

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Educational Administration: Theses, Dissertations,  
and Student Research

Educational Administration, Department of

---


Winter 12-15-2017

# The Road Taken That Has Made All The Difference: A Narrative Inquiry of Student Engagement and Success in Butler Community College's Accelerated Learning Program in English

Troy Nordman

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, [tnordman@butlercc.edu](mailto:tnordman@butlercc.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehseddiss>

 Part of the [Community College Leadership Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#),  
and the [Educational Methods Commons](#)

---

Nordman, Troy, "The Road Taken That Has Made All The Difference: A Narrative Inquiry of Student Engagement and Success in Butler Community College's Accelerated Learning Program in English" (2017). *Educational Administration: Theses, Dissertations, and Student Research*. 285.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehseddiss/285>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Educational Administration, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Educational Administration: Theses, Dissertations, and Student Research by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

The Road Taken That Has Made All The Difference:  
A Narrative Inquiry of Student Engagement and Success in  
Butler Community College's Accelerated Learning Program in English

by

Troy Douglas Nordman

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Educational Studies  
(Educational Leadership & Higher Education)

Under the Supervision of Professor Brent Cejda

Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 2017

The Road Taken That Has Made All The Difference:  
A Narrative Inquiry of Student Engagement and Success in  
Butler Community College's Accelerated Learning Program in English

Troy Douglas Nordman, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 2017

Advisor: Brent Cejda

The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate whether students who completed the accelerated learning program (ALP) in English at Butler Community College in fall 2016 perceived a three-part, structured approach to the course as having been a significant factor to their persistence and successful completion of the course. These perceptions were gathered during the spring 2017 semester through one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with 12 students from the fall 2016 cohort. Utilizing the conceptual framework of narrative inquiry proposed by Clandinin (2006) allowing the individual student narratives to weave a common, thematic context, this study examined the specific factors associated with the three-part strategic structure students perceived as having been critical to their success. Using both deductive and inductive analyses, the study did reveal relevant linkages between the three-part structural approach — a guided, co-requisite course design, AVID high engagement strategies, and focused tutoring support — and student perceptions. Moreover, additional factors emerged during the inductive process emphasizing the influence of the ALP learning environment on student success. These added factors included the formation of highly-engaged, collaborative

learning communities among students and instructors as well as instructor support of student non-cognitive issues.

## Acknowledgements

Two words have often come to mind during this study's inception and process: humility and thankfulness. Having returned to the classroom as a student after having served it as an instructor for 30 years, this doctoral process proved challenging and satisfying to be a student once again and to have had the opportunity to study under some remarkable people whose passion for both their craft and content are, literally, humbling.

Lessons in humility often come at odd times, but they leave lasting impressions. A question from Dr. Katherine Wesley during my dissertation proposal left me pondering my response on my five-hour drive home from Lincoln, Nebraska. Near the end of the proposal discussion, she asked if I would be able to remain objective about a topic for which I had obvious ownership and want for its success. I know I mumbled something which began "of course I could because the data would be the critical...", but I know now that my response was probably a tad short of the truth. I'm not sure that anyone can be totally objective with a study that includes working with community college students who bring a very human face and individual perspective to the data. Is my study only looking to validate the success of the program? Perhaps. Most of all I hope it serves, in some capacity, as a reflection of the community college mission at large, to serve all students and help them find success.

A special thanks to my advisor, Dr. Brent Cejda, and committee members, Dr. Deryl Hatch, Dr. Katherine Wesley, and Dr. Allen Steckelberg who have kept me both on task, provided extremely helpful and thorough feedback, and encouraged a continued life of inquiry. I have greatly enjoyed my time with you all.

To my many friends and mentors at Butler Community College who all have exemplified and modeled integrity and passion for the profession including Larry Patton, Dr. Susan Bradley, Dr. Jackie Vietti, Dr. Kim Krull, Dr. Karla Fisher, and the great encourager, Lori Winningham. I so value and appreciate your patience and guidance over many years. I should not fail to mention Kathy McCoskey, Andrea McCaffree-Wallace, Dr. Gene George, and Dr. Esam Mohammed for their careful attention to detail, data, and their varied talents which greatly benefit Butler students and have been very helpful to me. Also, my thanks to Dr. Cheryl Rasmussen whose timely words of encouragement meant so much. I have always believed that teaching at the community college offers the greatest of challenges coupled with the greatest rewards for those who know that service is at the heart of its mission. You all live and breathe that mission, and I have benefited from it in many ways.

To not just the twelve students who came in to interview for this study, but to the hundreds of students with whom I've had the opportunity to share the classroom and the larger learning community, know that I am constantly humbled and inspired by your stories and your tenacity to follow often the dimmest of dreams and, despite the many hurdles thrown in your way, realize them along with your own potentials. You, the students, and your successes, continue to be my professional dream fulfilled.

Finally, and most important to me, I want to thank my wife, Nancy, who remains the sole person I long to return to each day, and my family, Abby, Cody, Tyler, Stephanie, Nicholas, Taylor, and Kathryn, who continually echoed my long-time advice to them and told me, "you should just do this, Dad!"

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	vi
List of Figures .....	vii
List of Appendices .....	viii
CHAPTER I .....	1
Introduction.....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	8
Theoretical/Conceptual Framework.....	9
Research Questions.....	11
Methodology Overview .....	13
CHAPTER II.....	21
Review of Relevant Literature .....	21
Community Colleges and Developmental Education .....	22
Too costly?.....	24
Intentional solutions.....	25
Guided/Structured Pathways.....	26
Intrusive Success.....	28
Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP) .....	32
Early initiatives .....	34
Obstacles to Acceleration .....	35
High Challenge.. High Support.....	36
AVID for Higher Education and Student Engagement.....	37
Summary .....	41
CHAPTER III .....	42
Methodology and Research Questions.....	42
Rationale .....	45
Context of the Study .....	46
Role of the Researcher .....	46

Data Collection Methods .....	48
Validation of the Data.....	49
Data Sources .....	51
Description of Student Cohort .....	53
Table 1 .....	55
Interview Protocol.....	57
Interview structure: A Pattern to Inquiry .....	57
Table 2 .....	58
Transcription of Interviews.....	58
Data Analysis .....	59
First Cycle Coding .....	60
Second Cycle Coding.....	61
Reporting the Findings.....	62
CHAPTER IV .....	64
Findings.....	64
Deductive Coding Patterns .....	66
Table 3 .....	69
Inductive Coding Patterns.....	69
Table 4 .....	70
Three Students' Stories.....	72
Crystal's Story .....	72
Ann's Story .....	74
Tim's Story .....	76
An ALP Learning Community.....	77
Initial Perceptions of an ALP Co-Requisite Design .....	78
Themes: An ALP Co-Requisite Design.....	79
Figure 4.1 .....	80
Perceptions of AVID and High Engagement Strategies.....	85
Themes: AVID and High Engagement Strategies .....	85
Figure 4.2 .....	86



Perceptions of Tutoring and Supports for ALP Students.....	90
Themes: ALP student supports .....	91
Figure 4.3 .....	92
Additional Factors to Success .....	94
Student Awareness of Academic and Personal Growth .....	95
Figure 4.4 .....	95
Instructor Influence on Student Learning .....	97
A Culture of Collaboration .....	99
Final Thoughts on Analysis .....	102
Figure 4.5 .....	104
CHAPTER V .....	106
Discussion .....	106
Considerations and Challenges .....	111
Implications for Practice and Future Research .....	115
“All-in” focus.....	116
Commit to engagement .....	117
Develop active networks of student support.....	118
Next Steps .....	119
Final Thoughts .....	120
References.....	122
Appendix A.....	134
Appendix B .....	135
Appendix C .....	136
Appendix D.....	138
Appendix E .....	139
Appendix F.....	141

**List of Tables**

Table 1 ALP Student Interview Cohort .....	55
Table 2 ALP Course Strategies and Interview Questions Correlation .....	58
Table 3 Deductive Coding Pattern Categories.....	69
Table 4 Inductive Coding Pattern Categories .....	70

**List of Figures**

Figure 4.1 An ALP Learning Community .....	80
Figure 4.2 AVID and High Engagement .....	86
Figure 4.3 ALP Student Supports .....	92
Figure 4.4 Additional Factors to Student Success .....	95
Figure 4.5 Butler's ALP Learning Community .....	104

**List of Appendices**

Appendix A Pilot Cohort Interview Questions .....	134
Appendix B IRB Exemption Form .....	135
Appendix C Student Consent Form .....	136-137
Appendix D Interview Questions.....	138
Appendix E Student Recruitment Email Form .....	139-140
Appendix F Interview Follow-up Email .....	141

## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

Community colleges across the United States are facing increasing numbers of entering students requiring remediation. Federal Beginning Postsecondary Students, or BPS, data from 2009 indicate that 68% of students beginning at public two-year colleges in 2003–2004 took one or more remedial courses in the six years after their entry. In 2010 a study published by the Community College Research Center, CCRC, found that of more than 250,000 students at 57 community colleges in the Achieving the Dream initiative, 59% of entering students were referred to developmental math and 33% were referred to developmental reading (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). A more recent National Center for Educational Statistics, or NCES, (2016, p. v) report indicated that “almost one-half of their incoming students (vs. 21% of those at public 4-year institutions) took two or more remedial courses” (2016, p. v). As these percentages remain high currently, the challenge of moving the students from remedial course work and on to credit-bearing course becomes even greater.

More students are entering two-year institutions needing remediation than in the recent past, and, unfortunately, only about half of those students complete their remedial or developmental coursework. Community colleges have not been successful in retaining students through completion of remedial coursework. Considering that among first year students between 1995-96 and 2003-04, the percentage taking a remedial course increased from about 25% to 30%, and between 2003-04 and 2011-12, this percentage increased from about 30% to almost 35%, the ability to retain students through a battery of remedial courses has become much more difficult (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016).

According to the data at two-year public institutions, only “about half of the remedial coursetakers beginning at public 2-year institutions (49%) completed all the remedial courses they attempted,” and the other half will more than often drop out after the first semester and not return (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016, p. v). Bailey and Jaggars (2016) confirmed “the likelihood is quite low” (p. 1) that students who enroll in multiple remedial courses “will ever complete a college-level course in that subject area” (p. 1). The challenge for community colleges becomes twofold: how can we help students persist in their remedial coursework and what should we do to help them complete those courses?

Many factors prevent remedial community college students from completing their coursework, but Martin, Galentino, & Townsend (2014) found that the three most common indicators of a lack of persistence were “cultural capital, academic underpreparedness, and access” (p. 15). It may seem obvious that if a community college student persists in remedial coursework, he or she has a much better chance to complete at some level in higher education. Perin (2002) suggested that institutions still struggle with the overall design of developmental programs and how programs best complement the institution’s curricula and mission. So how do community colleges help their remedial students persist and complete? Given the above data, the answer is simple: not very well. But as an entry point to higher education for many remedial students, community colleges provide an affordable point of access to higher education, and community colleges are very often a first step for students with little to no experience with higher education in general. What community colleges must continue to address is the lack of academic preparedness with entering students requiring remediation specifically in the areas of math and English, two

foundational content areas for the majority of major and degree programs [as cited in Perin, D. in Chapter Six of Levin and Kater (2013)].

To help address this academic need for remedial students, many institutions have set up co-requisite curricular courses to provide students a more efficient means of navigating developmental pathways enabling them to persist and progress into credit-bearing plans of study (see Table 2 in Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, & Jaggars, 2012, pp. 7-8). Innovative curricular designs to help students move more quickly and successfully toward additional college-level coursework in their major, which is often dependent on the passage of early gateway classes such as English Composition I, become important strategies to improve persistence and overall retention. In fact, one of the most successful, and underused, strategies is the accelerated remedial course. Accelerated strategies, such as the accelerated learning program (ALP) developed through Baltimore County Community College, tend to focus on and provide support to the students who, typically through mandatory placement testing, fall into the category of developmental, remedial, or non-college level (Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Bailey, 2009). Accelerated programs provide more immediate but still rigorous paths to credit bearing course work and improve students' opportunities to advance more efficiently through the first two years of college.

