruit new students than it does to retain current students, institutions often focus on student recruitment rather than student retention (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Institutions budget for recruiters and associated expenses such as travel and recruiting materials. Recruiting is essential for getting students enrolled. But after they are enrolled, what are institutions doing to retain them? According to Tinto (1999), most institutions do not take student retention seriously. With an average attrition rate of approximately 41% from first to second year and a 34% persistence-to-degree rate, it is incumbent upon higher education institutions to determine predictors of student retention to focus on student success (ACT, 2010). Hossler (2005) wrote that most colleges and universities "do not conduct studies of the efficacies of retention intervention programs" (p. 7). Interventions should be tailored to each institution and then evaluated to make sure they are meeting the unique needs of the institution and its students. Using data to predict student retention enables administration to engage in interventions with students who bring particular characteristics and aspirations to the campus.

The theoretical principles are based on research regarding student retention in university settings: "Most of this research is based on traditional-age students in the residential settings of universities" (Wild & Ebbers, 2002, p. 504). Though these retention theories may be relevant for all postsecondary students, it is important to recognize that the typical community college student possesses different characteristics than the traditional university student. For example,

community college students are usually older than the average university student. "About 60% of adults (25 and older) who study at the undergraduate level are enrolled in two-year/community colleges" (Aslanian, 2001, p. 29). Community colleges are also more likely to enroll higher percentages of minority students than the university. According to Cohen and Brawer (1996), ease of access, low tuition, and the open-door policy have contributed to the increased numbers of minority students in community colleges. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to enroll on a part-time basis and are more likely to be from low-income families. Community colleges encourage part-time attendance and have lower tuition than universities (Cohen and Brawer, 1996).

According to Goldrick-Rab (2010), Community college students have unique characteristics when compared to university students. The specific impact of these characteristics on community college retention needs to be further assessed. Consequently, the study reported in this article employs variables that differentiate community college students from university students. These variables include age, because community colleges enroll large numbers of adult and returning students; ethnicity, because the community college is the primary entry point to higher education for minorities; enrollment in developmental education, because a high proportion of students entering through the open door are not college ready; and the number of hours for which students enroll, because nearly two thirds of community college students attend on a part-time basis (Powers, 2007) and because students can enter a community college to take classes for the purpose of obtaining a 2-year transferable degree or a terminal certificate, enhancing general job skills, or for personal enrichment (Derby & Smith, 2004).

Student attrition represents huge potential losses to the individuals, their families, and society as a whole. Educators must be reminded that it is education, not retention itself that is the

principal goal of retention programs (Tinto, 1993). It is essential to use data to guide institutional decisions that are supportive of retention goals. The purpose of retention data are to provide greater insight into the factors influencing student retention. Student data can be used to develop an understandable and workable plan to guide efforts toward effective interventions that increase student persistence (Tinto, 1993).

Community College Student Progression

For many students, community colleges seem to be the only route to accessing a higher education. Data from the 2005 to 2009 American Community Survey (as cited in the U.S. Census Bureau, 2009) showed little increase in the state of Florida's educational attainment rankings and almost no increase for Hispanic and African American students. According to the data, only 16.3% of the state's population aged 25 years or older had earned bachelor's degrees and 8.5% had earned associate degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Moreover, 14.1% of Hispanic students and 10.0% of African American students graduated with associate degrees within 3 years (NCES, 2005).

The concept of student retention is at the forefront of many community college administrators and implementing best practice methods for keeping students enrolled. The reason is that student retention is a major problem for schools as graduation rates decline (Talbert, 2012). Funding opportunities rely on institutional effectiveness determined by respective accrediting bodies. If retention rates decrease, institutional funding will also decrease (Schroeder, 2003). Graduation rates and student retention data are an overall indicator of institutional effectiveness (Mezick, 2015). Haddow (2013) reported that student retention is a strong indicator of student progression and is shown in the on-going enrollment reporting data of a college or university. The focus of student retention efforts have been added to many colleges and

universities mission statements and strategic plans. From academic affairs to student services, higher education institutions are seeing departments work together in developing coordinated and integrated efforts for maximizing the impact on student success rates (Hess et al., 2015).

Community College Completion Rates

The open enrollment policy at most community colleges is often reflected in the level of student preparedness for higher education experienced by community college students (Karp, 2011). For example, approximately 42%, of first-year students in public, 2-year higher education institutions are underprepared academically for college-level courses (Moss et al., 2014). The lack of preparedness of many students, along with other characteristics, can negatively impact learning, influence attrition, and impede completion of programs. Student degree and certification completion at community colleges is historically lower than 4-year institutions, with percentages of those in community college successfully completing a program of study within 6 years as low as 25% (NCES, 2020).

Low academic program completion rates at community colleges have also raised questions about the efforts being put forth by the federal government directed towards increasing the access to higher education for nontraditional students through community colleges (Shea & Bidjerano, 2014). Administrators continued to research method for increasing enrollment rates and leveraging the amount of money spent per student. Low completion rates have raised concerns in academia about the effectiveness of online learning at community colleges and the apparent negative impacts it possessed for nontraditional students (Shea & Bidjerano, 2014). This concern is especially salient when one considers that distance education course enrollment at community colleges has far outpaced traditional course enrollment. As indicated by Allan and

Seaman (2013), enrollment in distance education at community colleges in the 2006-2007 academic year was five times the rate (10% increase versus 2% increase) of traditional courses.

While community college department administrators closely monitor enrollment in their courses, they often do not know which students are pursuing programs of study in their fields and thus do not track students in their programs to ensure that they make steady progress toward achieving their goals for program completion and transfer (Karp, 2011). As a result, many students end up self-advising. With so many choices and without a clear roadmap or someone monitoring their progress, it is not surprising that many community college students indicate that they are confused and often frustrated trying to find their way through college (Venezia et al., 2004). The lack of clear guidance can lead students to make costly decisions. Indeed, there is evidence from research on the course-taking patterns that many community college students are pursuing suboptimal pathways (Calcgno et al., 2006). When asked, students indicate that being in a program with a well-defined pathway would improve their changes of persisting, completing, and transferring (Calcgno et al., 2006).

Under the prevailing model common to community colleges, students are left to navigate a complex and often confusing array of programs and courses and support services mostly on their own. Instead of letting students figure out their own paths through college, a growing number of colleges and universities are creating guided pathways for students. The elements of this approach include three key features, described as follows (Calcgno et al., 2006).

Venezia et al. (2004) point out that institutions that have implemented guided pathways reforms, academic programs are clearly mapped out by faculty to create educationally coherent pathways, with learning outcomes clearly defined and aligned with the requirements for further education and, in occupational programs, for career advancement. Students are given a default

sequence of courses to follow for their chosen programs based on maps created by faculty, although they can still opt out. Rather than restrict students' options, the guided pathways approach is intended to help them make better choices so that they will be more likely to achieve their goals (Venezia et al., 2004).

According to Calcgno et al. (2006), colleges and universities leaders are rethinking admissions, advising, and remediation as on-ramps to programs of study. Mechanisms are in place to help new students develop or clarify goals for college and careers and create an academic plan. As part of their plans, students are required to choose a field of study with a default curriculum that gives them a taste of the given field and helps them decide if they want to pursue a specialized course of study in the field or switch to another one. Teaching of academic foundation skills and college knowledge and success skills are contextualized in college-level coursework in the student's field of interest. Students who cannot be placed in college-level courses are helped to move through remediation as quickly as possible (Calcgno et al., 2006).

Students' progress and frequent feedback are provided to them, their advisors, and instructors. Advising is designed to ensure students are making progress based on academic and nonacademic milestones, such as choosing a major, applying for transfer, and updating a résumé. Close cooperation between professional advisors and faculty ensures smooth transition from initial general advising to advising in a program. Early-alert systems signal when students are struggling and set in motion appropriate support. Advising and other necessary supports are designed as defaults that students are expected to use unless they opt out (Shea & Bidjerano, 2014).

Measuring cost has become critical for community colleges (Bailey et al., 2003). As economic conditions have deteriorated, record numbers of students have flocked to community

colleges for retraining, whereas state support for higher education has decreased. Administrators readily know what it costs students to attend community colleges but may not necessarily know exactly what it costs colleges to educate students in different programs. To make better resource allocation decisions or improve production efficiency, it is important for administrators to have a framework for measuring and understanding program costs and related concepts (Bailey et al., 2003).

Exploratory Experience Course

Choosing a major and, subsequently a career, is very important to college students, who often feel pressured to choose a major early to stay on track. This is often a result of pressure to graduate in the shortest period of time, either for financial reasons or as a result of familial or societal influence (Carey, 2004). Gati and Amir (2010) recognized that vocational indecision during college may result in "spending an additional year at college, [and a] negative effect on the individual's self-esteem" (p. 301). This is indicative of the need for effective interventions to help students transition from tentative vocational preferences to more specific career goals (Rehfuss, 2009; Super, 1990). Advisors should understand the needs of college students as well as the demands of a changing workforce for career interventions to effectively address the consequences of academic major and career indecision (Rehfuss, 2009).

Early Intervention Programs

Dr. Skip Downing is credited for creating the concept of On Course at Baltimore City Community College more than 20 years ago (On Course Workshop, 2019). Frustrated by his observations of seeing capable students not succeed academically. Downing began researching strategies that would address increasing student academic success, retention, and graduation rates. In an interview Downing stated "attrition rates for community colleges are approximately

45%" (DowningOnCourse, 2017, 4:40). Among other things, Downing's quest led him back to graduate school roots where he earned a master's degree in counseling psychology. After much trial and error, Downing concentrated on two factors that garnered the most results. First, Downing applied an essential finding from brain research that underscores the importance of engagement in learning, and he pursued innovative learner-centered strategies that engage students at a very high level. Second, he observed that 12 or more years of education had turned most of his students into passive learners. Downing realized they needed to be empowered to be the active, responsible, and successful learners that they had been as little children (On Course Workshop, 2019). The combination of engagement and empowerment had an immediate and measurable impact on student success and retention among students at Baltimore City Community College. According to Downing's early research, developmental English students in this program were 348% more successful in passing English 101 than developmental students not in this program (On Course Workshop, 2019).

On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life

Many college students fall short of their potential. Pass rates, especially in developmental and first-year courses, are very low (Hern & Snell, 2014). The consequence is poor retention and declining graduation rates. Everyone loses–students forfeit their dreams, faculty are frustrated, and colleges scramble to improve retention (Downing, 2015). Postman and Weingartner (1969) offered a valuable insight when they wrote: "Good learners are good learners precisely because they believe and do certain things that less effective learners do not believe and do. And therein lies the key" (Postman & Weingarner, 1969, p. 29). The On Course Learning Principles offer practical answers. Synthesizing the best wisdom from innovators in psychology, education, business, sports, and personal effectiveness, the On Course Learning Principles represent eight of

the essential “things” that good learners believe and do. Founded on these timeless principles, the On Course text and the On Course Workshops give students and instructors alike a collection of practical success tools. By guiding students to adopt these principles and tools, you’ll empower them to become effective partners in their own education, giving them the outer behaviors and inner qualities to create greater success in college and in life (On Course Workshop, 2019).

On Course Workshops (2019) are designed to engage learners in the active construction of knowledge. Instructional methods in the workshop demonstrate how educators can address the varied learning preferences of today’s students. Students construct learning primarily as a result of what they think, feel, and do and less so by what their instructors say and do. Consequently, in formal education, the deepest learning is provided by a well-designed educational experience. The most effective learners are empowered learners, those characterized by self-responsibility, self-motivation, self-management, interdependence, self-awareness, life-long learning, emotional intelligence, and strong belief in themselves (On Course Workshops, 2019).

Institutional Effectiveness of Early Intervention Programs

Centenary University (CU) is located in Northwest New Jersey with enrollment of 1,110 undergraduate students. In 2007, Centenary created two sections of an academic foundations course specifically for undeclared majors and named it Major Discoveries and, adopted On Course as their textbook and curriculum learning outcomes. Faculty employed the reading and journal writing schedule prescribed in the On Course Instructor’s Manual and interactive class activities (Centenary College, 2009). Faculty conducted 9 in-class information interviews with professionals from a variety of fields who work both on and off campus. Each student was required to conduct three information interviews on their own as well as complete a half-day shadowing experience in a work place. These activities were followed up with a written

reflection on each of these experiences and all of this was uploaded into an e-portfolio (Centenary College, 2013).

Centenary enrolled 31 undeclared students that included 11 who were provisional admits. Additionally, six of the enrolled students had accommodation letters from the Disabilities Service Office. Nineteen students earned a semester GPA over a 3.0 including four with a 4.0, 10 students earned between a 2.0 and 3.0 and two students failed to make minimum satisfactory academic progress (Centenary College, 2013).

In 2004, following an accreditation review, one of the recommendations made by the review committee was for Chaffey College in California to address its probation and dismissal policies and procedures. At the time the Manpower Demonstration Research Center (MDRC), a social and educational policy research organization, known for large-scale demonstrations and evaluations of real-world policies and programs targeted to low-income people, was interested in studying Chaffey's Success Centers (MDRC, 2020). MDRC and Chaffey representatives discovered there was mutual interest in developing a new intervention targeting students on academic and progress probation: approximately 3,500 in spring 2004, or about one out of every five students enrolled at Chaffey College (Chaffey College, 2013).

The Opening Doors to Excellence program was developed through a collaborative design and development process funded by MDRC bringing together instruction and student services to target students on academic, progress probation, or both. Targeted students were one semester away from being dismissed from the college if they continue on probation standing for a third consecutive term. Students who opted to participate in Opening Doors signed a contract agreeing to repeat specific courses that would help them improve their GPA, not drop classes without consulting a counselor, take a college success course, attend required Success Center visitations

and meet with the program counselor to develop an education plan with the primary objective of regaining good standing and avoiding dismissal. During the counseling appointment, a one-year educational plan listing courses, semester by semester, needed to regain good standing was developed. Prior to registering for the subsequent semester, participating students were required to submit a proposed schedule for the upcoming term. Opening Doors staff then cleared a registration block authorizing the student to register at their designated time for the upcoming semester (Chaffey College, 2013).

In the subsequent term, participating students enrolled in the guidance class and other classes recommended by the counselor. The course "Opening Doors to Student Effectiveness" is a 3-unit, grade-earning, non-degree-applicable course using On Course. Students were required to complete five directed learning activities in any one of four Success Centers. Students chose from writing, reading, multidisciplinary, and math Success Centers to complete directed learning activities that correlated with specific topics covered in the guidance class. The directed learning activities were mandatory and were weighed in the final grade earned by the student in the guidance class (Chaffey College, 2013).

A follow up study completed by Chaffey's Institutional Research Department examined the change in self-reported perceptions of well-being across a range of affective indices before and after completing the guidance courses and receiving specialized counseling through the program. Instructors administered pre- and post-surveys to students in the fall 2008 and spring 2009 semesters before and after completing the course. The guidance course [using On Course] had a meaningful impact across all measured indices of well-being. In particular, both fall and spring cohorts showed a statically significant and increase in self-esteem ($d = 1.22$ and 1.48 respectively). The spring cohort also showed statistically moderate to substantial gain in the

perceived value of their education (d = .42) and their self-reported educational participation (d = .86) (Chaffey College, 2013).

Since the implementation of the enhanced version of Opening Doors that subsequently became the program institutionalized at Chaffey, the college has reported a steady decrease in the number of dismissed students. In fall 2007, the term the college began to fully implement it dismissal policy 750 students out of 18,654 students enrolled were dismissed. This represents 5% of the student population for the term. In spring 2009, 505 students were targeted for dismissed action out of 19,953 students. This represents 2.5% of the student population being dismissed. In a 2-year period, the college has cut the percentage of dismissed students to enrollment ratio by 50% (Chaffey College, 2013).

Clinton Community College (CCC) is a small, rural community college in upstate f New York. CCC began using On Course: Foundations of College Success in 2008. The Fall 2011 entering class of criminal justice majors were the first cohort that was required to take Foundations for College Success, a 3-credit course as part of the degree program (On Course Workshop, 2019). The course is described in the college catalog as, "This course is designed to assist the student in obtaining the skills, services and self-awareness needed to reach his/her educational and life objectives. Topics include self-assessment, CCC student services and resources, goal setting, self-management, cultural awareness, study strategies and, critical thinking." (CCC College Catalog, p. 98) From fall 2011 to fall 2012, new first-time, full-time criminal justice majors retention increased 54%. CCC compared the incoming cohort beginning in 2011 with the cohorts from the two years before the requirement (2009 and 2010) with a retention rate of 43% and 39% respectively. Based on a three-year graduation rate, fall 2011,

new first-time, full-time criminal justice majors graduation rate 32% compared to the college-wide graduation rate of 29% (On Course Workshop, Institutional Studies, 2019).

In 2005, Corning Community College began a First Year Experience Course with "On Course" as the foundational curriculum. During 2010, two studies were undertaken to evaluate any effect of the On Course curriculum on student retention, GPA and other variables of interest that impacted student success. The first study was an evaluation of the results of a student survey. In this inquiry, the students who successfully completed the On Course curriculum showed more use of campus resources (academic advising and tutoring), more preparation for classes and more use of the "soft skills" taught in On Course. Furthermore, the survey specified that these students had made more use of their advisor, became more conversant with others, made more friends with whom they studied, and increased in self-efficacy (Corning Community College, 2017).

In the subsequent assessment, researchers analyzed several groups of students who had completed the On Course curriculum with randomly selected "similar" students who had not taken the On Course curriculum. These analyses show both an increase in GPA and an increase in retention. On average, the retention rate of those who complete the On Course curriculum was 12% higher and their GPA was 0.82 points higher than those that did not. Corning Community College concluded the First Year Experience with On Course curriculum improved student GPA, persistence, self-efficacy and engagement (Corning Community College, 2017).

In fall 2008, Elgin Community College (ECC) adopted On Course as the text in a college success course that is required for all first-time, full-time students. The course has been a requirement at ECC since fall 2006. The one-credit course, called College Success, or COL 101, had as its purpose to guide students through their transition to college by teaching learning

essential success skills. Approximately 1,200 new students enrolled in this course annually. There were approximately 80 sections taught annually by approximately 50 instructors. Instructors who taught COL 101 had to complete training annually and were provided with a number of tools and resources to ensure the course is taught consistently and with high quality. Analyses of student retention showed students who complete COL 101 were significantly more likely to return the following term 22%-29% and year 28%-34% than those who did not enroll (Elgin Community College, 2013).

Inver Hills Community College (IHCC) is a commuter campus located in a suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota, enrolling approximately 5,000 full-time and part-time students each academic year. Beginning fall semester 2007, all full-time students enrolling in college for the first time were encouraged to participate in one of three new retention initiatives: 1) On Course – a one-credit freshmen year experience class based on the Downing textbook and curriculum, 2) a Learning Community comprised of 2 or more integrated courses, or 3) a Learning Community with the On Course class as one of the integrated courses. Approximately 23% (392 out of 1697) of all new, full-time students were involved in one of these three retention strategies during this first semester, with a higher proportion of males, students of color, first generation and low-income students participating when compared to the general population of first time students. Research conducted by the IHCC Office of Institutional Effectiveness, showed significant improvements in the retention of students participating in these retention strategies when compared to the general population of new students. These increased retention rates held true from fall semester to spring semester, but also from fall 2007 to fall 2008 semesters. Based on the results during 2007-2008 academic year, IHCC expanded the overall number of On Course sections offered from 17 during fall 2007 to 25 in fall 2008. The college also expanded the

number of Learning Communities that On Course was one of the embedded classes from 4 to 10 sections during fall semester 2008 (Inver Hills Community College, 2013).

In fall 2001, Mission College of Santa Clara, California, began a learning community program similar to the successful one at Baltimore City Community College. The Mission College program linked 11 basic skills classes (English, Reading, ESL, and Mathematics) with On Course counseling classes. Whereas the BCCC learning community program was two semesters, the Mission program was one semester. The retention of all basic skills students in the On Course learning community at Mission College was 87% compared to the overall retention of all basic skills students not in the On Course learning community of 65%. The academic success rate of all basic skills students in the On Course learning community was 62% compared to the overall academic success rate all basic skills students not in the On Course learning community was 45%. The classes demonstrated higher retention and success. Faculty members commented that they were energized and excited by the opportunity to work with the On Course strategies. They used their On Course strategies in a range of other classes and workshops, including athletics, transfer, motivation and other workshops, Orientation, counseling classes, and many others. The students in On Course classes were actively involved in finding solutions to their problems, and in applying their new strategies to their Mathematics, English, and Reading classes." (Mission College, 2013).

Mount Hood Community College (MHCC), located in Gresham, Oregon, adopted On Course as the primary text for their one-credit freshman seminar course (HD 100: College Success). The adoption of On Course was part of an institution-wide initiative to increase student persistence. While HD 100 had been offered at the college for many years, the administration made significant changes to the course structure. First, the course was offered for

free, and faculty/staff across the campus were recruited to teach the course. Second, advisors actively recruited new students into the course. Finally, faculty and staff who taught the course had a one-day On Course training in which faculty learned about the On Course Principles, focusing on self-responsibility, self-management, self-motivation, interdependence, and lifelong learning. The course was considered a success with students from the On Course group persisting 27% more the following term than students not taking the freshman seminar (Mount Hood Community College, 2013).

MHCC surveyed students taking the course and approximately 75% of students responded that the On Course text was either "helpful" or "very helpful." Improvement in persistence was even more impressive when other factors such as student drop-out are considered. The Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory was administered to all sections of HD 100 in Fall, 2004. On a scale that is correlated with factors contributing to increased drop-out risk, 30% of students in the experimental group scored at or above the 90th percentile. This was many times higher than the equivalent amount in the comparison group whose results are distributed in a bell curve pattern with relatively fewer students scoring in the extreme ranges (Mount Hood Community College, 2013).

In fall 2000, National Park Community College (NPCC) located in Hot Springs, Arkansas created a one-credit hour first-year experience (FYE) course titled Success Seminar. All first-time, full-time students were required to enroll in the class that was offered in the first five weeks of each semester. Students who were placed in two or more transitional classes (for remediation) were also required to take College Study Skills. In 2003, the supervising instructor for all FYE courses attended the On Course I Workshop. Since that time, the On Course movement has become part of the culture at NPCC. Thirteen instructors have attended On

Course I Workshop, and two have attended On Course II Workshop (National Park Community College, 2013).

Through the adoption of the On Course textbook and involvement with the On Course curriculum workshops and conferences, NPCC has made a commitment to student success that goes beyond its campus. NPCC used its Success Seminar as a pillar for its work with Achieving the Dream. In spring 2010, NPCC adopted a two-credit hour FYE course in response to the strong retention and persistence numbers for its Success Seminar (National Park Community College, 2013).

In fall 2004, researchers in the Title III Program at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College conducted a study to compare the academic success and retention of two groups of first-time basic skills students. All students were enrolled in three courses: Reading (CIED 0133), Basic Composition (ENGL 0123), and College Life and Success (SOSC 1213). College Life & Success (CL&S) was a course required for any student who has 3 or more academic deficiencies, but it could be taken as an elective by any student (Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, 2013).

The primary difference between the two groups was the text used in the College Life & Success course. The goal of the study was to determine if the different texts created a discernable difference in students' academic success and retention. Academic success was defined as a student passing the basic skills class. Retention was defined as a student registering for classes in the following semester. Group 1 (On Course CL&S) was comprised of 43 students who had the three classes in common. The four CL&S classes in this group used the text On Course by Downing. Students for the study were chosen at random during spring and summer enrollment. There were an additional 29 students in the On Course sections of College Life & Success who

did not need or did not take the Reading and Basic Comp classes. Group 2 (Other CL&S) consisted of 33 students who had the three classes in common. The four CL&S classes in this group used another popular student success text. There were an additional 57 students in the "Other" sections of CL&S who did not need or did not take the Reading and Basic Comp classes (Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, 2013).

The researchers found that students who used the On Course text achieved significantly better academic success in Reading and slightly better academic success in basic composition than students in the control group. Students who used the On Course text demonstrated significantly better retention rates, 96%, than students in the control group, 73% (Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, 2013).

Researchers at Roane State Community College (RSCC) in Harriman, Tennessee, implemented a study of their College Success course in fall 2010 known as COLS 1010. The course was three-credit hours and it was a free class. Students used the 6th edition of On Course. Because of funding from a Funding for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant, students were able to check out the text from Roane State's library and used it for the entire semester. The curriculum was supplemented by the requirement that students use three specific learning strategies. Students applied two of the strategies (graphic representations in the form of concept cards and two-column note-taking) in one or more classes they were taking concurrently with the COLS 1010 class. The third strategy, keeping an organized notebook, was applied in the COLS 1010 class. RSCC fall 2010 to fall 2011 retention rate improved by16.8% over previous semesters (Roane State Community College, 2013).

Chapter 3. Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative, comparative study was to determine the differences in retention and the academic completion between students who participated in a first-year experience, college orientation and career exploration course, and students who did not participate in the course at a rural, southeastern community college. Perhaps one of the most undervalued methodologies for achieving academic success within the community college is the development and implementation of a purposeful, inclusive approach to orienting new students to the college setting and career opportunities (Hollins, 2009).

The student information database records examined for this study included students who attended a community college as first-time, full-time students. The College to Career Navigation exploration course was developed at the research site in 2015 for students to enhance their personal aptitudes, interests and values, while learning effective strategies to navigate college with career and life goals in mind (Appendix A: College to Career Navigation Syllabus). The course was held three hours each week and taught by administrators, full-time professors, or adjunct professors. Each instructor has participated in On Course I (three-day) and II (four-day) training sessions. The instructors teaching the College to Career Navigation exploration course developed a consistent, interconnected course environment for students. A course syllabus presented in Appendix A.

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

A first-year experience, college orientation, and career exploration course (College to Career Navigation) and its relationship to fall to fall retention and academic success was measured. The study focused on 14 research questions and corresponding null hypotheses.

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho1: There is not a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

Research Question 2: For students designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho2: For students designated as at-risk, there is not a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

Research Question 3: For students not designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho3: For students not designated as at-risk, there is no a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

Research Question 4: For traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho4: For traditional-aged students, there is not a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

Research Question 5: For non-traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho5: For non-traditional-aged students, there is no a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

Research Question 6: For male students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho6: For male students, there is not a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

Research Question 7: For female students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho7: For female students, there is not a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

Research Questions 8: Is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho8: There is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

Research Questions 9: For students designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho9: For students designated as at-risk, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

Research Questions 10: For students not designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho10: For students not designated as at-risk, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

Research Questions 11: For traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho11: For traditional-aged students, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

Research Questions 12: For non-traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho12: For non-traditional-aged students, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

Research Questions 13: For male students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho13: For male students, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a

College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

Research Questions 14: For female students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho14: For female students, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

Population and Sample

The site for this study was a community college located in Southeastern Tennessee. The institution is governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents College System. The institution's enrollment was approximately 4,600 students. The mean age of students was 21.8 years old with the student population nonracially identifiable. The college is an open-enrollment institution. However, incoming students must submit ACT scores or complete a college placement exam before enrolling. The population of this study consisted of those students enrolled in the fall semesters of 2017 and 2018.

The student population of the college is diverse in terms of age, gender, and socioeconomic background. First-time, full-time students included are those who had not attended another postsecondary institution before enrolling at the participating community college. Limiting the population to students in their first year, rather than in their first semester, captured data for all new students and those who took the College to Career Navigation

exploration course. For the purpose of this study first-time, full-time students who did not participate in the College to Career Navigation exploration course were also included in this study. In the fall terms of 2017 and 2018, 987 and 994 first-time full-time students were enrolled at the college, respectively. Of those students, 38% were male and 62% were female. Approximately, 55% were considered at-risk students (defined as students who scored below 19 on their ACT composite) and 19% were non-traditional aged students (over the age of 24). Students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course during the official add period in the first week and then dropped were not included this study.