These strategies have developed, in part, as a response to President Barack Obama's 2008 initiative Building American Skills Through Community Colleges (2009) to more rapidly advance a student's ability to navigate remedial course work and move to skills-based and/or credit-bearing course work and to the successful attainment of a certification, degree, and/or transfer. As part of its effort to help meet President Obama's 2008 initiative and to further address the needs of students entering higher education, in 2010 the state of

Kansas established a 10-year plan for its higher education system with measurable goals in the areas of attainment, alignment, and excellence entitled Foresight 2020 (Kansas Board of Regents, 2010). Under its attainment aspirations, the state's plan established a specific set of student success initiatives challenging the state's 19 community and technical colleges to raise retention and completion rates 10% by the year 2020. Due to the higher percentage of students entering community colleges with remedial needs, institutions have turned to more targeted interventions to retain those students and help them to complete.

Because student success is commonly defined as the completion of some type of credential or transfer to a four-year institution (this definition varies from state to state, but the overall general focus is on the completion of a two-year degree, certification, and/or transfer to a four-year institution or university) and to help meet the goals established by the state, more Kansas community colleges have begun focusing on student success strategies by piloting and implementing newer programs such as accelerated programs (Belfield, Jenkins, & Lahr, 2016; Cho et al., 2012; Jaggars, Hodara, Cho, & Xu, 2015) in both their math and English curricula. These more focused programs – more intentional and structured pathways for students linking curriculum, advising, student services support, and greater tutoring awareness – are intended to help students complete college-level work not only more quickly, but also with greater competence and confidence. Such initiatives, often viewed as “radical potential solution[s]” (Scott-Clayton, 2011, p. 26), have found a foothold in the past five years as these programs have proven to help students complete their college-level English course with a C or better (Belfield et al., 2016, pp. 4-5). Many are yielding positive results: “students who engage in an accelerated course during their



first term are nearly two and a half more times more likely to pass remedial coursework” (Mangan, 2014).

In the fall of 2013 the English department at Butler Community College in El Dorado, Kansas piloted its first accelerated English course with the goal of working to improve upon its retention and existing English Composition I completion rates. There were two reasons for the pilot. First, Butler as an institution was looking at new strategies to improve overall student retention and completion. This was an internal effort that grew out of a strategic planning model to improve graduation rates. Second, Butler was responding to an external charge from the state of Kansas. In 2012 the Kansas Board of Regents published Foresight 2020, which set forth their state initiatives setting several goals for two-year, higher education institutions. One of the goals was increasing the completion rates of developmental students by 10% by 2020.

At the same time the English department along with the Butler Developmental Education Task Force implemented its accelerated English pilot, Butler Community College received a five-year grant through AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) for Higher Education and began training instructors in AVID student high engagement strategies. AVID has had a thirty-seven year record of student success with a mission focusing on preparing students for college and career readiness. Over 1.5 million students at the K -12 level in 46 states and 16 countries and territories participate in AVID programs (AVID, n.d.). AVID provides a “college preparatory program including an academic and social support elective class, enrollment of students in rigorous curriculum, professional development for a school’s site team, and the use of writing, inquiry, collaboration and reading strategies” (Watt, Huerta, & Alkan, 2012, p. 752). In the early

2000's, both AVID student success courses and strong academic support strategies (Cuseo, 2015b) were brought to higher education institutions with the purpose “to systemically address the goals of increased learning, persistence, completion, and success beyond college” (AVID, n.d.).

As Butler began its programmatic steps to becoming an *AVID for Higher Education* institution, faculty from across the institution were trained in the WICOR skills — writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading — and high engagement strategies for students. The AVID program, as it has existed within the K-12 system, operates as a strategically structured set of focused student success strategies for students who, through individual institution-specific processes, are selected to the program. Once in the program, students attend courses that have been infused with AVID high-engagement classroom activities such as *World Café* and *Think-Pair-Share* all designed to encourage and support the WICOR skills. Additionally, students attend Socratic tutoring seminars and practice organizational-building activities known as “binder checks.”

At the higher educational level, and at Butler specifically, AVID is less programmatic (faculty training is encouraged and tutor training is mandatory) and more focused on supporting student engagement and self-advocacy at the classroom level across the institution. There is no program selection process for Butler students; the expectation was for all students to become familiar and comfortable with common strategies in all their classes. Thus, Butler began training instructors to *AVID-ize* the institution's faculty and staff in the various AVID strategies and help students utilize the support strategies to enhance their overall learning and success. At Butler, students in any class would utilize familiar AVID strategies such as *Cornell Note-Taking* and *Speed Dating* bringing

consistency to their learning experiences and support their levels of engagement in learning. By the second semester of the accelerated pilot, English instructors were incorporating many of the AVID strategies into their accelerated learning program, or ALP, courses with the purpose of helping students' level of engagement [as cited in Perin, D. in Chapter Six of Levin and Kater (2013)]. The ALP course set paired the remedial English course, EG 060 Fundamentals of English, with the credit-bearing, college-level writing course, EG 101 English Composition I. Similar to a traditional English Composition I class, the ALP course set had a maximum enrollment of 25 students, but 12 of the students were enrolled in both EG 101 and EG 060 concurrently. The 12 ALP students attended the regular EG 101 course, and, immediately following the EG 101 class, transitioned directly to the EG 060 class with the same instructor in a different classroom.

The emphasis for limiting the class to 12 students was to better encourage a true learning community (Cuseo, 2015a; Tinto, 1997) and to build higher levels of student engagement (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). As well, and in conjunction with the AVID Socratic Tutor training model, English instructors along with members of the Academic Support and Effectiveness division began a redesign of the tutoring program, a design which redefined for students as not just a means of academic content support, but an integral and mandatory part of the normal learning process that encouraged greater levels of engagement and enhanced the classroom experience (Bonet & Walters, 2016; Cuseo, 2015b).

The initial design of the Butler accelerated English courses was based on the ALP model developed at the Community College of Baltimore County and led by Dr. Peter Adams. ALP pedagogy is based on a backward design model (see Wiggins & McTighe,

2005) with outcomes from the higher-level course supported in the remedial course with both courses emphasizing college-level reading, active learning strategies, greater peer collaboration, and the development of reasoning and editing skills. The initial “course sets” comprised four EG 101 and EG 060, paired, co-requisite sections each with 12 students that tested below the entry level for EG 101. The 12 developmental students were enrolled in the EG 101 section with 13 students at college-level, and immediately following the EG 101 class those 12 students went with the same teacher to a different classroom for their EG 060 class. After the first semester, compared to the non-ALP section of EG 060, the ALP EG 060 sections showed a 21.9% higher success rate (a C or better in the course), and in the ALP EG101, the success rate was 11.5% higher. Over the following two semesters, 65.1% of EG 060/EG 101 students passed with a score of C or better (Spring 2014) and 69.1% (Fall 2014). Respectively, these rates were 26% (Spring 2014) and 34.1% (Fall 2014) improvements over the baseline. Since scaling, the ALP program has averaged 26.5% above the baseline.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Because there were significant improvements (an average of 26.5% above baseline per semester since 2013) in persistence and completion for students in the accelerated English courses which integrated both AVID high engagement strategies and more intentional tutoring practices, the purpose of this dissertation research is to identify and gain greater understanding regarding what students who enrolled in and successfully completed an accelerated English course at Butler Community College perceived to be factors that contributed to their success. Knowing those factors would enable the institution (specifically the English department and Developmental English Team) to develop a set of

best practices for future ALP instructor trainings and further the knowledge of the larger community of practice.

Building upon the literature review and conceptual framework, research questions would help to determine what factors students found to be critical influencers to their success. This study helped to more deeply understand what specific elements of the accelerated course design, AVID high engagement strategies, and/or intentional tutoring practices students identified as being critical and helpful to their success in completing the accelerated course. The resulting research may be instrumental in helping Butler retain more developmental English students. It may also lead to higher numbers of students completing English Composition I successfully at Butler. Lastly, it may serve as a model of practice for other community college administrators, faculty, and institutional stakeholders to consider how these strategies might be best incorporated and utilized within the courses and with ongoing training opportunities in accelerated learning English programs.

### **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study utilized the concepts associated with a structured-pathways design (Dadgar, Venezia, Nodine, & Bracco, 2013) that helped to facilitate student retention and completion for remedial students in English Composition I. A foundational concept of structured pathways, scaffolding comprises a paired or linked, set of courses within a set curricula with an intentional design in which one course supports the other. Linked, or co-requisite, courses provide the foundation upon which specific strategies such as accelerated learning program curricular models (Jaggars et al., 2015; Jenkins & Cho, 2014; Cho et al., 2012) have sustained higher levels of completion rates

among students requiring remediation in English composition. In this study, the linked courses of the accelerated learning program were complemented with two additional supports: AVID high engagement learning strategies and mandatory tutoring. This three-part structure provided the overall framework for investigating what students described as factors that supported their persistence and success.

Within a structured-pathway design, developmental students are directed, typically through mandatory placement test scoring, to required courses within an accelerated, co-requisite curricular pathway (e.g., students are concurrently enrolled in both a non-credit developmental and a credit-bearing course in the same semester) that place the students into a set of paired courses comprising the credit-bearing course (in this case English Composition I) and the supporting, or linked, developmental course (in this case Fundamentals of English). The overall success of the accelerated learning program, or, ALP, at Butler relied upon an intentionally structured pathway designed to enhance both rigor and engagement (AVID) and additional support (mandatory tutoring) for the students within, in this case, Butler's developmental English strand. This more structured curricular foundation not only helped frame the research, but also supported the argument made by Scott-Clayton (2011) and her "*structure hypothesis*: that community college students will be more likely to persist and succeed in programs that are tightly and consciously structured" (p. 1) and that have become "'structurally, financially, and culturally institutionalized'" [as cited in Edgecombe, Smith-Jaggars, DeLott Baker, & Bailey (2013) in Jaggars et al., (2015), p.17]. Because the design of the Butler ALP English course sets was built with this hypothesis in mind (the design of the paired courses, the institutional commitment to the use of AVID high engagement learning strategies along with mandatory

tutoring) the structured pathways framework provided the opportunity to better understand the specific factors which students who have completed the course set identified as having helped facilitate their overall success.

### **Research Questions**

Published student success data from Community College of Baltimore County, the California Acceleration Project, and the Denver Community College system provided an indication of the success of accelerated English learning programs (Bailey, 2009; Bettinger & Long, 2003; Cho et al., 2012; Jaggars et al., 2015; Jenkins, Speroni, Belfield, Jaggars, & Edgecombe, 2010), but little published data existed for institutions where the accelerated English program design had intentionally integrated both AVID high engagement strategies and intentional tutoring practices (high support) and for how well these combined strategies affected student success. Having utilized the three-pronged strategy design of ALP over the past three years, we knew that students who came to Butler Community College needing remediation in English and who had enrolled in ALP, the co-requisite, developmental and credit-bearing English composition set, had a much higher success rate of completing English Composition I with a C or better than students who did not. We also had data indicating that the students who had completed ALP moved on to complete a certification and/or degree at a higher rate than those who do not.

What we did not know is how and whether this three-part design had worked to help students succeed in the course. We did not know how or whether the ALP paired-course design alone (the one-semester, intentionally structured, linked-course set), the ALP design with the integration of AVID high engagement strategies, or the intentional emphasis on student engagement in mandatory tutoring practices was the facilitating

agent(s) to student success and eventual completion. Because Butler's completion rates rose for students enrolled in the ALP course sets, and because the institution made the intentional effort to infuse both AVID high-engagement strategies and mandatory tutoring as part of the accelerated, co-requisite curriculum, the guiding question this study hoped to answer was — *how did students who completed the accelerated learning program (ALP) perceive the three-part, structured approach to the course as having been the contributing factor(s) that helped them to persist and complete the course successfully?* Inherent to the guiding question were three sub questions investigating the students' perceptions of what the factors mean to the students.