Only those students who completed the semester with final grades were included in the initial study. Students who were enrolled but received an (I) incomplete, (W) withdrawal, or (AU) audit were not included. The objective was to select students who had successfully completed their first term of college.

Instrumentation

Archival data were used in this study. The data for this study were collected at the participating community college's student records database (Banner). Banner runs on an integrated database system. It supports many institutions in managing and maintaining students' records. The permanency of the system facilitates validity as data entry has been exceedingly consistent over the years (Graybeal, 2007).

Data Collection

Permission was gained from the President of the participating community college, the participating college's institutional review committee and from the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board. This study consisted of first-time full-time community college students who completed and those who did not enroll in a section of the College to

Career Navigation course. Archival data, consisting of student records from 2017 and 2018 fall cohorts in the College to Career Navigation course and students who did not take the course, along with other variables of gender, at-risk status, and age, were gathered. Data included first-year student's cumulative GPA. Retention rates of the first-year, full-time students were collected and measured according to reporting enrollment policies of the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR). In addition, the student's identity was protected, according to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, by randomly assigning an identification number to each student's record. This process eliminates the need to incorporate names in the extraction of data.

After sorting for first-time attendance, student lists were produced in the same way for the fall 2017 cohorts and 2018 fall cohorts. Student variables such as, age, gender, college placement scores, enrollment status in the College to Career Navigation course, and academic performance (as measured by GPA) were collected for students meeting the study criteria.

Data Analysis

Data were aggregated and enter into IBM-SPSS to test the null hypotheses. Students were divided into two groups – those who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation course and those who did not. Student completion of the course was reported as receiving a grade of A, B, C, or D. All data were analyzed at the .05 level of significance. For research questions 1 through 7, chi-square tests of independence were used to determine the relationship of the College to Career Navigation course with outcomes that measured student success. For research questions 8 through 14, independent sample t-tests were conducted. The data were analyzed to determine if there were significant relationships between academic success and retention for those who participated in College to Career Navigation courses and those who did not participate.

Chapter 4. Findings

The purpose of this quantitative, comparative study was to determine the differences in retention and the academic completion between students who participated in a college experience, college orientation and career exploration course, and students who did not participate in the course at a rural, 14 county service area, community college. This chapter presented the findings of the analyses of data associated with each research question and null hypothesis.

Data for this study were stored in the participating community college's student records database, Banner system. According to the institutional research review board policy at the participating community college, the director of the office of institutional research was assigned to assist with collecting the sample data. The study compared first-time, full-time students from the fall-to-fall semesters of 2017 and 2018. The cohorts studied were divided into two groups, students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not take the course, along with other variables of gender, at-risk status, and non-traditional aged students. Chi square tests (two-way contingency table analysis) were used to determine if there was an association between each variable and fall-to-fall retention rates. Independent sample t tests were conducted to determine if there was a significance relationship regarding those students who took the College to Career Navigation exploration course and their GPAs.

Table 1

Demographics of First-Time, Full-Time Students

	Enrolled in Course (N = 1,227)		Not Enrolled in Course (N = 757)	
Variables	N	%	N	%
First-Time/Full-Time Students				
Fall 2017	592	59.1	400	40.3
Fall 2018	635	64.0	357	36.0
Gender				
Female	797	66.2	407	33.8
Male	430	55.1	350	44.9
At-Risk Students	413	59.1	286	40.9
Non-traditional Students	65	8.6	691	91.4

The demographic information, as shown in Table 1, indicates there were 1,984 participants in the study. There were more females (797) who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course than males (430). A review of the demographic information showed that 59.1% of students who were considered at-risk (defined as enrolled in two or more learning support, co-requisite classes) enrolled in the class compared to 40.9% considered at-risk of those who did not enroll in the College to Career Navigation exploration course.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho1: There is not a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course had higher retention rates those students who did not enroll. The analysis indicated that the association between enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and retention were found to be significant, X^2 (1, N = 1984) = 379.30, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .43. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The frequencies and associated percentages for those who did and did not enroll and those who were and were not retained including the population are displayed in Table 2. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of students retained who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course to those students who were not retained and those who did not enroll and retained to those students who were not. In summary, the fall-to-fall retention rate is significantly higher for students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course than for student who did not.

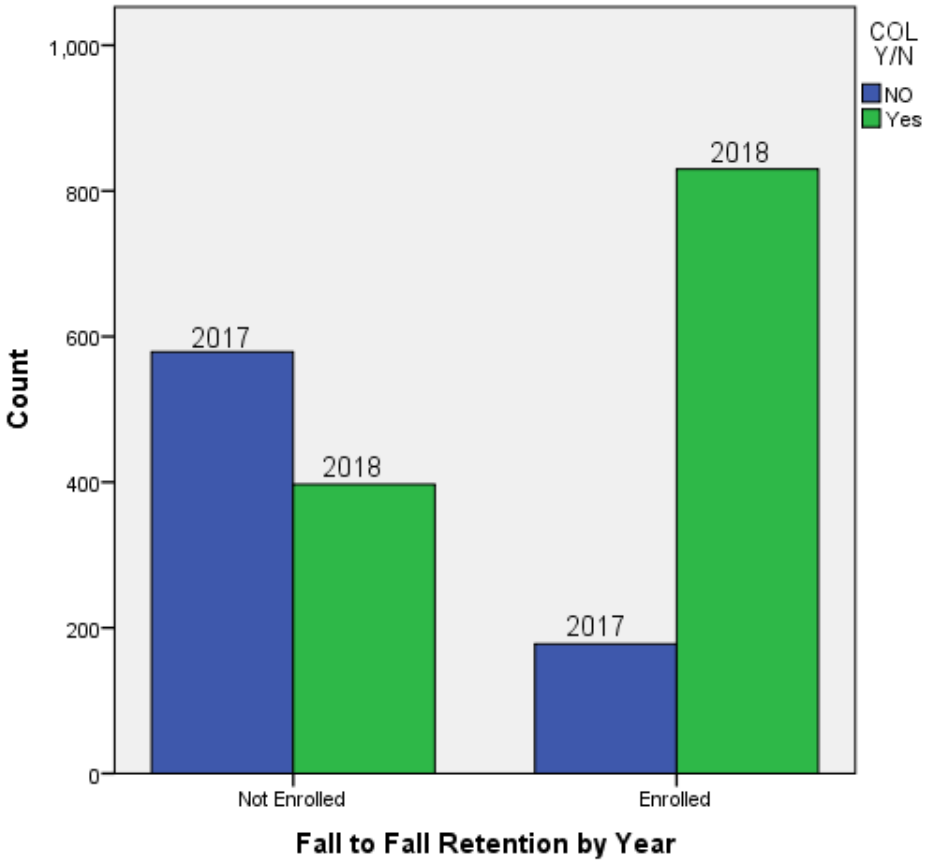
Table 2

Retention Status of Participants

	Enrolled		Not Enrolled		
	N	%	N	%	Total
Retained	830	67.6	178	23.5	1,008
Not Retained	397	32.4	579	76.5	976
Total	1,227		757		1,984

Figure 1

Student Retention for 2017 and 2018



Research Question 2

Research Question 2: For students designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho2: For students designated as at-risk, there is not a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether students designated as at-risk who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course had higher retention rates those students who did not enroll. The analysis indicated that the association between enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and retention were found to be significant, X^2 (1, N = 884) = 230.04, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .50. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The frequencies and associated percentages for those who did and did not enroll and those who were and were not retained including the population are displayed in Table 3. Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of students retained who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course to those students who were not retained and those who did not enroll and retained to those students who were not. In summary, the fall-to-fall retention rate is significantly higher for students designated as at-risk who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course than for student who did not.

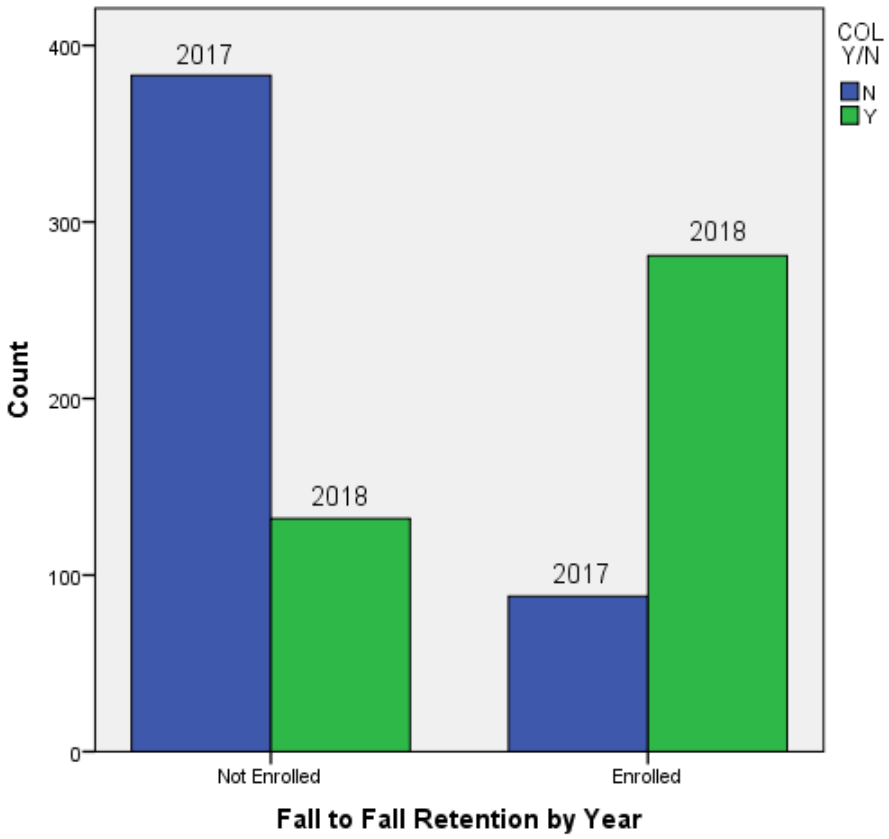
Table 3

Retention Status of At-Risk Enrolled Students and At-Risk Not Enrolled Students

	At-Risk Enrolled		At-Risk Not Enrolled		
	N	%	N	%	Total
Retained	281	68.0	132	32.0	413
Not Retained	88	18.7	383	81.3	471
Total	369		515		844

Figure 2

At-Risk Enrolled and At-Risk Not Enrolled Retention for 2017 and 2018



Research Question 3

Research Question 3: For students not designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho3: For students not designated as at-risk, there is no a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether students not designated as at-risk who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course had higher retention rates those students who did not enroll. The analysis indicated that the association between enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and retention were found to be significant, X^2 (1, N = 1,100) = 112.51, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .32. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The frequencies and associated percentages for those who did and did not enroll and those who were and were not retained including the population are displayed in Table 4. Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of students retained who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course to those students who were not retained and those who did not enroll and retained to those students who were not. In summary, the fall-to-fall retention rate is significantly higher for students not designated as at-risk who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course than for student who did not.

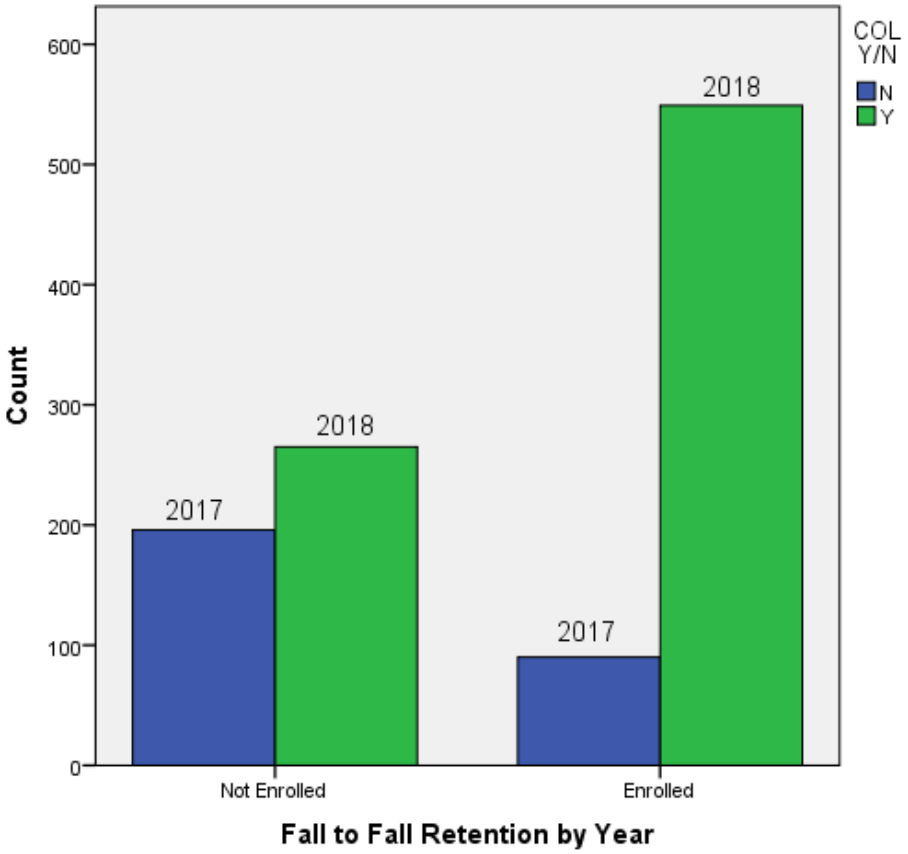
Table 4

Retention Status of Not At-Risk Enrolled Students and Not At-Risk Not Enrolled Students

	Not At-Risk Enrolled N	%	Not At-Risk Not Enrolled N	%	Total
Retained	549	67.4	265	32.6	814
Not Retained	90	31.5	196	68.5	286
Total	369		515		1,100

Figure 3

Not At-Risk Enrolled and Not At-Risk Not Enrolled Retention for 2017 and 2018



Research Question 4

Research Question 4: For traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho4: For traditional-aged students, there is not a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether traditional-aged students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course had higher retention rates those students who did not enroll. The analysis indicated that the association between enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and retention were found to be significant, X^2 (1, N = 1,853) = 372.57, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .44. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The frequencies and associated percentages for those who did and did not enroll and those who were and were not retained including the population as displayed in Table 5. Figure 4 illustrates the percentage of students retained who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course to those students who were not retained and those who did not enroll and retained to those students who were not. In summary, the fall-to-fall retention rate is significantly higher for traditional-aged students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course than for student who did not.

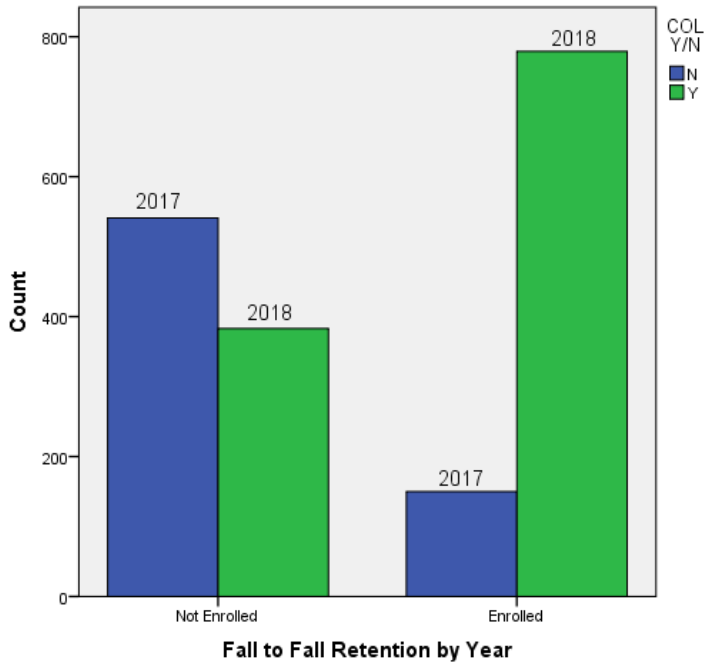
Table 5

Retention Status of Traditional-aged Enrolled Students and Traditional-aged Not Enrolled Students

	Traditional-aged Enrolled N	%	Traditional-aged Not Enrolled N	%	Total
Retained	779	67.0	383	33.0	1,162
Not Retained	150	21.7	541	78.3	691
Total	929		924		1,853

Figure 4

Traditional-aged Students Enrolled and Traditional-aged Students Not Enrolled Retention for 2017 and 2018



Research Question 5

Research Question 5: For non-traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho5: For non-traditional-aged students, there is no a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether non-traditional-aged students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course had higher retention rates those students who did not enroll. The analysis indicated that the association between enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and retention were found to be significant, X^2 (1, N = 131) = 18.30, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .37. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The frequencies and associated percentages for those who did and did not enroll and those who were and were not retained including the population as displayed in Table 6. Figure 5 illustrates the percentage of students retained who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course to those students who were not retained and those who did not enroll and retained to those students who were not. In summary, the fall-to-fall retention rate is significantly higher for non-traditional-aged students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course than for student who did not.

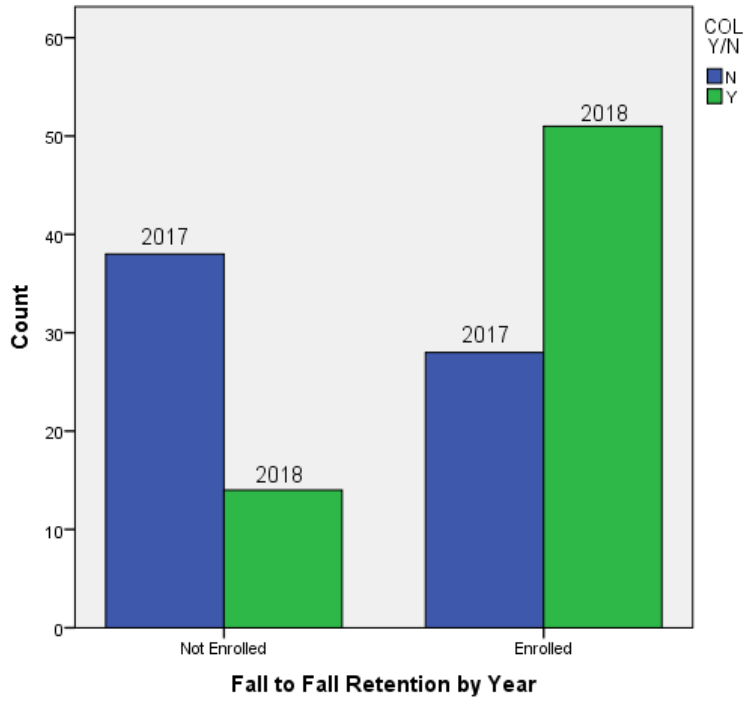
Table 6

Retention Status of Non-traditional-aged Enrolled Students and Non-traditional-aged Not Enrolled Students

	Non-traditional-aged Enrolled N	%	Non-traditional-aged Not Enrolled N	%	Total
Retained	51	78.5	14	21.5	65
Not Retained	28	42.4	38	57.6	66
Total	79		52		131

Figure 5

Non-traditional-aged Students Enrolled and Non-traditional-aged Students Not Enrolled Retention for 2017 and 2018



Research Question 6

Research Question 6: For male students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho6: For male students, there is not a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether male students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course had higher retention rates those students who did not enroll. The analysis indicated that the association between enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and retention were found to be significant, X^2 (1, N = 780) = 146.95, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .43. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The frequencies and associated percentages for those who did and did not enroll and those who were and were not retained including the population as displayed in Table 7. Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of students retained who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course to those students who were not retained and those who did not enroll and retained to those students who were not. In summary, the fall-to-fall retention rate is significantly higher for male students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course than for student who did not.

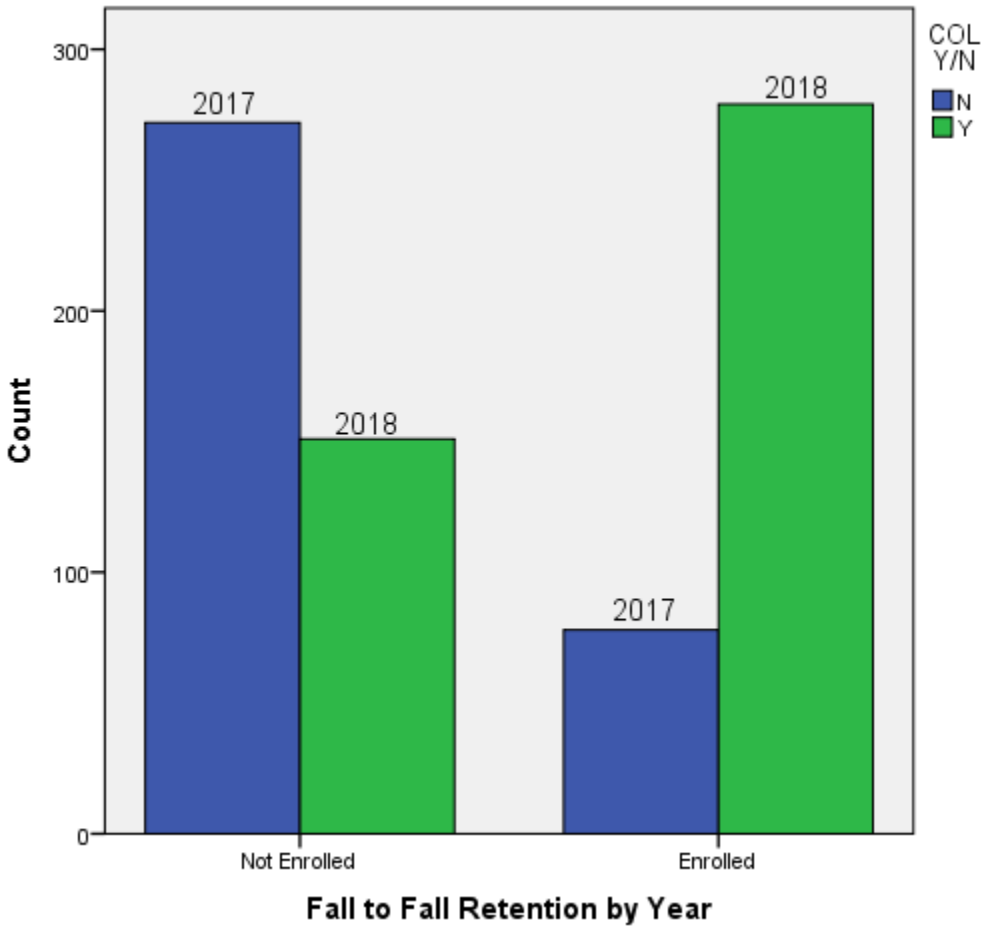
Table 7

Retention Status of Male Students and Not Enrolled Male Students

	Males Enrolled N	%	Males Not Enrolled N	%	Total
Retained	279	64.9	151	35.1	430
Not Retained	78	22.3	272	77.7	350
Total	357		423		780

Figure 6

Males Enrolled and Males Not Enrolled Retention for 2017 and 2018



Research Question 7

Research Question 7: For female students, is there a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course?

Ho7: For female students, there is not a significant difference in the fall-to-fall retention between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the course.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether female students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course had higher retention rates those students who did not enroll. The analysis indicated that the association between enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and retention were found to be significant, X^2 (1, N = 1,204) = 222.13, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .42. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The frequencies and associated percentages for those who did and did not enroll and those who were and were not retained including the population as displayed in Table 8. Figure 7 illustrates the percentage of students retained who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course to those students who were not retained and those who did not enroll and retained to those students who were not. In summary, the fall-to-fall retention rate is significantly higher for female students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course than for student who did not.

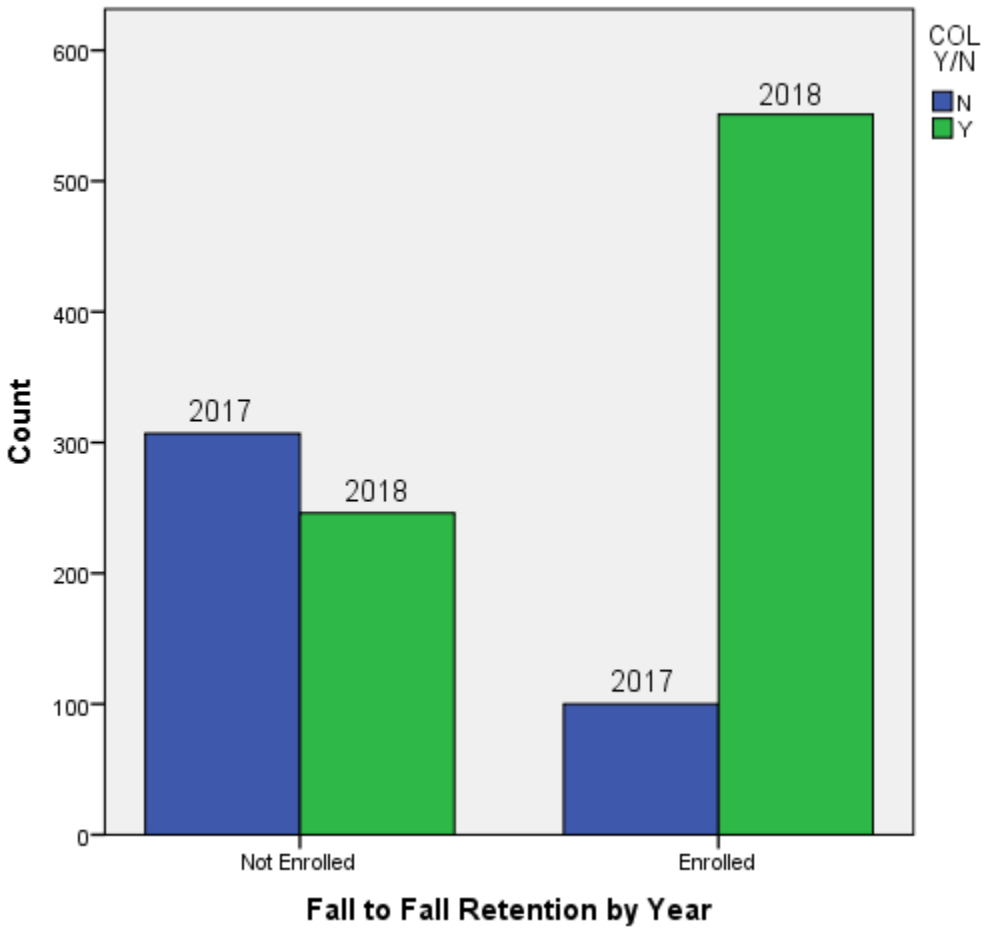
Table 8

Retention Status of Female Students and Not Enrolled Female Students

	Females Enrolled N	%	Females Not Enrolled N	%	Total
Retained	551	69.1	246	30.9	797
Not Retained	100	24.6	307	75.4	407
Total	651		553		1,204

Figure 7

Females Enrolled and Females Not Enrolled Retention for 2017 and 2018



Research Question 8

Research Questions 8: Is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho8: There is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean cumulative final GPAs differed between community college students participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and students not participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course. Equal variances were not assumed ($p < .05$). The test was significant, $t(1341.22) = 18.26$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Students participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.05$) tended to have a significantly higher cumulative final GPA than those who did not participate ($M = 1.37$, $SD = 1.31$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was .92 to 1.13. The eta squared index indicated that 16% of the variance of the overall cumulative final GPA was accounted for by whether the student participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course or not. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 9. Figure 8 shows the distribution of GPAs for the two groups.