First, data indicated that students who enter community colleges needing developmental coursework in English are more likely to persist and complete if they enroll in a structured pathway consisting of accelerated, co-requisite courses (Jaggars et al., 2015; Hern, 2012). *How did students perceive the accelerated learning program design as having been a contributing factor to their success in the course?*

Second, studies showed that students in AVID programs at their institutions tend to persist and complete because they feel more engaged with their coursework (Cuseo, 2011; Adelman, 2006; Conley, 2005). *How did students perceive the AVID high engagement strategies utilized by instructors in the ALP English course as having been a contributing factor to their success in the course?*

Third, studies also indicated that students in remedial English courses have a greater chance of completing the courses if they are engaged in more purposeful and focused tutoring programs (Daws & Schiro, 2008; Rose, Moore, VanLehn, & Allbriten, nd). *How*



*did students perceive the mandatory and more intentional tutoring support as having been a contributing factor to their overall success in the ALP course?*

### **Methodology Overview**

This study utilized narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2001; Clandinin, Cave, & Berendonk, 2017) as the major methodology. Clandinin and Connelly (2001) contextualized the role of the researcher using narrative inquiry in the human sciences based on the works of John Dewey who proposed that “examining experience is the key to education” (p. xiii). Because this study investigated student perceptions delivered through the experiential responses to personal interview questions, “the importance of having research strategies that can work with the narratives people use to understand the human world” [Polkinghorne (1988) as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2001, p. 15] the narrative inquiry method was well suited.

Though there are many settings in which one may gather the narratives, or, stories, of the participant, Clandinin & Connelly (2001) pointed to the personal interview as the setting which “shapes the relationship and therefore the ways participants respond and give accounts of their experiences” (p. 110), thus allowing the interview to become more a “form of conversation” (p. 110) in which both interviewer and interviewee feel more comfortable. “The kinds of questions asked and the ways they are structured provide a frame within which participants shape their accounts of their experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2001, p. 110). The interview questions for this study were designed with such a narrative pattern in mind.

Narrative inquiry was complemented by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013) deductive qualitative analysis approach to help create a framework to test the general

theory that the three strategies utilized in the ALP courses were what students perceived as having been instrumental in their ability to persist and successfully complete the accelerated, co-requisite English course. Thus, the study consisted of a framework of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin, et. al., 2017; Clandinin & Connelly, 2001) employing Miles' et al., 2013 deductive analysis approach to qualitative coding of the data. This coding approach allowed for both deductive and inductive coding processes and served two purposes: one, a deductive analysis of the narrative data revealed direct links between the factors students identified as contributing to their success and the three-pronged strategy approach to the structured pathway of ALP at Butler; and, two, inductive analyses of the data revealed additional, underlying factors students perceived as having been instrumental in their retention and success in the course.

Patton (2015) described deductive analysis as a qualitative method that functions to find “core meanings” (p. 541) predominantly through “pattern analysis and theme analysis” (p. 541). These patterns, or themes, may emerge from the analyses of the students’ narratives; they may also provide initial confirmation to theory and hypotheses testing. Gilgun (2016) recommended this analysis method as guidance in the initial research process to help test an initial theory. Because a qualitative approach to theory may result in findings reported in a more general and less specific manner, Creswell (2014) emphasized the critical need to pay attention to the particulars within the data. A qualitative approach proved best to allow for the “perspective of the participants” (Creswell, 2014, p. 110) and for greater variation between the students’ perceptions of the strategies. Because my theory was grounded in the argument that the three strategies employed in the ALP course set were significant factors in the students’ levels of engagement, allowing them to persist

and successfully complete, deductive analysis helped to confirm whether those strategies did emerge as common patterns from the students' interviews.

As the three strategies comprised the significant general categories for coding purposes, Miles' et al. (2013) two-cycle coding approach and Patton's "pattern analysis and theme analysis" (p. 541) was useful in discovering the various themes, or patterns, emerging from the data. Incorporating deductive analysis within the framework of narrative inquiry became advantageous to the study as the interview data revealed not only specific patterns and themes associated with the respective strategies, but it also verified to some degree student awareness and understanding of the three-pronged approach to the structured pathway of ALP at Butler. This helped to confirm whether the strategies were significant factors to student retention and overall success in the course. Results gleaned from the students' perceptions of the structured pathway of the accelerated format coupled with the AVID high engagement learning strategies and mandatory tutoring assisted in this qualitative study to better understand how the three strategies factored into the students' success in the course. The results were used to assess the overall efficacy of the three strategies and future scaling of the pathway.

Additionally, because narrative inquiry functions "as both phenomenon and methodology" (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 575), applying inductive analysis, specifically "subcoding" (Miles et al., 2013, p. 77) allowed for associated factors to surface from the interview data. Subcoding, a complementary process to deductive coding processes, allowed "for nuanced qualitative data analysis" (p. 77) in which "particular qualities or interrelationships emerge" (p. 77) as unique from the established coding

framework. Thus, inductive coding analyses of the student narratives revealed what factors were missing, not considered, or were contrary to the theory.

### **Data Collection**

The method for gathering the data to help answer the guiding and additional sub questions was face-to-face interviews with 12 student participants invited from the 36 ALP course sets from the Fall 2016 semester who completed their ALP course with a grade of “C” or better and who enrolled in at least one additional Butler Community College course for the spring 2017 semester. Because there had been a significant upward tic in Butler’s completion rate for developmental English students through ALP, and because I wanted to determine what relationships might exist between the three-pronged strategy and student perception of those factors, I focused this study specifically on students who had successfully completed both courses in the set. The interview guide consisted of 10 questions framed such that students might, literally, tell their stories of their experiences in the course (See Appendix D page 138). Following the interview process, student responses were transcribed and coded for further analysis. Chapter Three of this study details more specifically the rationale, methodology, and analyses utilized.

### **Definitions of Terms**

As this study analyzed a three-part structured pathway strategy for the successful completion of the gateway English Composition I course at Butler Community College by students requiring English remediation, it is vital to define specific terms and concepts comprising the strategies and their inherent connections to the overall study.

**Accelerated Learning Program (ALP):** Programs in which students are enrolled concurrently in both a credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing course (typically the

prerequisite course for the credit-bearing course) during the same semester to complete the credit-bearing course are termed *accelerated* as students can complete both courses in one semester rather than two.

**AVID:** This acronym stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination. AVID, in this study, refers more globally to the emphases on skills known as WICOR (writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading) and the multiple high engagement learning strategies used to support them in a classroom.

**Co-requisite/linked courses:** Courses linked by curricular discipline are termed co-requisite. Specifically, for this study, the linked courses comprise the remedial English course, Fundamentals of English (EG 060) and the credit-bearing course English Composition I (EG 101).

**High-engagement:** This phrase refers to teaching and learning techniques in which students are more actively involved with the curricular outcomes of a class. Specifically, to this study, high engagement refers to AVID high engagement learning strategies for higher education strategies emphasizing a greater participatory role for students in active-learning, collaborative situations.

### **Assumptions**

Primarily, this study assumed students at Butler Community College who tested into remedial-level English, or Fundamentals of English, and who then were placed into a more structured, co-requisite accelerated English course infused with AVID high-engagement learning strategies and mandatory tutoring tended to persist and complete the courses at a higher rate (made a grade of C or better) than students who were not. Research exists confirming higher completion rates for community college students at a remedial

level who are engaged in accelerated learning programs (Jaggars et al., 2015; Cho et al., 2012). Evidence also shows that instruction complemented with intentional activities that engage students with rigor do help students persist and eventually complete (Cuseo, 2015a; Cuseo, 2015b; Dweck, 2006). However, data regarding students' perceptions of how they individually operationalized the strategies into their own learning and how that lead to individual success is lacking. For this study, the students interviewed were students who had successfully completed the accelerated English course at Butler Community College during the fall 2016 semester and who had enrolled in at least one additional Butler Community College course for the spring 2017 semester.

### **Limitations**

This study was qualitative in nature and focused specifically on students' perceptions of what helped them to succeed in the accelerated English course. The students' understanding of the strategies utilized within the accelerated pathway was limited to their experiences in the courses; thus, their interview responses did not reflect on the program's overall success. Because the study analyzed only students who successfully completed the ALP course, there is no information regarding why specific strategies were not instrumental for other students.

### **Delimitations**

Community college students looking to attain a degree or certification in higher education and who also require remediation in English face multiple challenges in terms of completion (Bailey & Smith-Jaggars, 2016; Martin, Galentino, & Townsend, 2014). Understanding and solving for those inherent student obstacles would require a much different and larger study. Though there is evidence arguing the validity of testing methods

and the overall accuracy of placement of developmental students mentioned in the review of the literature, this study did not seek to draw a correlation between testing, placement, and eventual success in the accelerated course. This study was more intrinsic in that it sought to identify what strategies students perceived as having helped support individual student success in the accelerated English course at Butler Community College. The study did not explore the overall efficacy of the ALP program. Rather, this study analyzed the individual student experiences to the strategies within ALP course, what made it different from other courses for them, and what they believed to be specific aspects of the course that helped them complete it successfully.

### **Significance of the Study**

A study of the critical supporting strategies identified by students who have completed the accelerated learning program (ALP) and have earned either a certificate and/or degree created meaningful data on what features of the ALP program and its complementary supports, AVID and tutoring, helped to facilitate their success. The findings were meaningful to four specific audiences:

1. Data from this study are critical to Butler Community College as it continues to assess and add to the current retention and completion strategies utilized by other divisions and student support areas of the college as part of the institution's Institutional Research department's ongoing *best practices* research. As well, the data complements one of Butler's strategic priorities of its mission — *Students Finish What They Start* — by providing evidence of successful strategies at work within the institution.

2. The data are useful to Butler's English department and its faculty involved in training the full and part-time faculty who teach accelerated courses. Given the results, faculty will be able to adjust not only training in engaging students, but also better assess how to deliver and engage students in the curriculum. The data are able to assist the institution as the study revealed the AVID strategies (implemented institution-wide in 2013) combined with more intentional tutoring were major agents in student completion and success in other courses.

3. The evidentiary data are also useful to other institutions who are considering piloting and implementing accelerated programs within their institutions. The data add to and enrich the overall body of study of accelerated programs at community colleges with developmental education programs as well as AVID higher education institutions.

4. Lastly, researchers who are generally interested in student persistence and purposeful strategies that best engage and help students persist and complete should be interested in looking at how students perceive what strategies do so.



## CHAPTER II

### Review of Relevant Literature

Pertinent to the scope of this study, this review had an over-arching focus on analyzing specific student success initiatives for students with developmental needs in English as utilized at Butler Community College in Kansas. The review applied Creswell's (2014) "in-depth analysis" (p. 14) approach to the literature and consider four related areas linking the history, critical issues, strategic reform initiatives, and complementary supports of developmental education at the community college level. Though the literature often reflected on developmental education generally across the higher education curricula, much of the discussion and analysis in the review focused on developmental education in the discipline of English Composition.

Because of the important place of developmental education within the mission, this review briefly examined the historical role (Cohen & Brawer, 2008) community colleges played with basic adult education and students who require remediation related to their abilities to persist and succeed at the college level. Building upon that history, the review investigated current national issues, trends, and reforms (Jenkins, 2014; Jenkins, 2011; Smith-Jaggars, Hodara, & Stacey, 2013) regarding developmental education in community colleges and included literature that looked more closely at initiatives serving as ways to not only on-board developmental students, but also assisting with student persistence and their abilities to establish a purposeful pathway (Jenkins & Cho, 2014) towards completion of a certification, degree, or transfer to a four-year institution.

As Boylan (2002) emphasized, "developmental education is most successful at institutions that consider it to be a priority" (p. 22); he also argued that for development

education to become more successful for both student and institutions there must be purposeful system reform in both method and practice. Because this study focused on a unique three-pronged approach to developmental English at a community college, this review considered literature pertaining to accelerated learning models (Smith-Jaggars et al., 2013; Hern, 2012) within intentionally guided pathways which have had a systemic effect on an institution's academic and student support processes.

Lastly having examined the efficacy of accelerated learning programs, this review analyzed the effectiveness of more intentional and complementary initiatives, specifically the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) higher education initiative, AVID high engagement strategies (Kuh, 2003; Kuh et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2012), and Socratic tutoring practices, which support student success through high engagement, promote greater self-advocacy, and assist in more efficient movement through the two-year institution.