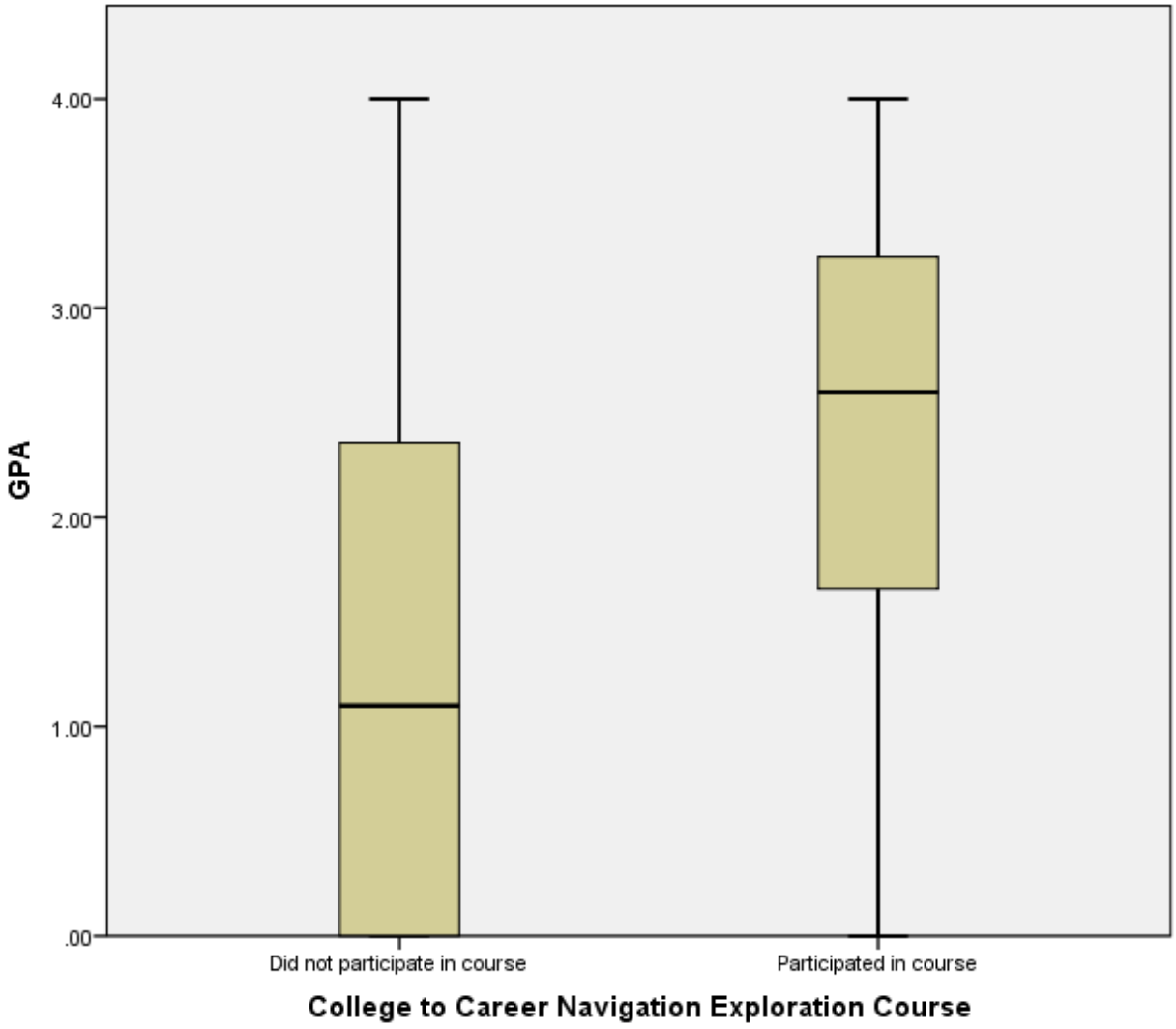
Table 9

GPAs of Participants and Non-Participants

Participated	N	Mean	SD	GPA Range
Yes	1,227	2.39	1.05	0.0 – 4.0
No	757	1.37	1.31	0.0 – 4.0

Figure 8

GPAs of Students Who Participated in the College to Career Navigation Course and Those Who Did Not



Research Question 9

Research Questions 9: For students designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho9: For students designated as at-risk, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean cumulative final GPAs for students designated as at-risk differed between those participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and those not participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course. Equal variances were not assumed ($p = .004$). The test was significant, $t(881.92) = 13.36$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Students designated as at-risk participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course ($M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.00$) tended to have a significantly higher cumulative final GPA than those who did not participate ($M = 1.07$, $SD = 1.13$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was .81 to 1.09. The eta squared index indicated that 6% of the variance of the overall cumulative final GPA was accounted for by whether the student designated as at-risk participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course or not. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 10. Figure 9 shows the distribution of GPAs for the two groups.

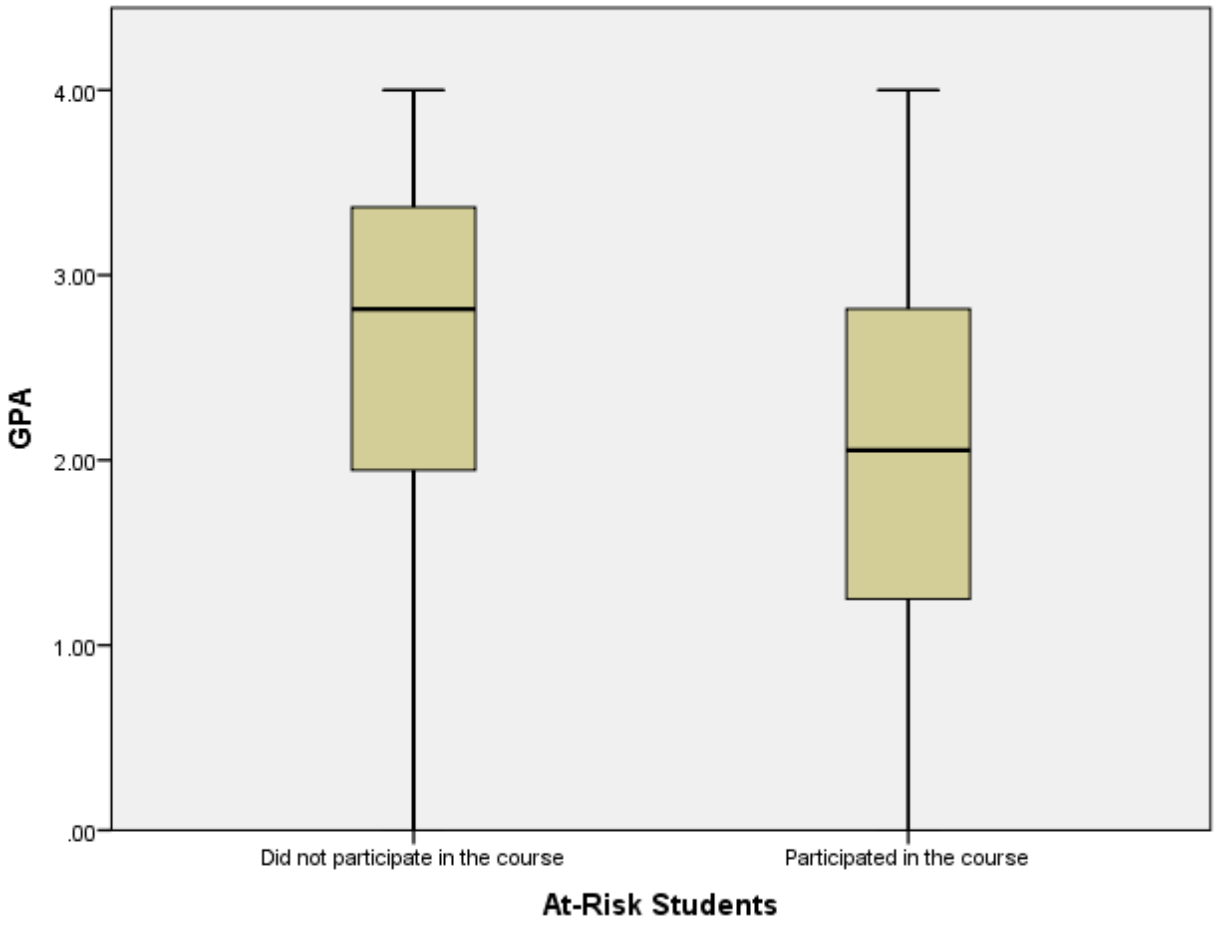
Table 10

GPAs of At-Risk Participants and At-Risk Non-Participants

Participated	N	Mean	SD	GPA Range
Yes	413	2.02	1.00	0.0 – 4.0
No	471	1.07	1.13	0.0 – 4.0

Figure 9

GPAs of Students Designated At-risk Who Participated in the College to Career Navigation Course and Those Who Did Not



Research Question 10

Research Questions 10: For students not designated as at-risk, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho10: For students not designated as at-risk, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean cumulative final GPAs for students not designated as at-risk differed between those participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and those not participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course. Equal variances were not assumed ($p < .05$). The test was significant, $t(390.91) = 7.84$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Students not designated as at-risk participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course (M = 2.58, SD = 1.02) tended to have a significantly higher cumulative final GPA than those who did not participate (M = 1.86, SD = 1.44). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was .57 to .88. The eta squared index indicated that 9% of the variance of the overall cumulative final GPA was accounted for by whether the student designated as at-risk participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course or not. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 11. Figure 10 shows the distribution of GPAs for the two groups.

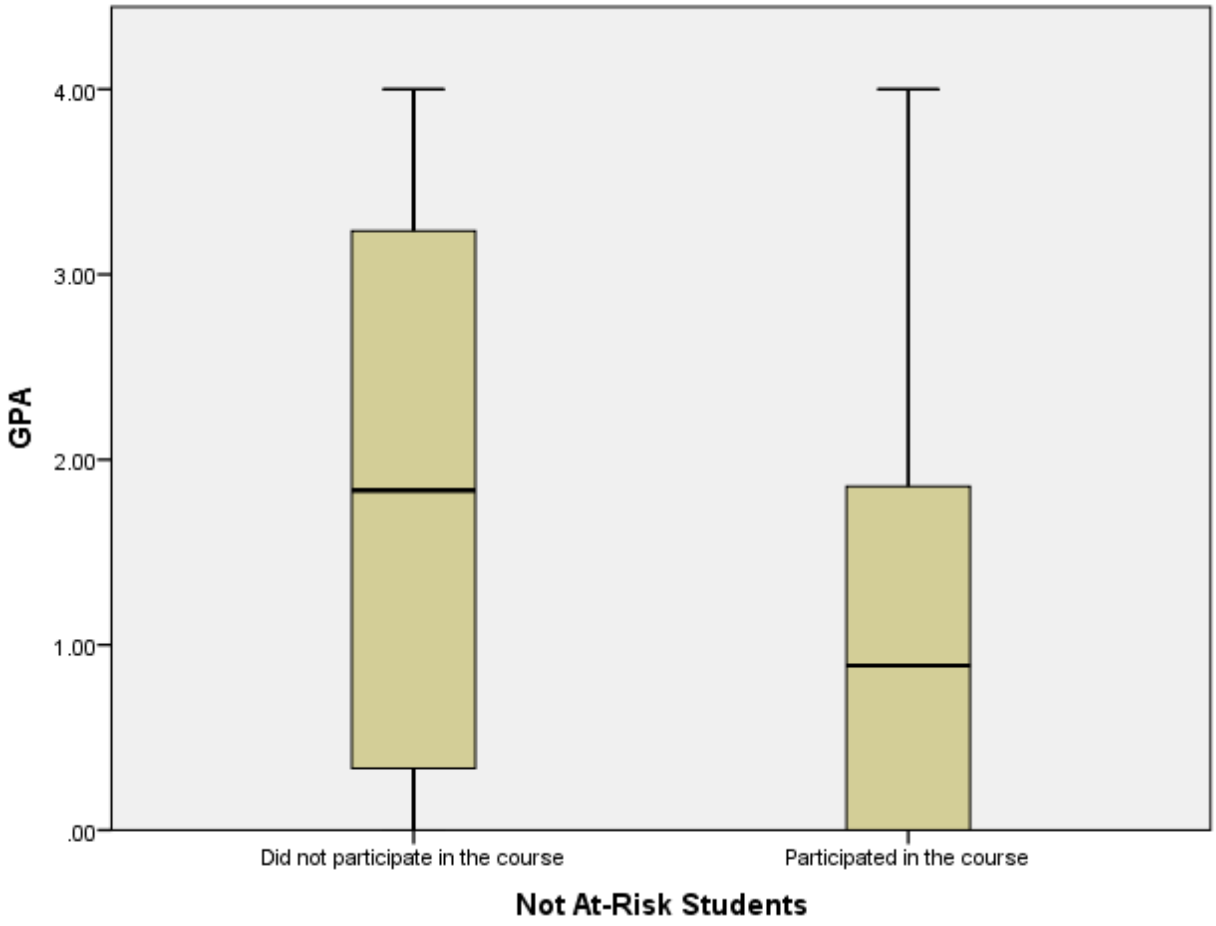
Table 11

GPAs of Not At-Risk Participants and Not At-Risk Non-Participants

Participated	N	Mean	SD	GPA Range
Yes	814	2.58	1.02	0.0 – 4.0
No	286	1.86	1.44	0.0 – 4.0

Figure 10

GPAs for Students Not Designated At-Risk Who Participated in the College to Career Navigation Course and Those Who Did Not



Research Question 11

Research Questions 11: For traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho11: For traditional-aged students, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean cumulative final GPAs for students designated as traditional-aged differed between those participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and those not participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course. Equal variances were not assumed ($p < .05$). The test was significant, $t(1,231.70) = 18.51$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Traditional-aged students participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.05$) tended to have a higher cumulative final GPA than those who did not participate ($M = 1.30$, $SD = 1.28$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was .96 to 1.17. The eta squared index indicated that 3% of the variance of the overall cumulative final GPA was accounted for by whether the student designated as at-risk participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course or not. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 12. Figure 11 shows the distribution of GPAs for the two groups.

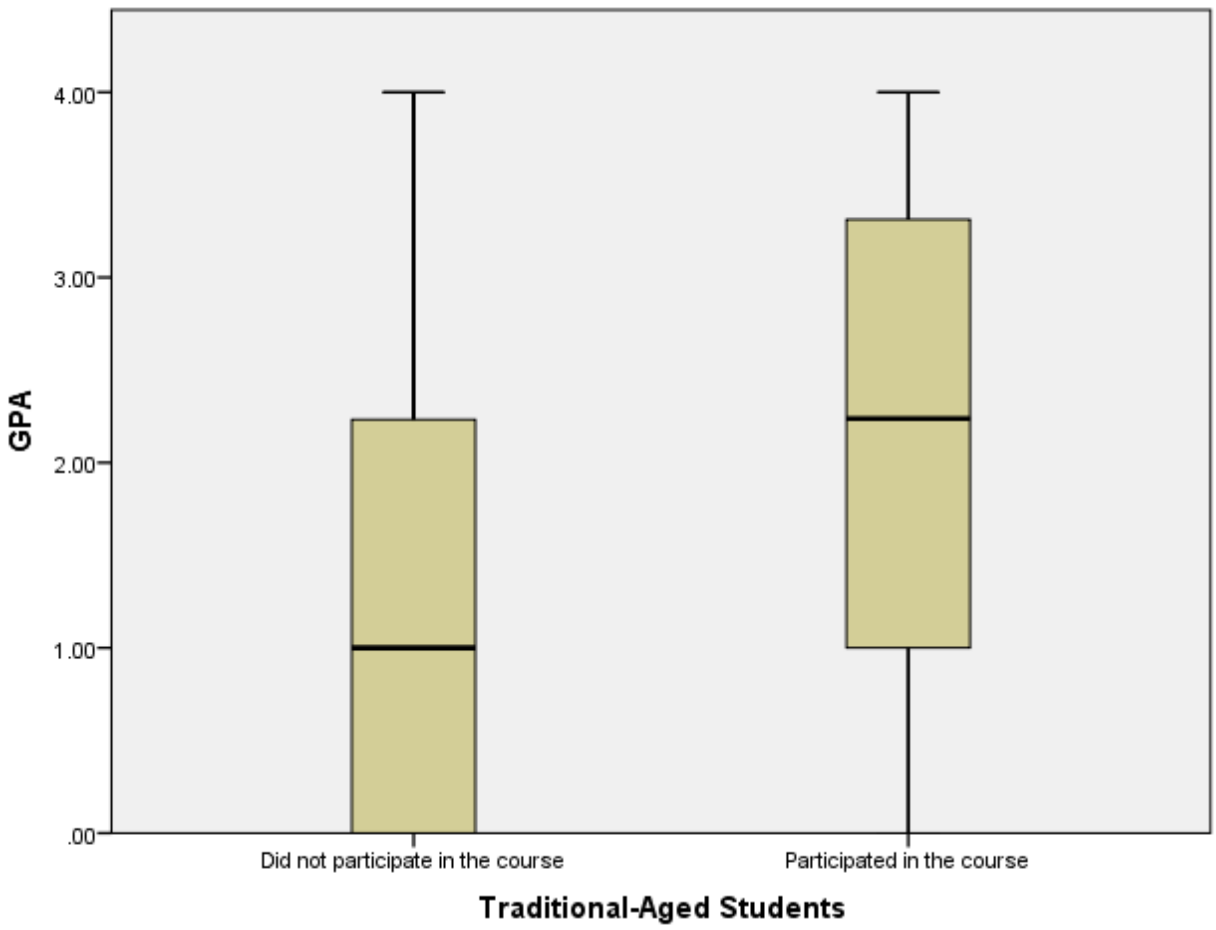
Table 12

GPAs of Traditional-Aged Participants and Traditional-Aged Non-Participants

Participated	N	Mean	SD	GPA Range
Yes	1162	2.36	1.05	0.0 – 4.0
No	691	1.30	1.28	0.0 – 4.0

Figure 11

GPAs for Traditional-Aged Students Who Participated in the College to Career Navigation Course and Those Who Did Not



Research Question 12

Research Questions 12: For non-traditional-aged students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho12: For non-traditional-aged students, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean cumulative final GPAs for students designated as non-traditional-aged differed between those participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and those not participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course. Equal variances were not assumed ($p < .05$). The test was significant, $t(112.11) = 3.90$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Non-traditional-aged students participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course ($M = 2.88$, $SD = .91$) tended to have a significantly higher cumulative final GPA than those who did not participate ($M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.39$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was .39 to 1.20. The eta squared index indicated that 1% of the variance of the overall cumulative final GPA was accounted for by whether the student designated as at-risk participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course or not. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 13. Figure 12 shows the distribution of GPAs for the two groups.

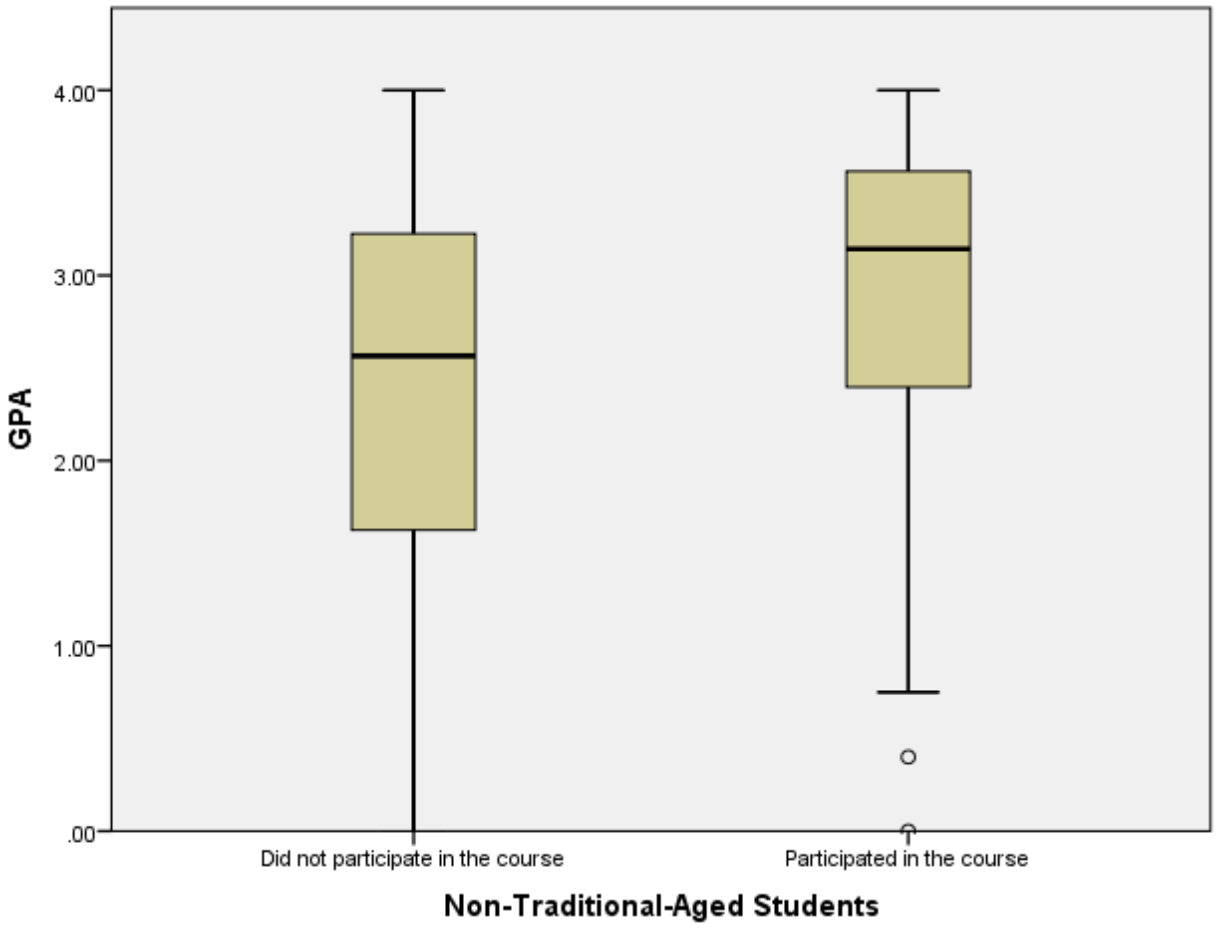
Table 13

GPAs of Non-Traditional-Aged Participants and Non-Traditional-Aged Non-Participants

Participated	N	Mean	SD	GPA Range
Yes	65	2.88	.91	0.0 – 4.0
No	66	2.07	1.39	0.0 – 4.0

Figure 12

GPAs for Non-Traditional-Aged Students Who Participated in the College to Career Navigation Course and Those Who Did Not



Research Question 13

Research Questions 13: For male students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho13: For male students, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean cumulative final GPAs for male students differed between those participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and those not participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course. Equal variances were not assumed ($p < .05$). The test was significant, $t(667.34) = 10.30$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Male students participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.08$) tended to have a significantly higher cumulative final GPA than those who did not participate ($M = 1.32$, $SD = 1.33$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was .74 to 1.07. The eta squared index indicated that 1% of the variance of the overall cumulative final GPA was accounted for by whether the student designated by gender participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course or not. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 13. Figure 12 displayed the distribution of GPAs for the two groups.

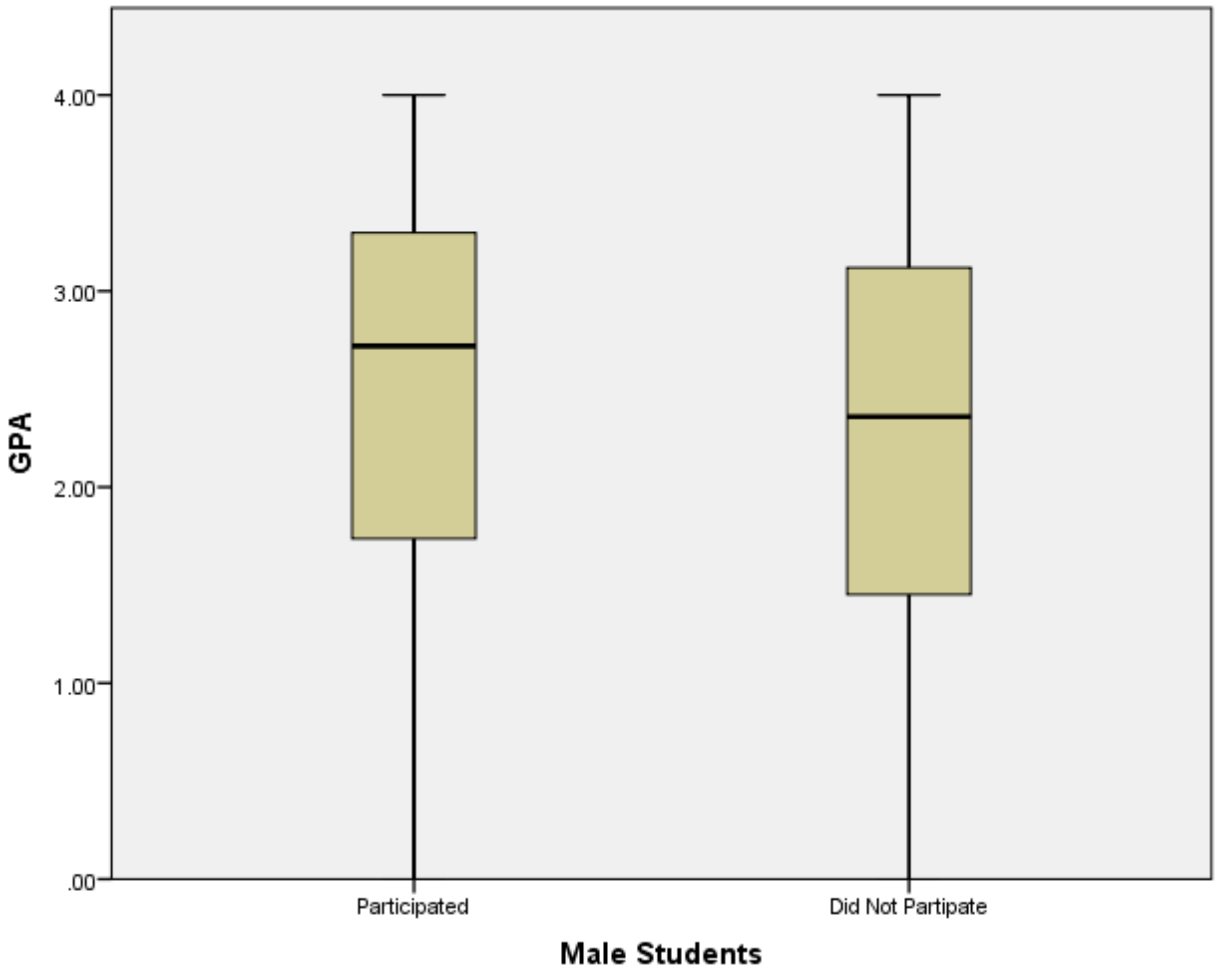
Table 14

GPAs of Male Participants and Male Non-Participants

Participated	N	Mean	SD	GPA Range
Yes	430	2.22	1.08	0.0 – 4.0
No	350	1.32	1.33	0.0 – 4.0

Figure 13

GPAs for Male Students Who Participated in the College to Career Navigation Course and Those Who Did Not



Research Question 14

Research Questions 14: For female students, is there a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course?

Ho14: For female students, there is not a significant difference in the academic success, as measured by cumulative final GPA, between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean cumulative final GPAs for female students differed between those participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and those not participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course. Equal variances were not assumed ($p < .05$). The test was significant, $t(669.386) = 14.62$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Female students participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.02$) tended to have a significantly higher cumulative final GPA than those who did not participate ($M = 1.41$, $SD = 1.29$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was .94 to 1.21. The eta squared index indicated that 0.1% of the variance of the overall cumulative final GPA was accounted for by whether the student designated by gender participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course or not. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 14. Figure 13 displayed the distribution of GPAs for the two groups.