### **Community Colleges and Developmental Education**

Cohen and Brawer (2008) emphasized the critical nature of developmental education as being “central to instructional planning” (p. 290) and inherently linked to institutional mission. With nearly 60% of incoming students arriving at community colleges underprepared and in need of remedial education in math and English (Bailey, 2009; Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013), mission effectiveness for many community colleges has been hobbled financially and challenged pedagogically by developmental education. Retention for developmental students is low, and student success rates for students completing developmental programs remains low (Bailey et al., 2013). A quantitative study by Fowler and Boylan (2010), which used data

collected from a cohort of 887 students at a small, two-year public institution, noted a 23% difference in retention between students in a “Pathways to Success (PWAY) program” (p. 4) and those who were not. Their findings indicated a retention rate of less than 30% for students who lack specific student support mechanisms in advising, engagement, and developmental skills. Fowler and Boylan (2010) emphasized “institutional officials should gather information on the academic, nonacademic, and personal needs of students in order to target the areas of greatest need for their student populations” (p. 9) to address overall retention issues.

Another quantitative study by Pruett and Absher (2015) pointed out that “remedial students are among the student populations with the highest attrition rates” (p. 32). This study utilized CCSSE data from the 2013 cohort comprising 400,000 community college students, of which “60% of the student population was classified as developmental” (p. 34), explored key factors that were critical to bolstering retention, especially among developmental students. Using regression analysis, they posed ten research questions and explored the data for significant indicators that positively affect overall retention. They concluded that “after cumulative grade point average, the second most important factor that impacts retention of developmental students is the extent of their academic engagement” (p. 39). Other factors identified in the studied such as the number of developmental courses a student may take, involvement in other college activities, and the lack of collaborative opportunities with peers, impacted the student’s level of engagement, or, better, disengagement.

Bailey (2008) also noted that community colleges face increasing pressures from state and federal legislatures for greater accountability regarding the effects of

developmental education on students' abilities to balance financial debt and additional time spent in remedial courses to bring them to college level. Though remediation is a "critical function" (Bailey, 2009, p. 16), Bailey et al. 2015 and Bailey et al. 2013 emphasized in their studies that the more time a student spends in a developmental sequence of course work, the less likely that student will persist, move into college-level course work, or complete at some level.

### **Too costly?**

Birnbaum (1988) anticipated how challenging it is for higher education institutions to balance mission and fiscal accountability. Silver-Pacuilla, Perin, & Miller (2013) pointed out that the yearly total for higher education to fund developmental education "may be as high as US \$3billion per year" (p. 112). Bettinger, Boatman, and Long (2013) cited a study by the Alliance for Excellent Education indicating the figure to be over 3 billion for the "2007-2008 school year" (p. 960) alone. Scott-Clayton, Crosta, & Belfield (2012) conducted a quantitative study which indicated an even higher cost, but more important, emphasized that overall costs to deliver developmental education "does not include the opportunity cost of time for students enrolled in these courses, nor does it account for any impact, positive or negative, that remediation may have on students' future outcomes" (p. 1). It is of no surprise then that many states are looking at ways to either reform their developmental education systems or to eliminate them. Shields (2005) noted that many states "currently prohibit developmental education at four-year institutions" (p. 44), but later emphasized that even at universities, developmental students (those who do complete the developmental coursework) graduate at a higher rate than developmental students at two-year institutions. What Shields (2005) did not indicate is that the number of students

entering community colleges needing developmental English and math skills far exceeds the number of students in need of remediation (or who may not even meet minimum placement standards) entering a four-year institution.

As open-access institutions, community colleges bear the burden and responsibility of developmental education and are compelled to develop programs that are more effective and efficient. But Bailey (2008) indicated sparse agreement on best practices, and he argued the “system is characterized by uncertainty, lack of consensus on the definition of college ready or of the best strategies to pursue, high costs, and varied and often unknown benefits” (pp. 16-17). Bracco, Austin, Bugler, and Finkelstein (2015) noted in a report through the Lumina Foundation that effectiveness and efficiency translate into program redesigns more flexible to students’ needs, clearer, more compact pathways to credit-bearing courses, yet maintaining quality and rigor. Additionally, Barnett and Cormier (2014) noted additional pressure in some states to create meaningful linkages between developmental education at the higher education level and the Common Core State Standards, CCSS.

### **Intentional solutions**

An early study by Boylan and Bliss (1997) of student success in developmental programs suggested a relationship between overall student performance and programs that were consolidated within either a “single administrative unit with its own director or coordinator” (p. 3) or “a decentralized program in which remedial courses and laboratories are offered through individual academic departments” (p. 3) both of which incorporated and utilized consistent practices. Their quantitative study sampled 6,000 developmental students at 160 institutions to determine whether certain “program components” (p. 2) —

an identifiable program organization, assessment practices of both program and students, tutoring and tutor training, and strong advising — existed or not. Though data indicated the presence of a relationship between such a coordinated program containing the components and student success, the study also suggested that it was difficult to say which components were the most impactful. However, the study suggested that more centralized programs were “more effective than decentralized programs” (p. 3).

Perin (2002) offered five “recommendations” (p. 3) which should predominate developmental education redesign at the community college level including co-requisite curricular designs, enhanced tutoring support, greater faculty development in developmental education, student opportunities for greater engagement in the institution as a whole, and greater attention to the affective needs for students. As well, Perin, in Levin and Kater (2013) proposed successful programmatic redesigns should focus on issues of context more so than standards (students testing to specific levels of readiness) to make the experiences for students in remedial courses applicable and self-motivating toward a specific personal goal; it is context in the sense of both general academic engagement as well as specific degree and profession that is critical. Levin and Kater (2013) cited a study by Perin and Charron (2006) in which highly contextualized developmental courses designed around specific professions proved successful for developmental students.

### **Guided/Structured Pathways**

In 2009, an extensive study (Roska, Jenkins, Jaggars, Zeidenberg, & Cho, 2009) of the Virginia Community College System was conducted with the assistance of the Community College Resource Center. This study looked specifically at two issues: retention and student success. Utilizing a sizeable dataset of over 24,000 students from “23

colleges in the system in summer or fall of 2004” (p. 8), the group’s results produced telling information regarding the enrollment patterns for developmental students. Since many of the students in this large cohort required remediation in both math and English, it was not surprising the findings revealed that, given the opportunity, students enrolled in the highest level developmental course (the remedial course just below the credit-level course). It might be argued that students were not interested in investing extensive time and money in a developmental pathway. The report found students who did enroll in a multiple-course sequence leading to credit-level courses “were less likely to successfully attain educational outcomes than students who did not enroll in developmental courses” (p. 18).

Additionally, the study indicated testing and placement had little relationship to the students’ abilities to pass the developmental course. Jenkins (2014) advised developmental education focused too often on the fulfillment of a remedial set of courses to develop college-level skills but failed to link those skills to relevant, student-related academic goals.

Though the VCCS study (Roska et al., 2009) found a relationship between student success and actual participation in a developmental sequence, their team’s recommendation that institutions should study why students simply do not enroll in those courses is most telling. The researchers’ interests in examining more critically the pathways students do take “can help to identify ‘leakage points’ where students struggle on the path to program completion” (p. 41) was a key conclusion, but institutional efforts at “designing [and] testing strategies for overcoming such barriers” (p. 41) is only part of a larger programmatic issue for developmental education. However, one of the recommendations in the report — that institutions look more keenly at the start of a student’s pathway in developmental courses — focused on the importance of helping students meet “those early

milestones” (p. 39) of the developmental pathway. The report and its recommendations (which are extensive and thorough in their scope) stopped short of making a critical recommendation more explicit: that students who place into a developmental pathway, regardless of their level in placement testing, should be required to enter a developmental pathway that, in an efficient and well-supported model, guides them to credit-bearing courses.

Bailey et al. (2010) emphasized that with the misperception and inconsistency surrounding developmental education and college readiness, the focus of attention should center on the “developmental sequence” (p. 1) and “the relationship between referral to developmental education and actual enrollment” (p. 2). Their multivariate analysis of data from both the Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges County and the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study databases also revealed current developmental pathways shared a common flaw: “most students referred to remediation, even those referred to only one level below college-level, do not complete their sequences” (p. 5). Quantitative in nature, the study’s concluding remarks revealed a more unique qualitative inference, especially concerning developmental course sequencing, in that students entering those tracks “take a bewildering variety of pathways as they try to make progress toward college-level courses” (p. 27).

### **Intrusive Success**

The works of Bailey et al., 2010; Jenkins 2014; Dadgar et al., 2013; and Scott-Clayton (2011) offered a set of governing principles in developmental redesigns to better clarify for students how to navigate their developmental pathway. These principles include pathway models reducing the overall time students would spend in remediation, and



include more intrusive, mandatory advising and placement in programs with enhanced flexibility and support, and co-requisite models that clearly link remedial and credit-bearing courses. As well, the studies implied that institutions need to be more aware of and understand the challenges students must initially overcome when arriving for the first time. Ender, Winston, and Miller argued it is somewhat naïve of institutions to assume students are capable of understanding and maneuvering their academic and personal pathways as they enter higher education (as cited in Cuseo, 2015). Dadgar et al. (2013) argued that creating a structured pathway for students did not imply adding more structure; the *structure* of the pathway for students was more “a network of integrated supports and instructional programs – connecting them to faculty, staff, and peers” (p. 4) with the purpose of efficiently moving them through academic programs successfully. This study looked specifically at several colleges including CUNY, Miami Dade College, and Valencia College which had implemented intentional strategies to assist and guide students more proactively. Specifically, students were encouraged to choose a field of study soon after enrolling to have “clearly specified course sequences with limited electives” (p. 5). Institutions tracked student progress through the various course sequences and intervened when student performance dropped in a class or if students tried to enroll in a course out of the regular sequence. The study highlighted several strategies, but there was little reporting data included.

Much of the literature emphasized the importance of connecting with students early in their enrollment/intake processes. A longitudinal study by Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey, and Jenkins (2006) comprising a cohort of “42, 641 first-time, degree-seeking Florida college students” (p. 7) examined a comparison between traditional and non-traditional students’

levels of persistence and completion. The findings indicated that non-traditional students requiring remediation were “less negatively affected than are younger students who do the same” (p. 27) in their abilities to persist and complete. As well, more intrusive and supportive advising for traditional students was found to be beneficial to overall persistence and completion. Scott-Clayton (2011) argued that understanding the relationship between student retention and a student’s ability to “determine what they want to do, plan how to do it, and then follow through” (p. 3) would be key for institutions looking to redesign developmental education. Her study lauded advising as “the most straightforward approach to addressing the complexity of the community college experience” (p. 16) and suggested that it be very “intensive” (p. 5) to help simplify the various “bureaucratic processes” (p. 25).

Jenkins and Cho (2014) through their research of early pathway programs at Florida State University and Arizona State University encouraged institutions to keep pathway designs simple and uncluttered, so students working with faculty and advisors can make intentional choices to a more efficient path to completion. Their study emphasized defined plans of study, clear “on-ramps to programs” (p. 3), and institutional support following the student through the pathway and providing necessary “feedback and support” (p. 3). Moreover, the literature confirmed students do need varying levels of support and intrusion. Knowing *clutter*, what Calcagno et al. (2006) identified as “career, financial, and family obligations” (p. 10), is often unique for traditional and non-traditional students, institutions need pathways that “mitigate the effects of the external pressures” (p. 28) for older students who need options for course delivery, and that maintain “the intensive advising, counseling, and other support that are appropriate for younger students” (p. 28).

Bailey, Smith-Jaggars, and Jenkins' 2015 book, *Redesigning America's Community Colleges*, offered a comparative analysis of students' community college experiences moving through both a cafeteria (self-service) and guided pathway (prescriptive, directed) model in their concluding chapter. This analysis emerged from the authors' own studies of community college reforms beginning in 1995 through 2011 including their involvement with the Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count initiative. Their studies indicated current cafeteria (self-selection) program designs neither assisted nor supported a student success model. The more compelling finding from the comparison of the current model to a guided pathways model is the authors' suggestion that community colleges consider guided pathways as a part of an inclusive framework that "reconceptualizes remediation as part of the beginning of a college-level program of study" (p. 212), not as a separate program which tends to isolate and discourage student persistence but is "designed to accelerate students into college-level program-relevant coursework as quickly as possible" (p. 212).