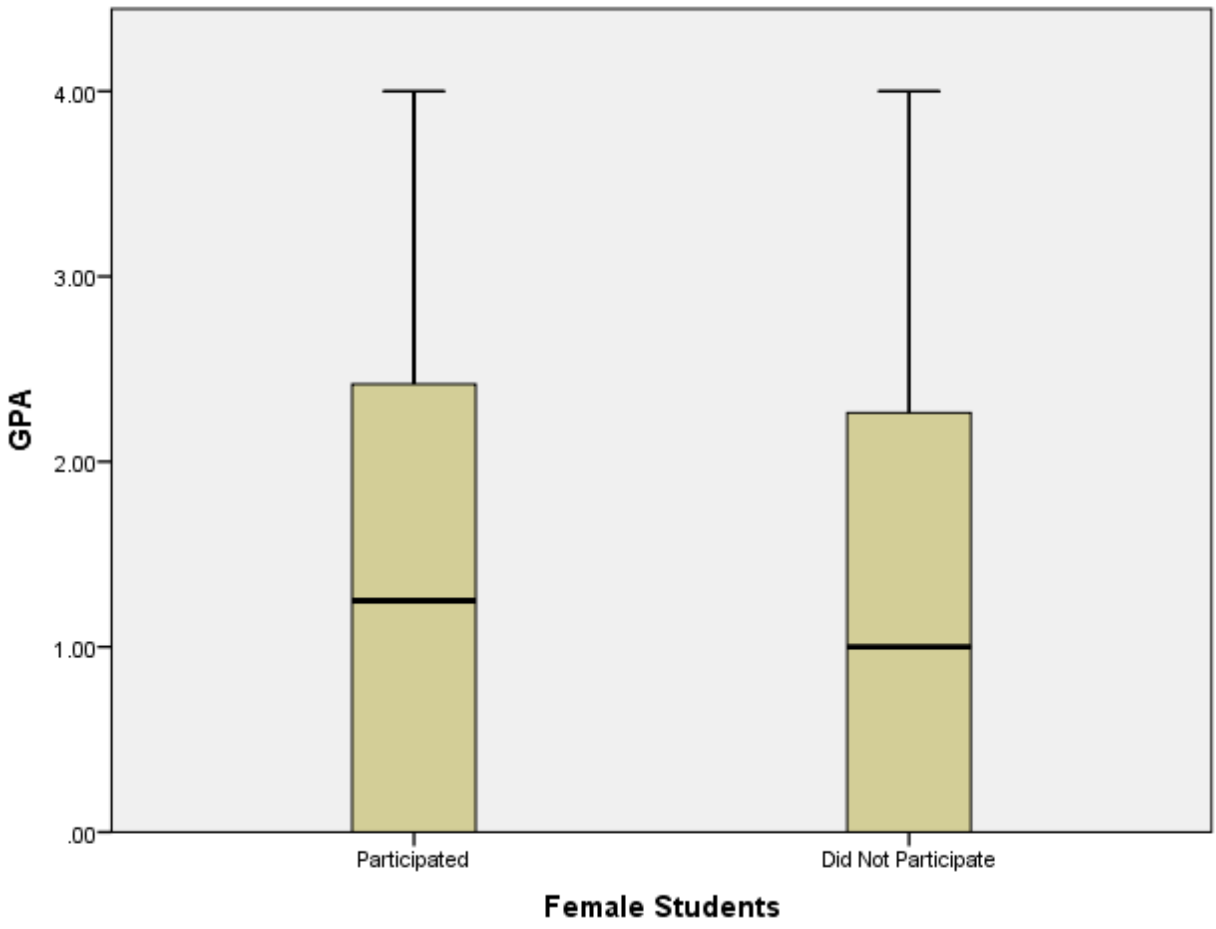
Table 15

GPAs of Female Participants and Female Non-Participants

Participated	N	Mean	SD	GPA Range
Yes	430	2.22	1.08	0.0 – 4.0
No	350	1.32	1.33	0.0 – 4.0

Figure 14

GPAs for Female Students Who Participated in the College to Career Navigation Course and Those Who Did Not



Chapter 5. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this quantitative, comparative study was to determine the differences in retention and the academic completion between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in the course. The researcher analyzed quantitative data stored in the participating community college's student records database. First-time, full-time students from the fall-to-fall semesters of 2017 and 2018 were compared. The students studied were divided into two groups, students who enrolled in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not take the course. The retention and academic success of students were analyzed, along with gender, at-risk status, and age. Retention was determined by analyzing whether or not the student registered fall to fall semesters. Academic success was determined by the student's cumulative final GPA.

Retention and academic success are founded in creating spaces for students to explore both their inner selves as a student and how that relates to choosing a career (Tinto, 1993). Persistence and academic success from year to year are measurable outcomes for student retention. Community college administrators should be prepared to invest and support as needed to guide students through the path of college through graduation and into the workforce. Many higher education leaders have instituted exploratory courses and intervention programs to address student retention. Therefore, community college leaders have an opportunity to improve the quality of the student's college experience and address retention through a College to Career exploration course (Peterkin, 2012).

Summary

Retention and Participation in a College to Career Navigation were addressed in Research Question 1. Fall-to-fall retention was significantly higher for students who participated in a College to Career Navigation course than for student who did not participate in the course ($p < .001$). The results of the present study support a review of literature on the relationship between retention and College to Career Navigation exploration type courses. Felman and Zimbler (2011) stated that students who participated in College to Career exploration type courses transition into the workforce with more specific career goals. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) surmised that students who participate in college experiential, orientation, and career exploration courses had positive effects on the student's retention and persistence to graduation.

Sidle and McReynolds (2009) hypothesized that studies on retention rates at public institutions students who chose to participate in the College to Career Navigation exploration type course registered for subsequent semesters at a higher rate of (63%) than students who chose not to participate in the course (56%). Derby & Smith (2004) surmised the effects of a college orientation and seminar courses during the first year at a community college on retention. A significant relationship between the college orientation experience course and completion of an associate's degree was found. The primary reason that colleges, including community colleges, implemented college experiential, orientation, and career exploration courses was to improve the retention of students and improve graduation rates (Fralick, 1993; Upcraft et al., 2005).

Retention and at-risk status were addressed in Research Questions 2 and 3. Findings in the present research indicated at-risk students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course had a higher retention rate (68%) than at-risk students who did not enroll in the course (32%). These results are in accord with research by Bradburn and Carroll (2002), who

found 24% of the university students who needed learning support or co-requisite courses left within 3 years while the retention rate for community college students who needed developmental courses did not differ significantly. Potts and Schultz (2008) found the retention rates of at-risk students who participated in a college orientation and experience course comparable to a control group that did not participate. Potts and Schultz (2008) reported a notable effective retention rates of 74.1% who participated versus 42.1% for who did not participate. Many academic programs intended to increase persistence among at-risk college students build implicitly or explicitly on Tinto's (1993) theory. For example, college orientation and success programs often introduce students to campus academic resources (e.g., tutoring programs, librarian assistance, student clubs and organizations). Similarly, academic support programs are aimed in part at increasing the academic integration of students. Institution administrators also attempt to grow social integration by offering and supporting activities that serve to connect students to each other. Retention rates were also significantly higher for students in the not at-risk group completing the College to Career Navigation exploration course ($p < .001$).

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (2012) reported fewer high school graduates in 2011 placing greater pressure on community college administrators to retain students. This is principally applicable for community colleges, which nationally, enroll 43% of all college students in the United States (Higher Education Research and Development Institute, 2011). According to research commission by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (2012), 79% of students indicated a desire to complete an associate degree, only 45% of full-time students did so within a six-year period. With such a heightened interest in

retaining students, many community college leaders employ intervention programs and student support programs.

Retention and age were addressed in Research Questions 4 and 5. Students in the traditional-aged group ($p < .001$) and students in the non-traditional-aged group ($p < .001$) both demonstrated significantly higher retention rates. Jeffreys (2007) stated that non-traditional-aged students perceive environmental influences, such as finances, family support, and employment hours, to be influential in retention. These may have impacted the older students, who perhaps have more responsibilities than younger students. Tinto's (1993) reconsiderations to his theory addressed the importance of financial resources within the set of background characteristics with which a student enters a postsecondary institution and acknowledged the role communities external to the community (e.g., family, work, and neighborhood) play in students' departure decisions. Similarly, Bean and Metzner's (1985) model builds on Tinto's but emphasized the importance of external factors on the persistence of non-traditional-aged students, such as those at community colleges. Braxton et al. (2004) theory of student departure in commuter institutions gives greater importance to both the internal campus atmosphere (e.g., academic communities and institutional environment) and students' life circumstances away from campus.

Retention and gender of attendees and non-attendees were addressed Research Questions 6 and 7. Both male and female students that attended the College to Career Navigation exploration course had significantly higher retention rates than male and female students that did not attend the course ($p < .001$ male students; $p < .001$ female students). Research on college orientation and success should not be restricted only to variables that the institution administration controls, as student characteristics have also been shown to influence the outcomes of educational interventions. For example, there is general agreement in the literature

that males (Leppel, 2002), students with weak academic backgrounds (Astin, 1993; U.S. Department of Education, 2001), or students who work off campus more than 15 hours per week (Choy, 2002) have lower persistence rates. Understanding the effect of College to Career Navigation exploration course objectives and components can only be accomplished when monitoring for student characteristics, so that the effect of course components are isolated from the effect of student characteristics.

Other studies have explored how student attributes influence the outcomes of college orientation and success courses. For example, the academic support components of these courses appear to work better for females than for males (Blackhurst, 1995). Kim and Sax (2009) also found that women are commonly more content with faculty interaction, while at the same time course-related, hands-on activities seemed to have a stronger impact on degree attainment among men. Nora et al. (1996) concluded that the most significant positive effect on female students remaining in college came from academic support experiences in the form of non-classroom interaction with faculty. It can be concluded that interaction with faculty as well as peers seems equally important for men and women, but it seems that women are more content with this interaction than men.

GPAs and attendance in a College to Career Navigation exploration course were analyzed in Research Question 8. Results from the present student indicated that GPAs of students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course were significantly higher than GPAs of students who did not participate in a College to Career Navigation exploration course. An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean cumulative final GPAs differed between community college students participating in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and students not participating in the College to Career Navigation

exploration course. The test showed that there was a statistically significant difference between students' GPAs who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate in the College to Career Navigation exploration course ($p < .05$).

The mean cumulative final GPA, $M = 2.39$, for students who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course was two times higher than those students who did not participate in the course. Schnell and Doetkott (2003) reported significantly higher retention rates for first year seminar students over a 4-year period at medium-size institutions. Fidler and Moore (1996) found significant positive effects on retention for college orientation and success seminar-type courses in attendance.

GPAs and at-risk status were analyzed for attendees and non-attendees in Research Question 9 and 10. Students designated as at-risk who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course had significantly higher GPAs than students who did not participate in a College to Career Navigation exploration course ($p = .004$). The mean cumulative final GPA, $M = 2.02$, for students designated as at-risk who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course was higher than those students who did not participate in the College to Career Navigation exploration course ($M = 1.37$). Similarly, students not designated as at-risk who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course had significantly higher than GPAs of students who did not in participate a College to Career Navigation exploration course ($p < .05$). Given the complex nature of relations between academic performance and academic readiness to succeed in college, it is not surprising that different perspectives on and definitions of readiness exist (Kobrin, 2007). College success (the dependent variable) definitions have ranged from college degree completion to success in general education college courses to circumvention of placement in developmental, learning support courses

(Stemler, 2012). Notably, researchers suggest, based on strength of indicators of college success, that high school grades might be more desirable than test scores for determining readiness (Bowen et al., 2009; Desjardins & Lindsay, 2008).

GPAs and age were addressed for attendees and non-attendees in Research Question 11 and 12. When comparing GPAs of traditional-aged students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course, the results showed significantly higher GPAs ($M = 2.36$) for students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course ($p < .05$). While research on college retention conventionally centered on academic predictors such as the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT) scores, GPAs, and other measures and showed that high school, traditional-aged student GPAs and standardized test scores were the strongest predictors of college GPAs, it is also an accurate indicator of success based strictly on academic values had only modest success (Breier, 2010; Crisp & Nora, 2010; Margarit & Kennedy, 2019). Non-traditional-aged students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course also had significantly higher than GPAs ($M = 2.89$) than students who did not participate in a College to Career Navigation exploration course ($p < .05$). Chen and Hossler (2017) found 91% of non-traditional-aged student had a first year college GPA of 2.86 at public community college. However, it was noted the enrollment of their institutions varied widely ($SD = 7573$).

GPAs for attendees and non-attendees and gender were analyzed in Research Questions 13 and 14. GPAs for male students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course were significantly higher than GPAs of male students who did not particpate in a College to Career Navigation exploration course ($p < .05$). Although most literature supports male GPAs often are higher after completing a College to Career Navigation course, research is

limited on the effect of male GPAs and the College to Career Navigation course (Bremer et al., 2013). GPAs for female students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course were significantly higher than GPAs of female students who did not participate in a College to Career Navigation exploration course ($p < .05$). The mean GPA for female students was slightly higher ($M = 2.48$) than for male students ($M = 2.22$).

Conclusions

Findings of this study provide information to community college administration in order for them to make data-based decisions about the appropriations of resources and revisions for their College to Career Navigation exploration courses. The research also increases to the body of literature concerning College to Career Navigation exploration course at community colleges and offers perspective to the effectiveness at a rural community college. Upcraft et al. (2005) postulated while a study of an inclusive national population might be interesting, but an examination of the local community college would quite conceivably have a greater effect on that campus and be more appropriate for the students, faculty, and administration.

The purpose of this quantitative comparative study was to determine the differences in retention and the academic success between students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and students who did not participate in a College to Career Navigation exploration course at a rural community college in the fall semesters of 2017 and 2018. The findings indicated the fall-to-fall retention rate was significantly higher for students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course than for students who did not participate in a College to Career Navigation exploration course. Furthermore, for several independent variables tested, specifically females, at-risk students, and non-traditional students, significantly higher in fall-to-fall retention rates were found for students who participated in a

College to Career Navigation exploration course than those who did not participate a College to Career Navigation exploration course. Moreover, the results indicated the fall-to-fall academic success rate (measured by cumulative GPA) was significantly higher for students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course than for students who did not participate in a College to Career Navigation exploration course. Furthermore, for the variables tested, specifically males, female students considered at-risk, and non-traditional students, significantly greater difference in fall-to-fall academic success rates were found for students who participated in the College to Career Navigation exploration course than those who did not participate in the College to Career Navigation exploration course.