Important for educators is the awareness that curriculum and methodology must be assessed to complement this kind of framework in order to "identify which learning outcomes are most important to emphasize in order to support students' development of the key skills, concepts, and habits of mind that will be critical to their success in their chosen field" (p. 207). The authors also emphasized that greater collaboration between academics and student services is critical during development and deployment of the "program maps that provide a default course of study" (p. 213) for all students and especially for developmental students in remedial programs where more individual support is necessary. Although ambitious in scope, the guided pathways design outlined by Bailey et al. (2015)

focused on putting the “students’ end goals in mind” (p. 16), developing a network of student support across the institution, and repurposing programs with the intention that students will succeed in the program and move on to completion.

### **Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP)**

Most important to understanding accelerated developmental English programs is the awareness that acceleration is merely one aspect of an often, multi-layered structure.

Acceleration, or *mainstreaming* as it has long been termed, is not new concept to higher education, but as it applies to developmental education there is much variety to the ways in which it is utilized. The literature on accelerated learning as it applies to developmental learning is vast and, to some extent, ill-defined due to the multitude of models. Bailey (2008) cited a study by Perin (2006) of “fifteen colleges in six states” (p.11) utilizing more models than institutions.

Bailey et al. (2015) noted three general accelerated program models including “paired courses, compressed courses/sequences, or mainstreaming students into college-level courses with added academic supports” (p. 133). The authors emphasized that regardless of the model, accelerated programs do two things well: they lessen the number of opportunities for students to withdraw from a course and, possibly, drop out; they also introduce students to more rigorous, college-level work earlier in the developmental curriculum. And regardless the model design, with the accelerated pace format and the higher level of academic rigor (Barragan, & Cormier, 2013), accelerated programs succeed when there are intentional supports, both cognitive and non-cognitive, incorporated with the model (Bailey et al., 2015; Edgecombe et al., 2013; Hern, 2012; & Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009).

Much of the early challenge to developing an effective accelerated model is recognizing and integrating how students are tested and placed into the program as well as periodically assessing the program to ensure a consistent level of quality (Smith-Jaggars et al., 2013). Edgecombe (2011) reviewed models from the early 1990's and forward and noted three designs common to most institutional models. These ranged from "compressed," (p.1) or modular designs which allow students to self-pace throughout a semester to move independently through a developmental battery of courses; "paired" (p. 1) courses, or what other models refer to as *linked* or *concurrent* courses that comprise a *course set* often scheduled back to back with the same instructor; and the application of a "backward design" (Hern, 2012) curriculum and complete reformation of the developmental course set in number and time.

Along with enhanced placement, i.e., the test score may not matter as much as institutions recognizing the need to urge students to take the accelerated course, Edgecombe (2011) encouraged institutions to take actions on accelerated models based on research and data in her recommendations. Additional components critical to creating a working model would include faculty buy-in and training, an ongoing funding model (reporting not only the operating costs and return on investment from student retention, but also the impact of successful students enrolling in additional institutional courses), and administrative backing to enhance the enrollment, scheduling, and institutional support processes complementary to the new model.

Hern (2012) emphasized what might be most unique (also least studied) about the curricular expectations of an accelerated model: students in accelerated programs become engaged in college-level activities from day one. The difference is in the guided and more

intentional support of the “same kinds of reading, writing, and thinking they’ll be asked to do in the college-level course” (p. 62) emphasized in the co-requisite developmental course. Hern (2011) reported that in models where this kind of support occurs for students, data overwhelmingly indicates higher, more consistent success rates in not only the accelerated course, but also for additional college courses those students enroll in having successfully passed the college-level English course.

### **Early initiatives**

Adams et al. (2009) were among the first to announce successful quantitative results of student progress in English accelerated learning programs. Their data from student cohorts in the late 1980s (see Charts I, II, and III in Adams et al., 2009, pp. 51-53) concluded that the longer students remain in developmental courses, i.e., non-credit-bearing courses, the greater the likelihood that there would “be ‘leakage’” (p. 53) for a developmental sequence, and students would not complete a credit-bearing, college-level English course. Hern (2012) verified this data and concluded completion rates would rise by lessening the number of sequential developmental courses for students to pass prior to entering a credit-bearing course. Smith-Jaggars et al (2013) provided some evidence legislators were calling for “curricular structures that would reduce the time to degree” (p. 5) because of overall program costs to institutions and increasing financial burden on students.

Hern (2011) reported in the findings of the study of developmental English cohorts at Chabot College that the completion rate for students in the one semester, accelerated English course who passed the college-level English course was 25% higher than students in the traditional, two semester track. Encouraging longitudinal data emerged from

analyses of the early program models (California Acceleration Project, 2015). Two key findings were noteworthy in the report, including a nearly doubled success rate in completion and a significant narrowing of the equity gap among minority and Hispanic students (note tabular data on p. 3 in California Acceleration Project, 2015).

### **Obstacles to Acceleration**

The current, functioning models that exist for accelerated programs have come about through careful attention to matters of articulation and transfer at the various states, institutional scheduling and staffing of co-requisite courses, creating, often new, institutional systems and processes for placement, advising, and enrolling students in those courses; unfortunately, the models are typically not one-size-fits-all. Smith-Jaggars et al. (2013) studied three specific accelerated English programs and argued that inconsistent testing placement, “de-motivating curricula or pedagogy, and the power of external pulls” (p. 4) were three main forces contributing to a lack of student success in developmental sequences. The two major issues their study reported included matters of scaling the program and student placement. However, their overall results indicated that regardless of the level of the score on placements tests, students in accelerated programs still succeeded more often than those who did not enroll in accelerated courses.

Smith-Jaggars et al. (2013) conducted a linear regression analysis which indicated students who choose the accelerated course are “most likely to benefit from it” (p. 19) and revealed that for one of the institutions “students in Chabot’s accelerated option were 17 percentage points more likely to complete college-level English than their counterparts” (p. 17). Because many students who test into the developmental levels require both English *and* math remediation, the challenge for institutions is which pathway to initially direct

students to in order to “maximize their chances for success” (Adams et al., 2009, p. 62). Though accelerated models for both math and English have shown success, there is little data available indicating the levels of success for students who do nothing else but developmental (even though accelerated) coursework for their first semester. Perin’s (2002) study suggested faculty from both subject areas should “become familiar with the literacy requirements of the college-level, subject-matter curriculum” (p. 3) to enhance the process of helping determine a successful pathway.

Perhaps the most common obstacle to accelerated models in developmental education is the assumption that speeding-up the process for students to move through non-credit bearing courses comes with the compromise of quality and curricular standards. Adams et al. (2009) noted that prior to current intentional movements to change the long-standing curricular models, success rates were flat and higher education was expending a great deal of money with little return. However, research and studies by Smith-Jaggars et al (2013); Cho et al. (2012); Hern (2012); and Hern (2011) indicated that students in accelerated courses were not only as successful as students who had tested into the initial college-level writing course, they often out-performed them in both the first and second-semester college English courses.

### **High Challenge...High Support**

Cho et al. (2012) indicated a significant difference between the success rates for developmental students in accelerated programs and those who are not; however, their conclusions emphasized that their findings do not explain a causal relationship between acceleration and success. Adams et al. (2009) contributed the success to two key factors: rigor and affective support. Placing developmental students into more “heterogeneous” (p.



62) cohort groups (i.e., a typical composition class would comprise half developmental and half college-ready) would encourage higher levels of rigor for the developmental student but greater opportunity at interactive learning communities with peers at a higher level (Edgecombe, 2011). Having the opportunity to provide curricular support (the linked developmental course following immediately after the college-level course) to a then smaller cohort in the linked developmental course would help support “with conscious and deliberate attention” (p. 62) the cognitive as well as the non-cognitive issues, which are often critical determiners in student success.

Barragan & Cormier (2013) suggested a set of strategies to increase rigor within developmental course offerings focused on closer association with college-level outcomes, high engagement classroom activities, and “making struggle a part of the learning process” (p. 3). Hern (2012) suggested that these cognitive supports, both within and outside of the classroom, be frequent and more intrusive to keep students engaged and on track to completion. Jenkins (2011) encouraged the development of cross-functional groups between academic and student services personnel that would create and implement “protocols” (p. 36) to more quickly provide support for students.

### **AVID for Higher Education and Student Engagement**

Known more by its acronym, Advancement Via Individual Determination, or, AVID, has been recognized, most notably among the K-12 system as one of the more highly successful intentional student success programs. Conceived in 1980 by two California high school teachers who were “concerned with the large number of students unlikely to pursue postsecondary education” (n.a., 1999, p.21), the AVID program has since spread into numerous states and several foreign countries. Its primary mission has

been college-preparation, typically for students who would be first-generation college students or students who are at-risk academically and/or economically.

In 2010-2011, AVID and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board launched a series of pilot programs with fifteen colleges, including four and two-year institutions, with the goal of determining whether the AVID student success initiatives utilized in the K-12 system would also be effective at helping achieve greater number of student retention and completion at the higher education level. Recently, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board released its report of the three-year progress of the pilot in those institutions (Shields, Shaw, Rapaport, Hallberg, Reese, Swanlund & Citkowicz, 2014).

Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative analyses, the report yielded small but significant findings on the impact of AVID strategies used institutionally on student persistence and completion. Although the data were unique and thus inconsistent across the number of participating institutions, the overall results were generally positive especially regarding student persistence to the following semester and overall grade point average. AVID at the higher education level is relatively new, and it is critical as more institutions become AVID-ized that data continued to be gathered and analyzed. But from a qualitative perspective, the results of the initial major study indicated that students feel much more engaged with their learning and knowledgeable about navigating their college pathway. Perhaps most encouraging were the results from Wiley College where students “were four times more likely than non-program participants in the first student cohort (fall 2011) to persist into their third year of college” (Shields et al., 2014, p. 59).

At the heart of the extensive AVID for Higher Education programming for institutions are high engagement strategies centered around the WICOR skills, or writing,

inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading (Custer, 2012) and a commitment to “a sustained approach to promoting student success by maintaining support for students beyond the first year” (Cuseo, 2012b, p. 5). As the literature applies to this study, these two programmatic areas become complementary strategies to a structured, accelerated learning program pathway model for which persistence and completion are the goals for developmental English students. A 2012 case study by Watt, Huerta, & Allan of a community college AVID implementation concluded that although faculty buy-in was challenging, students “reported that the support they received through the AVID class at WCCC has helped them focus, become more organized, and become more motivated to continue their studies” (p. 758).

This data complements an earlier study by Carini, Kuh, and Klein (2006) which concluded higher levels of classroom engagement tend to assist students at or near the developmental level. The AVID for Higher Education initiative offered a framework for institutions to more systematically and systemically help students become more engaged in their learning by creating a culture where they are challenged more but also supported more. Using National Survey of Student Engagement, or NSSE, data, Kuh (2003) emphasized the need for institutions to better link their student engagement results with institutional culture and processes.

Laird, Chen, & Kuh (2008) conducted a regression analysis which included data from 924 institutions that had participated in NSSE, between 2003 and 2007 that indicated a direct correlation between higher levels of persistence among students who were more actively engaged in supportive activities (tutoring, peer study groups, institutional activity opportunities). A correlation was also found between institutions with higher persistence

rates and academic rigor where students felt high levels of support. Often these institutional supports helped resolve issues of a non-academic nature — child care, work schedules — can factor greatly in student persistence. In a study of the impact of learning communities within a community college, Bonet & Walters (2016) conducted a survey (based upon the Center for Community College Student Engagement, or CCCSE, model) to look at levels of student engagement with faculty and curriculum. Results of the study emphasized the need of these additional supports both in and outside of the classroom to supplement student engagement and suggested “peer communication and teamwork, faculty-student interaction, and curriculum design” (p. 231) as the elements of keeping student engagement levels maximized.

Of the active and collaborative engagement strategies utilized in the AVID program, Socratic tutoring may be the strongest ally to classroom engagement. Highly collaborative, “the Socratic tutorial model is an example of intentional design, requiring certain preparation and activities on the part of the students” (Custer, n.d., p. 117). The tutorial model changes at the higher education level; K-12 schools incorporate a Socratic tutoring class period in their day. Collaboration and self-inquiry, both critical to the higher education tutorial model, are brought into both the classroom in peer groups and in tutoring labs to better support student schedules. To some degree the tutoring occurs online, but there has been very little study of the overall efficacy of this platform. But even at the higher education level, where the model has been incorporated as a “group learning strategy” (Custer, n.d., p. 115), students’ engagement levels and critical thinking levels are enhanced as well as their “capacity for interdependence” (Cuseo, 2015 June, p. 9).

## Summary

The literature confirmed what most institutions know: developmental education is costly to deliver and maintain (Bailey, 2009); more importantly, the literature offered here confirms that developmental education programming must be intentionally designed for greater efficiency and effectiveness (Bailey et al., 2015) for students to persist and become successful. A cost analysis conducted by Jenkins et al. (2010) concluded that for students enrolled in the accelerated English program, their costs were much less than had they taken the traditional set of developmental courses. Regarding the institution's costs, the study concluded "the benefits are more than double the costs" (p. 15) and, ultimately, more students were eventually completing their college goals.

The literature also indicated that there are successful accelerated learning models to not only provide a successful pathway of completion to credit-bearing courses, but also, as Hern (2012) urged, help contribute to an increasing data set that could greatly influence how developmental education is delivered in more institutions, save students and institutions dollars, and, most important, assist students more efficiently through the first two years of their higher education experience. Though there has been success for accelerated developmental English programs within community colleges in several states, these programs are not the norm for community colleges and their developmental students. Edgecombe (2011) emphasized the need for additional data that looks more specifically at what happens in the classroom and how what happens is assessed.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology and Research Questions

Based upon the literature and overall focus, this study utilized narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, et. al., 2017; Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2001) for the central research method. This method relied, predominantly, on an in-depth inquiry of students' perceptions and experiences (Creswell, 2014) and opened an opportunity "inquiring into experience that attends to individuals' lives but remains attentive to the larger contexts and relationships within which lives are nested" (Clandinin et al., 2017, p. 91). The narrative inquiry methodology, allowed me to explore "narrative accounts as they represent the lived and told experiences of participants and researchers as they engaged together during the inquiry" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 206).

Akin to phenomenological studies which seek "to understand and describe an event from the point of view of the participant" (Mertens, 2010, p. 235) and encourage the researcher "to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people" (Patton, 2015, p. 573) over time, narrative inquiry differs in that it can be "both phenomenon and method" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 11). "Narrative inquiry is how we understand human experience" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 584), and the "story is how people make sense of their existence" (p. 576).

Because this study sought to explore individual perceptions of a specific set of lived experiences, a qualitative approach utilizing face-to-face interviews with individual students generated data which, through narrative inquiry, provided greater awareness and insight within the frame of the research questions (Mertens, 2010; Patton, 2014). In other words, guiding students through a series of questions with attention to an implicit narrative

design allowed them to share their individual stories of their experiences and what they perceived to be significant factors to their success in the ALP course.

Different from a case study, which may often be bound to a single phenomenon or event within specific time and place parameters (Mertens, 2010; Patton, 2015), the narrative inquiry approach allowed the opportunity to “inquire into participants’ experiences” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47) and to consider additional factors of the participant’s “narrative inquiry space” (p. 47), in other words, a narrative timeline of their experiences throughout one semester. This related to what Patton (2015) referred to as the “phenomenological attitude” (p. 575) in which the researcher may consider additional, unique factors of a study such as students’ confidence levels and other non-cognitive issues brought to their experiences in the class. In that respect, because narrative inquiry assumes an “engagement with participants” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47) within their story, there was a risk of personal bias, or what Clandinin (2006) referred to as “tensions” (p. 48). To avoid any personal bias (see Role of the Researcher on page 46), the researcher assumed a more phenomenological attitude in which the narratives became a research concept to enhance the overall rigor of the study by forcing a more objective viewpoint on the data collected and removing any presuppositions which might have create a hurried set of conclusions, and this attitude allowed the data alone to drive the analysis (Patton, 2015) and not the relationship established during the interviews.

The guiding question this study hoped to answer was - *how did students who completed the accelerated learning program (ALP) perceive the three-part, structured approach to the course as having been the contributing factor(s) that helped them to persist*

*and complete the course successfully?* Inherent to the guiding question were three sub questions investigating the students' perceptions of what the factors mean to the students.

First, data indicated that students who enter community colleges needing developmental coursework in English were more likely to persist and complete if they enrolled in a structured pathway consisting of accelerated, co-requisite courses (Jaggars et al., 2015; Hern, 2012). *How did students perceive the accelerated learning program design as having been a contributing factor to their success in the course?*

Second, studies showed students in AVID programs at their institutions tended to persist and complete their coursework because they felt more engaged (Cuseo, 2011; Adelman, 2006; Conley, 2005). *How did students perceive the AVID high engagement strategies utilized by instructors in the ALP English course as having been a contributing factor to their success in the course?*

Third, studies also indicated students in remedial English courses had a greater chance of completing the courses if they were engaged in more purposeful and focused tutoring programs (Daws & Schiro, 2008; Rose et al., nd). *How did students perceive the mandatory and more intentional tutoring support as having been a contributing factor to their overall success in the ALP course?*

These questions comprised the underlying framework of the interview questions. They also supported an initial assumption regarding the three-pronged strategy linked to student success: to varying degree, each strategy was linked to student persistence and successful completion (see Table 2 on page 58). Data derived from the interviews helped confirm how the students perceived the three respective strategies as having been contributing factors to their overall success in the course.



## **Rationale**

Strategically, employing face-to-face interviews offered the best opportunity for more “prolonged engagement” (Gilgun, 2016) with a student interviewee. With the narrative inquiry methodology in mind, framing the interview questions such that students were semi-guided to tell their story through a common timeline of experiences and within the “context(s)” (Caine et al., 2013, p. 577) of the ALP course set allowed this researcher to gain what Clandinin (2013) referred to as “narrative coherence” (p. 48) — the shared stories merging students’ perceptions through “temporality, sociality, and place” (p. 50) into a common narrative to “engage audiences to rethink and reimagine the ways in which they practice and the ways in which they relate to others” (p. 51). This common story helped to better focus the research on the shared perceptions of the students’ personal outcomes and experiences in relation to the strategies, and not necessarily the strategies themselves.

Thus, the student narratives offered the interviewer multiple points of view on how the strategies uniquely affected students; they also allowed a glimpse into the narrative community — “where a narrative account exists of a *we* which persists through its experiences and actions. Such an account exists when it gets articulated or formulated — perhaps by only one or a few of the groups’ members — by reference to the *we* and is accepted or subscribed to by others” [Carr (1986) in Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997, p. 22]. Once coded, the results included data from the students’ personal and shared experiences and perceptions of the structured pathway of the accelerated format coupled with the AVID high engagement learning strategies and mandatory tutoring assisted in this qualitative study. Rich data helped the researcher to better understand how the strategies factored into

the students' success in the course and helped test the overall efficacy of the three strategies within the future scaling of the accelerated learning pathway.

### **Context of the Study**

The study was conducted at Butler Community College on both the El Dorado and Andover campus sites. Butler Community College had a total fall 2016 enrollment of just over 9,000 students with the majority of these students spread evenly across three major campus sites — El Dorado, Andover, and on-line. The El Dorado and Andover sites best accommodated the student interviewees of the study and the campus sites offered a familiar setting during the interviews for the students. I utilized classrooms to conduct the interviews for two specific reasons: first, the classroom setting helped students feel at ease, supported a non-threatening atmosphere, and, through experiential reference, allowed students to more honestly and thoughtfully respond to questions (Gilgun, 2016). Second, Clandinin et al. (2017) emphasized that researchers “adopt methods to enable participants to tell their stories or to allow us to live alongside them as they undergo their experiences” (p. 93). By providing a classroom setting very much like their ALP course, I allowed the student the spatial environment to act as a setting for their narratives. Interviews were scheduled for an hour and conducted in a designated classroom at both campus sites like the classrooms (for some students the exact classroom) in which students took their English courses. During the interviews only the interviewer and the interviewee were present.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Having been an instructor in English in both the high school and college-level settings for over 30 years, I do have substantial subject-matter knowledge and experience, specifically, with developmental English instruction. With that background, I believe that I

was well-qualified to more quickly perceive and note the details about their experiences in the ALP English class during the interviews; moreover, being engaged in the responses about a subject matter I know well, I could readily ask pertinent follow-up questions for more specific information. Additionally, I had been instrumental in the development, piloting, and scaling of the current accelerated learning program in English at Butler Community College. I obviously wanted to determine from the perspective of the students if the program was, in fact, helping them progress and succeed.

However, for the program to become more viable and to truly meet the needs of student success in English in a more efficient and cost-effective manner, this study relied on an objective consideration of the data. I realized that the shared relationship of the student's narrative established during the interview created a vulnerable relationship between the story-teller and the story-listener (Clandinin, 2006), but at a critical point the story became not one of the individual but part of the larger "social context" (p. 46). If there was bias, it was at a level of personal ownership to the program. It was more philosophical than selfish: passing the college-level English course is a critical gateway for students to overall college success. Because it was critical to the study to gather information from student subjects, I completed a document detailing the purpose and processes of the study, which I delivered to the internal review boards of both the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Butler Community College. The document detailed how and why student selection was conducted. It described the anonymity of subjects and analysis process. As well, the document included a willingness on behalf of the author to share the findings and results of the study with both institutions in order to contribute to any ongoing research and databases relating to developmental English at the college level.

Because of the nature of the study, I was granted IRB exemption (see Appendix B on page 135).

### **Data Collection Methods**

The method employed for gathering data to help answer the guiding and additional sub questions was face-to-face interviews with 12 students who had completed their ALP course with a grade of “C” or better from the 36 ALP course sets from the fall 2016 semester and who were currently enrolled in the spring 2017 semester. The interview protocol comprised no more than 10 questions framed somewhat sequentially so students could offer individual perspectives about how and why they felt more engaged as they progressed through the course and what specific factors they believe to have contributed to their success in the course (see Appendix D on page 138). I did ask follow up questions during each interview for further clarification and detail to some responses. I digitally recorded each interview using an Olympus hand-held recorder and downloaded each interview file into ExpressScribe© software on my personal computer. Additionally, I followed an observational protocol of keeping written comments (including my additional follow-up questions unique to each interview) and interviewer observations for each interview session (Saldaña, 2015; Creswell, 2014).

Interview data from 12 students invited from the cohort of students comprising thirty-five ALP course sections provided a rich set of perceptions regarding the three infused strategies. As part of the interview protocol and prior to beginning the interview questions, I asked each participant a set of questions to help me add specific descriptors of the cohort and further relevance to the analysis of the data. These questions included information about age, gender, employment status (if so, how many hours per week), and if

the student was a first-generation college student. Both the interview protocol (Creswell, 2012); initial pilot focus group questions (Mertens, 2010); and interview questions are provided in the appendices of this document. Prior to the actual interviews, I piloted a set of questions with a focus group of six students enrolled in a spring 2017 semester ALP course set using a roundtable, research focus group format (Mertens, 2010; Patton, 2015) to help determine whether the questions would establish the proper context for students to answer more thoroughly and thoughtfully. This initial set of pilot questions can be found in Appendix A on page 134. Following this round of pilot questions, I made intentional adjustments and the necessary revisions to my interview questions.

The final interview questions (see Appendix D on page 138) were framed to engage the students in more participatory conversation (Mertens, 2010) and to solicit from each student the narrative “strewn bits” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 49) of their experience in the ALP course sequence relating to their perceptions and awareness of the three strategies infused in the ALP course set. Using more open-ended questions encouraged discussion-like responses and helped avoid brief, one-word responses. Because the responses varied in detail to some degree, I incorporated follow up questions to further explore the students’ perceptions and experiences (Yin, 2014; Patton, 2015).

### **Validation of the Data**

The validation process included “member checking,” peer review, and “triangulation” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201-202). Initially, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness confirmed that the student subjects I interviewed had been enrolled in the fall 2016 at Butler Community College and had successfully passed the ALP course set with a grade of C or better. The Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, the English

department chair, the English site lead instructor, the Director of Developmental English, three accelerated learning program instructors, and the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness validated the interview questions for both content and relevance (Mertens, 2010). I also provided this group with the interview protocol detailing how I conducted the interviews and managed the storage of the data.