The results of this research were comparable to previous theory about the relationship between students who participated in a college success and career exploratory course and students who do not participate in a course. As concluded by Pascarella and Terenzi (2005), the findings are consistent, but only indicative, that participating in college success and career exploratory course appears to promote retention and academic success. More research needs to be conducted to evaluate why there was improvement in retention rates and academic success for students who participated in the College to Career Navigation experience course.

Although this study concentrated on student success by assessing retention from fall to fall and grade point averages, the definitive application should be on how the College to Career Navigation experience course can lead to degree completion. Consistent assessment is crucial for any institution effectiveness program offered at a community college to support retention and academic success.

Recommendations for Practice

This study can be used by community colleges leadership to evaluate institutional programs, policies, and procedures of that could support retention and academic success of their first-time, full-time students. Community College administrators should consider implementing a mandatory College to Career Navigation exploration course that requires not only first-time, full-time students but all students regardless if they are full-time or part-time status to enroll. Karp et al.'s study (2008) was comparable with research in finding that a college success and career exploratory course has a positive effect on student retention and academic success. Students who enroll and complete a college success and career exploratory course were more likely to be retained than those who did not successfully complete the course. Furthermore, students who participated in this type course were more likely to achieve academic success and graduate over those who did not successfully complete the course. Therefore, community college leaders should consider the College to Career Navigation exploration course as a component in the retention strategy.

Most importantly, the present research points to the importance of supporting incoming first-time, full-time community college students. Driscoll (2007) advised, "those who manage to persist in their education and maintain their high aspirations after the first semester are more likely to transfer than the majority of students who do not" (p. 2). The present research reported that most students who participate in a college orientation and career exploratory course had higher rates of retention and greater academic success. Tinto (1993) surmised the first academic year of college can be the most crucial time for students and community college leaders need to provide support services to help students make the transition. Subsequently, community college administrators should contemplate mandating the College to Career Navigation exploration course to support retention within their freshman class. Based on the findings of this study, it is

recommended that all community colleges implement the College to Career Navigation exploration course for all first-time, full-time students to assist students in transitioning into college life and to improve persistence to graduation.

Recommendations for Further Research

Studies in other areas could further grow the body of knowledge of the College to Career Navigation exploration course for community colleges. New studies within the area of college success and career exploration could provide the opportunity for institutions' administrators to structure these courses to better meet their specific objectives and strategic goals.

A comparison of the relationship between participating and not participating in College to Career Navigation exploration course at a single community college, post-secondary institution was performed making the generalization of the study limited. Therefore, the following recommendations for further research are presented:

1. Replicate this study in multiple community college based on the On Course model (Downing, 2015). This would provide a broader base of results to other institutions and College to Career Navigation exploration programs;
2. Examine the cumulative grade point average of students who participated in a College to Career Navigation exploration course and those who did not participate and compare the student's retention rate to their GPA to see if there is a significant difference comparing higher GPAs and higher retention rates;
3. Include the relationship between a College to Career Navigation exploration course and student graduations rates. The current study only evaluated fall-to-fall retention rates. Encompassing the retention evaluation until graduation, using the same variables applied in this study, may present valuable information to

community colleges on how to better structure College to Career Navigation exploration courses to meet specific institution strategic goals;

4. Investigate and examine varying models of On Course used by other institutions and how faculty embed the 8 qualities for being a successful students in their curriculum;
5. Future studies should center on finding the resources and best practices within the course that makes a difference in retention and academic success. Those variables could be topics covered within the course, instructors facilitating the course, and instructional pedagogy;
6. The College to Career Navigation exploration course promoted 8 qualities for being a successful student. Increasing the examination to explore grade point average and retention rates in correlation with these 8 qualities could provide community college leaders with information needed to better structure courses to increase academic success and retention rates;
7. Examine the College to Career Navigation exploration course impact on underrepresented student populations and building learning communities which perpetuate diversity, equity and inclusion;
8. A qualitative study interviewing participants about the impact of the course on their persistence to graduation.

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APPENDIX

College to Career Navigation Syllabus

"There is only one success—to be able to spend your life in your own way."
--Christopher Morely

COL 1030: College to Career Navigation

(3 Credit Hours)

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to help you navigate college with your career and life goals in mind. The course is designed to develop your understanding of your personal aptitudes, interests and values and to provide effective strategies for the challenges you may face in making successful college and career decisions. The work of the course involves self-assessment exercises, teamwork, case studies and information on careers related to specific academic focus areas. The aim of the work is to provide the basis for an informed choice of an academic focus area and related career and life decisions.

Learning Objectives (What does "learning objective" mean? What key words stand out to you?):

1. Use critical thinking to identify personal goals for college and career.
2. Understand how to get motivated to learn.
3. Recognize and respond effectively to areas of personal responsibility.
4. Recognize internal and external obstacles.
5. Identify strategies for effective self-management including time-management.
6. Develop mutual cooperation and effective communication skills including active listening.
7. Identify strategies for success.
8. Identify the steps needed to achieve success in a field of interest.

Course Supplies (required):

1. On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life, 8th edition, by Skip Downing ISBN 9781305397477
2. Composition notebook for journaling—dedicated only to this class.

Student Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability should follow the steps outlined on p. 29 of the JSCC Catalog (see www.jscc.edu). Reasonable accommodations will be made for any student with a documented disability who follows the procedure set forth on p. 29, including

information the Counseling Center at JSCC and this instructor early in the semester, hopefully by the end of the first week of class. For more information, contact: The Counseling and Career Center in the Student Union.

Method (or what to expect):

On the first day of classes, you will be randomly sorted into "success teams." You should think of the members of your success team as your closest neighbors in our classroom community. Exchange contact information, get to know each other. You will have some assignments together throughout the semester and hopefully serve as a support for each other.

Reading the book is important in this class. It is filled with great ideas and strategies that will help you in almost every part of your life. Plus, this is not your typical lecture-based class. We talk about experiences and concepts in class. Reading the book and knowing those concepts is only going to make things easier for you.

Another important part of the class is journaling. As a famous author once said, "I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say." (Do you know what author said this? Can you find out?) Journaling is exactly that—it helps you get to know yourself by helping you take a moment to organize your thoughts and put them on paper. I know you may not believe this, but many students who take this course, end up continuing to keep journals because they find it so helpful. That could be you by the end of the semester.

In class, we do a lot of activities and group work. Now, it isn't one big group project, so don't fret. You and your classmates will do many activities together and in the process you will learn about yourself and come to know your classmates really well. You might even find you have a lot in common and maybe things you thought were "just you" are things shared by a lot of people. How great would that be?

We also have some quizzes and a couple of online discussions in this course. After all, just as we are not all the same in opinions or hobbies, we don't all learn in the same way. We need variety in a class so that everyone has a chance to do something they're really good at.

We will spend some time looking at careers and talking with advisors. Maybe you think you already know what you want to do, so what's the point in this? Well, it's simple: You don't know what you don't know. Maybe you find something you didn't know existed and you think, YES! This is the thing for me!

The last thing you'll do in this class is write an essay about your journey as a student in the course. You'll write about those concepts and strategies and how they apply to your specific situation. I know what you're thinking, "how long does it have to be?" That is always the first question, but should it be? Think about it this way: This is your chance to write about your life and how what you learned in this class has guided you and helped in a variety of ways. How often do you get that chance? So, a heads up—pay attention to what moves you, pay attention to your journey, pay attention to your life. This will not only help you know what to write, but will undoubtedly help you along the way in your future.

By the end of the course, you'll know a few people, have some new ideas about what your career goals might be, and have several new strategies to help you through tough decisions.

Grades		Points
A	=	270–300
B	=	240–269
C	=	210–239
D	=	180–209
F	=	208 or below

Total Points = 300

1. Quizzes: 7 @ 5 points = 35 points
2. Success Journals/Other Assignments: 29 @ 5 points = 145 points
3. Online discussion: 2 @ 10 points = 20 points
4. Individual Advising Meeting: 1 @ 10 points
5. Career Lab Worksheet Activities: 2 @ 15 points = 30 points
6. Final Essay @ 60 points

Class attendance:

Coming to class is really important. I know professors say that all the time, but it is true, especially in this class. Remember, we will do a lot of exercises in class. If you miss it, you miss it. It isn't like an exam where you can make it up later. It is an experience, and experiences can't be made up. So, you can keep all the points you earned by attending class. Up to about 3 hours (that's one week of class) will be excused. Beyond that, you'll start losing points from your assignments. Here is a chart showing those point deductions:
T/R or M/W 15 week course: 5 points per absence

So, class attendance is important. Imagine if you attended and participated in every class. What might you gain?

Assignments:

Quizzes (35 Possible Points)

This course can show you ways to be successful in college and in life. One of the best ways to be successful is to be prepared. In this course, one way to be prepared is to read the assigned chapters. Having read the chapter, you'll have no problem with a quiz, right? Great success is created one small step at a time. Each time that you earn your quiz points you take an important step toward your success in this course . . . and in life! Quizzes, much like life experiences, may not be made up.

Success Journals, Online Discussions and Other Activities (205 Possible Points)

Did you find out who that quote about writing was by? Here's another: "Writing, to me, is simply thinking through my fingers." You will have numerous opportunities to think through your fingers in this course. Your Success Journals give you the opportunity to explore your thoughts and feelings as you learn about and experiment with the success strategies presented in the On Course textbook. By paying attention to these strategies in your journals, you will discover which ones are most meaningful to you. Please don't hold back in your journal. Although I will be collecting your journals and looking through them, you should write your journal for yourself, not for me. Do also know that some less personal journal entries may occasionally be shared in class. If you are uncomfortable sharing your journals, that's cool—you always have a choice.

It is important that you bring your textbook and journal to every class. Note: Because some of us are digital and others are analog we do have some options in journal writing. 1.) Composition book (You can write the first draft of journal entries on loose sheets of paper, but all journal entries must be written in the composition notebook when it is handed in for evaluation). 2) Computer based (If you choose to write your journals on a computer, you will need to print hard copies of all entries and bring them to class neatly organized in a three-ring binder). Either way, at the end of this semester, you will have your entire journal to keep for years to come (and you may just continue to write in it as many others have done. It might become one of your most valued possessions.)

Journal Evaluations: Journals are due once a week. I will not read every journal entry you write. I will look through your journal entries to see that you have completed the assignment, that you spent some time on it and thought deeply about it. I do read occasional journal entries to get a sense of your struggles, goals, and accomplishments. If I have some ideas about you, I can be much more helpful to you throughout the semester. If you want to know what I think about any specific journal entry, please write me a note in your journal so I will know to read that one more thoroughly.

Journal Points: Each journal entry will be awarded up to 5 points. You can receive the maximum points if:

1. The entry is complete (all steps in the directions have been responded to), and
2. The entry is written with high standards (an obvious attempt has been made to Dive Deep).

You are free to express yourself in your journals as creatively as you wish without worrying about formal writing standards.

You will also think through your fingers on a few online discussion posts. There are a couple of reasons for this: First, it is important to know how to use eLearn because many of your professors utilize this interactive platform. Second, remember we all learn in different ways, this may be great for you! Please think of this as an opportunity for sharing and learning. How you feel about something, the language you use makes a difference. For example, if you say, "I HAVE to do this assignment" it feels different from saying "I CHOOSE" to do this assignment." What is the difference in how each of those statements make you feel?

Other activities: We will spend some time looking at career choices. Career lab dates will include an exploration of career choices, information about your chosen career(s), how to job search and interview, as well as some advising activities and campus exploration. Your fees for this course include the fee to attend the class interdependence activity at Jackson Escape Rooms. You will love this experience. Not only will you learn some things about yourself (and your classmates) you will have fun!

Final Essay (60 Possible Points)

As your final project, you will choose one of the two following topics on which to write an original essay.

Option 1: One Student's Story

In this essay, you will tell the story of how you used specific On Course strategies to overcome an obstacle to your success in college or in life. Each chapter of the textbook contains at least one of the "One Student's Story" essays. We have read some of them over the course of the semester, but please read one or two before beginning your story. Use these as a model for what you write. If your essay is insightful and well done, your instructor may submit it to the On Course Essay Contest (with your permission). Winning entries will be published in the next edition of the On Course text and will inspire future students. Winning entries will also be awarded a $100 prize. Full directions for writing this essay can be found at http://oncourseworkshop.com/course-textbook/essay-contest.
An "A" paper will . . .
1. Tell the story of a specific obstacle(s) you faced.
2. Tell the story of a specific On Course strategy you used to overcome that specific obstacle.
3. Tell the story of the outcome of using the specific On Course strategy to overcome the specific obstacle you faced.
4. Tell the story of a commitment to excellence in preparation, including professional appearance and a command of Standard English. (This should be more formally written than your journals).

Option 2: Personal Philosophy of Success Essay

In this essay, you will present your own Personal Philosophy of Success, identifying the On Course success strategies that you will use in your life for years to come. This essay is your opportunity to write the script that will keep you "on course" to a rich, personally fulfilling life!
An "A" paper will . . .
1. Offer your personal definition of success.
2. Demonstrate your careful consideration of three or more of the On Course success strategies that you will use to achieve success.
3. Contain extensive and specific support (examples, experiences, evidence, and/or explanation) for each strategy. (Details count!)
4. Show a commitment to excellence in preparation, including professional appearance and a command of Standard English. (This should be more formally written than your journals).

Course Guidelines (Rules) for Success

We want the best sort of environment in our classroom community. In order to create this community which supports success for us all, we have three important guidelines, or rules. By *choosing* to follow these three rules, you are choosing to be successful not only in this course but in your life.

1. Show up—to support my success, I choose to attend every scheduled class period in its entirety.
2. Do the work—to support my success, I *choose* to do my very best work in preparing all of my assignments and hand them in on time. I am responsible for my learning and personal quiz answers, and *I own my work* so I do not engage in plagiarism (copying other's work without using quotation marks and references to give credit to the true author).
3. Participate actively—to support my success, I *choose* to stay focused and involved in every class session, offering my best comments, questions, and answers when appropriate, and I will only use my cell phone or other electronic device before or after class, when my instructor requests, or when the class is using computers together.

What other guidelines should there be in this class?

VITA

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