I did employ member checking as part of the validation process. I emailed electronic copies of each individual transcription to the respective students requesting that they confirm their response data was accurate and prompted them to make any corrections or additions to the text and return it to me (see Appendix F on page 141). Two weeks after sending those emails, I had not received any further student feedback. The lack of any responses did not support member checking as a viable validation method; however, it did not discount that students did receive the transcriptions, agreed with the content, and simply chose not to respond.

Because the data collected correlated with three specific strategies, it was important to verify that both the scope and content of the interview questions and the collected student interview data did reveal a relationship and that there was consistency to the interview process (Creswell, 2014). This process also helped to determine any bias on the researcher's behalf. I confirmed these correlations by having the Vice-President of Institutional Research and Effectiveness review the interview instrument and collected data by utilizing a content matrix (Mertens, 2010) to link interview questions with strategy content (see Table 2 on page 58). To assist in this process I incorporated a brief, narrative description of the students in the cohort who were interviewed (students' names remained anonymous), the interviews themselves, and the overall findings (Creswell, 2014). As

well, I used triangulation to ascertain the number of visits made to a Butler tutoring lab by the interview participants. I used data pulled from the tracking software used by the Academic Support Services' Academic Success Coach who tracked students' usage of tutoring labs at both the El Dorado and Andover campus sites. From these data I was able to verify the actual number of visits made to a Butler tutoring lab by the interview participants.

Prior to final analysis and discussion, I shared my findings with the Vice-President of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, the Dean of Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, the English department chair, the English site lead instructor, the Director of Developmental English to review the overall findings. This "peer-debriefing" process (Creswell, 2014, p. 202) was very helpful and confirmed that my findings did indeed correlate to the overall scope of the study and helped indicate whether there were areas lacking in data.

### **Data Sources**

The main source for the research data came from student interviewees selected from the fall 2016 cohort of students at Butler Community College who completed the co-requisite, accelerated English course with a C or better. Since the study looked specifically at individual student perception, interviews provided the opportunity to capture a more profound set of student perspectives (Mertens, 2010). Because participants in the study knew they and their responses would remain anonymous, personal interviews allowed for more candid, insightful responses.

Utilizing the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness' Banner database, I examined data from the total fall 2016 ALP cohort that revealed a total of 367 students who

were enrolled in EG 060. Of that total, 296 students were ALP students, i.e., students concurrently enrolled in a paired EG 060 and EG101 ALP section. Of the 296 students enrolled, 184 students, or approximately 70%, completed each course in the ALP set with a grade of C or better. Tracking those 184 students through the Banner database indicated that 161 (87%) students enrolled in at least one Butler course for spring 2017; thus, I believed there would be an adequate number of students from which to draw students for interviews. With the help of the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness' Banner database to filter the cohort of students who completed a fall 2016 ALP set with a C or better and my advisor, emails were sent to students in the cohort. The process solicited students employing a purposeful random sampling technique (Mertens, 2010), and it allowed for a more stratified and representative set of subjects based on age, gender, race, and overall performance in the class.

Knowing that the data for this study would rely on student perception of their experiences in the ALP co-requisite course and wanting to build continuity within the cohort, I asked the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness to run a report of students who had completed the ALP course set in the fall 2016 semester with the grade of C or better, had enrolled in at least one course for the spring 2017 semester (they had persisted to the next semester), and were 18 years of age or older. As well, the report included each student's Butler Pipeline email account which would be the mode of contacting students.

I submitted the Excel spreadsheet to my advisor along with the Student Recruitment Email Form (see Appendix E on pages 139-140). Although my credentials and contact information were included in the letter, it was important for a third-party (in this case, my



advisor) to solicit first contact with the students who could then, if interested, contact me to learn more about the study and set up an interview time. Within the first two days of the email solicitation, I received calls from two students who were interested in being part of the study. Another week passed without any other students' response. At that point, I realized that students' Butler email accounts were not necessarily synced with their CANVAS course shells (the learning management software where a majority of students access their Butler email). I then contacted my advisor and provided him with a list of instructors in whose classes the cohort students were enrolled for spring 2017. He then contacted those instructors via email and asked them to email the invitation to interview to the appropriate students in their courses. This produced a more positive result; within a couple of weeks I had the 12 student interviews scheduled.

Assuming a large percentage of the cohort would choose to either not participate or simply not respond, I wanted to interview at least a minimum of 12 students. If I had not received this minimum number of responses, I would have continued to solicit additional students via email to interview. However, I did receive positive responses and interviewed 12 students from the fall 2016 cohort. Based upon similarities among student responses within the interviews and that factors such as age, gender, or work schedule did not significantly affect student responses, I determined that I had achieved data saturation (Creswell, 2014, p. 189) for the study.

### **Description of Student Cohort**

Although the limiting factors for the cohort included only students enrolled in an ALP section for the fall 2016 semester, only students who had passed both the ALP course (EG 060) and the EG 101 course with a grade of "C" or better, and only students who had

enrolled in at least one additional Butler course for the spring 2017 semester, there were a substantial number of students (185) from which to draw a random sample. The student cohort comprised 108 (58%) females and 77 (42%) males; the majority of whom (86%) were enrolled at full-time (a minimum of 12 credit hours) status. In terms of ethnicity, the cohort breakdown included 66 (36%) Caucasian, 36 (19%) Hispanic, 27 (15%) African-American, 7 (4%) Asian, and 49 (26%) undeclared students.

Though Butler collects multiple data points for students in its BANNER system, certain data qualifiers are not. For example, Butler does not collect data on age, whether students work, or if they are the first in their family to attend college. I believed there were additional descriptor categories that would be helpful to the overall analysis of the student interviews and findings discussion. These included the age of the student, whether they were first-generation college students, and whether they were working more than 20 hours a week during the semester. I chose twenty hours as this is the minimum number of hours for part-time work at the college; this would be a point of comparison later in the analysis. Following is a tabular breakdown of the 12 students interviewed for the study and their unique descriptors:

**Table 1***ALP Student Interview Cohort*

Name*	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	1 <sup>st</sup> Gen	Status	Employed
Samantha	F	23	Undeclared	No	FT	Yes
Mark	M	18	African-American	No	FT	No
Jake	M	19	Caucasian	Yes	FT	Yes
Billy	M	19	Asian	Yes	FT	Yes
Crystal	F	23	Caucasian	Yes	PT	No
Maria	F	19	Hispanic	Yes	FT	Yes
Evette	F	19	African-American	Yes	FT	No
Tim	M	19	Caucasian	No	FT	Yes
Ann	F	19	Hispanic	No	FT	Yes
Julie	F	19	Hispanic	No	FT	Yes
Beth	F	19	Caucasian	Yes	FT	Yes
Lisa	F	20	Caucasian	No	FT	Yes

\* For the sake of anonymity, the names listed are fictitious.

The tabular cohort data indicate an average age of 19.6, with a 50/50 split on students who were first generation college students. There were 8 (67%) females and 4 (33%) males who participated in the interviews. The percentage between female and male were comparable to the larger cohort, and most the various ethnic groups comprising the larger cohort were represented. There were 9 (75%) students who indicated they were working, in some capacity, 20 or more hours per week while in school (two students were working multiple jobs). Interestingly, the students in the study who were working held

jobs ranging from babysitting (1), shift work at fast-food restaurants (4), construction (1), CNA at a local nursing home (1), and shift work and retail stores (2). The student who was working at the nursing home also worked a weekend shift at a fast-food restaurant; another who babysat (weekends) also worked an evening shift at a fast food restaurant three days a week. Using the data from the BANNER system, I also determined the 12-student cohort represented students from 6 full-time Butler English faculty members.

Although I had not originally intended to capture information about the students' major/career interests, during our time before the interview proper, all 12 students talked about their educational interests, their future education plans at Butler; they also talked about themselves. I noted these data in my observational notes. Students' interests ranged from simply wanting to "get through the semester" to "getting my first two-years and Butler and transferring to K-State to be a veterinarian." All but 3 of the students were native speakers, and those 3 students (2 of whom were first-generation students), who had been educated in local K-12 systems, were fluent in English and mentioned that they only spoke their native language around family. Most striking to this researcher was the student in the study who was the parent of a special needs child requiring continual attention due to the nature of the condition. The student felt that further education would be an asset in caring for the child. Since the questions probed students about their perspectives on classroom strategies and their engagement with them, students never seemed to feel threatened to make honest response. Regardless, though their anonymity was ensured, two students were unwilling or unsure to offer personal perspectives to some questions and, instead, offer only limited, more general responses to questions even after a follow up question.

Following the interviews, I returned to my Excel file which housed student data from the larger cohort to determine whether the 12 students were exceptional in any categories other than the additional data I had gathered at the beginning of each interview. From the review of the student data within the larger cohort, I determined that the 12 students within the study provided a representative cross-section of the fall 2016 ALP cohort.

### **Interview Protocol**

I allowed one hour for each of the 12 student interviews. During each of the digitally recorded interviews, I also captured anecdotal notes in a separate notebook of each student's general behavior throughout the interview. These notes followed a consistent observational protocol (Creswell, 2014). As I established initial rapport with each student, I collected basic data on gender, age, and whether the student was a first-generation college student. During each of the recorded interviews, I also captured anecdotal notes of what I observed of each student's behavior throughout the interview. The observations became critical for initiating follow up questions, noting what I found to be consistent terms and phrases that students used in their answers, and for describing each student's level comfort in answering the questions. Having the recorded interviews, and having personally transcribed each interview, these observational notes added a complementary dimension to the coding and overall analysis of the narrative data.

### **Interview Structure: A Pattern to Inquiry**

As indicated in Table 2 below, the interview questions (see Appendix D on page 138) were designed to not only assist in establishing correlations between students' perceptions of their success in the course and the three employed strategies, but also to

determine, by way of the students talking about their experiences throughout the semester in the ALP course set, how they understood the strategies to have been personally helpful.

**Table 2**

*ALP Course Strategies and Interview Questions Correlation Matrix*

ALP Course Strategy	Interview Questions
Structured pathway of accelerated format	2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
AVID high engagement learning strategies	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Mandatory tutoring/outside support	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Thus, the questions were intended to solicit the narrative examples of their experiences as they progressed through the semester from how they felt about their level of confidence before starting the ALP course set to at what point in the semester they realized they were going to be successful in the course. My purpose for this method was to allow the responses to become the narrative; the narrative would offer “discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience” (Hinchman & Hinchman, 2001, p. xvi). Thus, the narrative (the collected stories from the student responses) told the audience (Butler Community College) the story it hoped would be told — the three strategies had been significant factors to student success.

**Transcription of Interviews**

Because I wanted to more thoughtfully listen to the students’ narrative responses, I felt it critical to transcribe the interviews myself. I utilized ExpressScribe© software and a foot pedal so I could more efficiently pause, rewind, control speed, and transcribe each student’s responses. This process was helpful as I collected nearly 120 pages of interview

responses (12 point, double-spaced format) along with ten pages of hand-written observational notes. I also believe personally transcribing the narratives allowed me to engage in inductive, pre-coding note taking (Miles et al., 2013) providing opportunities to capture what “a participant was ‘really’ saying” (p. 90) and to better note “personal reactions to some participants’ remarks” (p. 90).

After concluding the transcriptions (and as promised following each interview), I emailed an electronic Word file copy of each individual transcription to the respective student thanking them once again for their participation, acknowledging that their identities would remain anonymous, and requesting they read through the transcription and to contact me (either by email or personal phone call) if they had any changes or additions to their statements.

### **Data Analysis**

Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed the recorded portions of the interview as well as my observational notes, collected during the student interviews, and began coding utilizing a deductive qualitative method (Miles et al., 2013). Personally typing the transcriptions served two important functions related to my initial coding: one, deeper listening to each interview for a second time and at a slower pace may yield comments from students that I did not hear the first time (Mertens, 2010; Gilgun, 2016); and, two, the literal work of transcribing the students’ comments would allow further clarity to my commentary notes taken during each interview. Ultimately, the purpose was to mine as much data as possible from the interviews to assist with the eventual coding and ultimate analysis.

My coding process complemented the narrative inquiry methodology — truly an “intimate study of an individual’s experience over time and in context(s)” (Caine et al., 2013, p. 577) — and my participation in what Clandinin (2006) referred to as a three-dimensional “narrative inquiry space” (p. 47). The narrative space contained the students’ perceptions of both their personal and social experiences in the ALP course set affected by “personal and social (interaction) along one dimension; past, present, and future (continuity) along a second dimension; place (situation) along a third dimension” (p. 47). It also encouraged me as a researcher to adapt my analysis “to thinking *with* stories instead of *about*” (Clandinin et al., 2017, p. 92) the students’ perceptions to better determine what they truly revealed within the narrative space.

### **First Cycle Coding**

As indicated in Chapter I, the coding process occurred in two cycles. I started with a careful and thorough reading of each interview transcription for topics matching the three main categories (the three key strategies) I theorized would be present (Creswell, 2014). I used a deductive process (Saldaña, 2015; Miles et al., 2013) linking codes to strategies by way of both descriptive and value coding methods (Miles et al., 2013, pp. 71-73). Being “more appropriate for social environments” (p. 71), descriptive coding helped match language from the transcriptions to appropriate codes. As a complementary process to the descriptive coding, value coding also helped me identify a “participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives” (p. 72) experienced in the ALP course set. Here, my observational notes complemented this portion of the coding process.



## **Second Cycle Coding**

Following this first stage I also utilized an inductive coding approach (Miles et al., 2013) to determine whether any additional, underlying impressions (associated subcategories that emerged) of students' experiences help to indicate to what degree the three strategies were instrumental to overall success. I accomplished this using narrative description (Saldaña, 2015; Miles et al., 2013) related to the codes identified during the first cycle, allowing me to expand upon the students' experiences based upon the wording and phrasing within their responses for more unique and deeper awareness of how the strategies effected student success. Incorporating this process allowed me to identify any associated, complementary dimensions of the three strategies and their parts in the students' overall success. These experiences provided a richer and more personally relevant description to my overall analysis of the narratives. Following the transcription and coding processes, a member of the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Director of Developmental English agreed to review the transcriptions and codes map for completeness and relevance.

Having the written anecdotal observations from each interview, the verbatim transcriptions of each interview, and the coded interview data, I began the process of validating my data and conducting the analysis of the specific perceptions students have of the three strategies' effects on their overall success. The hypothesis that all three strategies contributed to the students' success in the ALP course found greater clarity and meaning through this qualitative approach; however, it did not reveal to what degree one or more strategies were helpful to student success, and, of course, it did not account for students who did not complete the course successfully. Given I coded the data into set categories, a

deductive approach to the analysis (Miles et al., 2013) was an appropriate method allowing for rich exploration of the theory that the strategies employed in the accelerated course were instrumental in more students finding success and completing the ALP course set successfully.

### **Reporting the Findings**

The findings and discussion of the data comprise chapters four and five of this study. The findings include additional description of the interview and transcription processes as well as a thorough description (Mertens, 2010; Patton, 2014) of the data from the deductive coding relating students' perspectives to the strategies, and the data comprising additional themes which emerged from the inductive coding of the individual student interviews. The research was not concerned with how well students understood what the three strategies were specifically; however, the analysis did not dismiss ancillary factors (Yin, 2014) students perceived as having impacted their success. Because students communicated their perceptions of the three strategies by talking about their experience in the ALP course set, using a narrative inquiry approach allowed the experiences to become the students' story.

Thus my "reading" of their story was an immersion in what Clandinin (2006) referred to as the "tension" (p. 48) between story-teller (students) and narrator (researcher) from which the narrator works to best "represent their inquiries for a larger audience" (p. 48). This tension emerged as phenomena of "the temporal, the personal and social, and place" (p. 48) and comprised the fundamentals of the overall narrative: time, place, and action. Recognizing the essential story line was critical: these were students at a critical time in their academic lives successfully facing the challenges of progressing to and

achieving college-level writing competency in a setting requiring additional rigor, engagement, and support. Their story of how they successfully navigated that challenge became “a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 45).

Ultimately, an examination of this collective story as its own phenomenon (Clandinin, 2006) helped to determine whether the students’ perceptions answered the research questions regarding the impact of the three-pronged strategy approach on their abilities to succeed in the course.

## CHAPTER IV

### Findings

The findings of this study stem from a careful analysis of the narrative responses and observational notes gathered through personal interviews with 12 students who successfully completed the co-requisite, accelerated English course at Butler Community College in the fall 2016 semester, and from a two-pronged coding process of the interview data using deductive and inductive coding processes (Miles et al., 2013; Saldaña, 2015). Because the purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to examine what students' perceptions of the design of the ALP co-requisite course, the high-engagement strategies embedded in the instructional methodology, and the intentional tutoring and outside support revealed about why students persisted and successfully completed the course, the two-part coding process allowed for a richer examination of the data. More specifically, the dual coding processes provided the lens by which the experiences offered through the student interviews brought greater focus to the three dimensions of their common narrative space — “the personal and social (interaction) along one dimension; past, present and future (continuity) along a second dimension; place (situation) along a third” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47) — which Clandinin, having employed Dewey's (1938) “theory of experience and taking a narrative turn” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47) had noted as critical to the methodology.

Interestingly, during analysis, it became apparent, having asked the students to offer their perceptions to individual questions about the course set design, engagement, or support mechanisms, they rarely responded to the prompts concerning an individual strategy without implicating the other two. Their responses alluded to their collective and

related experiences within the strategies which grounded the narrative in time, place, and action. One student's response to the question of what were the most challenging and most satisfying aspects to the ALP class provided a typical example of this:

*Crystal* – Is it okay if I talk about the English class and ALP class together? The most challenging part would be the essays; that was hard. So, you know, you have two essays that you need to take care of that have to be done at a certain point, and it takes a lot of time out of your schedule... but, I mean, I survived it.

Crystal pointed to the rigor of the course design as personally challenging, but later in her same response she added:

*Crystal* – ...but the connections we made in the class, like I said, we, the first time we met we didn't talk to each other; we were just like, okay, this is a little awkward... so, you know, the smaller class, you don't have to deal with such a variety of students and so many distractions, uh, which made it satisfying because we were all there for the same reason. We were learning from each other; we were learning from the teacher, but then the teacher was learning stuff from us, too, which I found very satisfying...

...we [class peers] spoke a lot out of class about due dates and what they were doing on their paper... the tutors explained the very detailed things of what we needed to do for the paper and all that.

Crystal's ability to communicate what helped her survive the rigor of the two classes offered a perspective into both her levels of engagement with both her peers and the instructor as well as her willingness to seek additional support outside of the class. Her

responses also inferred her awareness of her place within the ALP community (her cohort), her role within it, and its expectation.

Crystal's and other students' perceptions, as offered through the accounts of their personal experiences with the three strategies, centered on the collective experiences within the co-requisite course set. These perceptions supported Butler's decision to cap the enrollment of the ALP course to 12 students and reinforced what Cuseo (2015a) and Tinto (1997) offered regarding the formation of learning communities resulting from higher levels of student engagement (Carini et al., 2006; Kuh et al., 2008). Thus, the findings indicated all three strategies as having been influencing factors to students — revealed through the individual student experiences and more significantly as a collective, single narrative.

Deductive coding revealed student engagement to be the most significant factor of the three, but coding also indicated that program design promoted greater opportunities for collaboration between students and instructors. Inductive coding revealed the significance of how collaboration, within all three strategies and especially the concurrent design, was vital to student success. Collaboration had a substantial effect on students' greater use of inquiry skills, on levels of confidence in self and content skills, and on involvement in collaborative peer/instructor relationships, as well as a higher awareness in skills and content support mechanisms both in and out of the classroom.

### **Deductive Coding Patterns**

As mentioned in Chapter III, I conducted my coding using a deductive process (Miles et al., 2013; Saldaña, 2015) to test my theory that the three strategies — a condensed, co-requisite design, high engagement, and high support — were significant

factors to student success. Specifically, when I started the actual coding, I reorganized the students' responses in the transcriptions by question so that each question contained the full complement of responses. Doing so allowed me the opportunity to not only code more consistently, but also to notice the narrative patterns (Miles et al., 2013) which developed out of the question set. To help build the codes, I used HyperResearch© software which, once coding was completed, allowed me the opportunity to manipulate the final list of codes by various theory filters.

My coding became more focused on the particulars of the students' narratives. I had framed my interview questions to not only determine whether connections existed between the three strategies (see Table 2 on page 58) and overall student success, but also, and more important, to allow students to describe their experiences of interacting with the three-strategy structure of the ALP class throughout the semester. Once I had finished the deductive coding process, I had developed 266 codes. Most of the codes fell into three general categories built around the students' perceptions of 1) their awareness and understanding of the ALP co-requisite curricular design; 2) their awareness of their level of engagement in the course(s); and, 3) their awareness of and engagement in tutoring and additional support mechanisms related to the course(s). Within the coding matrix, these specific categories manifest themselves in Table 3 below. Under the Code Pattern header, the included pattern statements were based upon what students stated or indicated specifically about their perceptions of the ALP course design (additional examples are noted within the brackets). Within the AVID high engagement learning strategies category, the two pattern statements indicate both what the student perceived of their level of engagement, as well as how students perceived the instructors having engaged them in

the course. Similarly, the final category, the pattern statements include both the students' perceptions of tutoring and additional support and the students' perceptions of how instructors encouraged students to engage in tutoring and additional support mechanisms. The total number of coded pattern responses is listed under the Frequency header in Table 3 below.

Accompanying this deductive coding, I also applied a process called subcoding (Miles et al., 2013), a helpful strategy when involving “content analysis [of] studies with multiple participants” (p. 77). These sub codes (related language, verbs, and synonyms used by students) allowed me to create a “second-order tag” (p. 77) to certain primary codes; these tags are incorporated (within brackets) with the frequency totals of Table 3 below.



**Table 3***Deductive Coding Pattern Categories*

Category	Code Pattern	Frequency
Perceptions of ALP curricular design	ALP course encouraged [helped, emphasized, supported, provided, was different, helped students, made learning fun, was a smaller class, believed ALP would help, ...]	54
Perceptions of AVID high engagement learning strategies in the ALP class	The student engaged in peer editing a lot [described using Speed Dating often, felt group work was efficient, felt comfortable working with others, connected well with others, felt challenged but supported, felt engaged in course, ...]	151
	The instructor asked students [engaged, taught WICOR skills, encouraged, broke down details, had the students, incorporated lots of reading, never said no, used lots of examples...]	
Perceptions of engagement in mandatory tutoring/outside support mechanisms	The student went to tutoring [formed their own study group, would often go together to tutoring lab, used the OWL, used instructor for tutoring, interacted with peers in tutoring lab, ...]	31
	The instructor encouraged students to use the tutoring lab [made students aware of the tutoring labs, required students to submit essays to the OWL, was available in his office, was available via email, ...]	

**Inductive Coding Patterns**

While the results from the first cycle, or the deductive analysis, indicated unique correlations between the three strategies and overall student success in the ALP course set, in my second cycle of coding, i.e., looking again at the data through an inductive lens, I did determine there were codes (specifically among the sub codes) that bore significance and needed to be considered as additional contributing factors to students' success as well as

critical aspects to the overall narrative. This coding process confirmed that students' perceptions did identify the three strategies as having been factors to success; moreover, inductive coding helped identify additional factors which I grouped into cognitive and non-cognitive categories: the students' perceptions of their own academic and personal growth within the overall course setting, and the students' perceptions of the instructor's influence on their abilities to succeed.

As in Table 3 above, related tags are incorporated within brackets with the frequency totals of Table 4 displayed below:

**Table 4**

*Inductive Coding Pattern Categories*

Category	Code Pattern	Frequency
Student awareness of personal growth (cognitive)	The student felt he would not have passed without ALP [felt more confident in her abilities, believed ALP course improved student confidence, felt ALP course reinforced reading skills, thought ALP class was more personable, believed ALP class helped with other courses, liked that the ALP class provided comfortable atmosphere, enjoyed working with other students in the ALP class...]	67
Instructor influence on learning (non-cognitive)	The student enjoyed having the same instructor [feel faculty are supportive, felt instructor become more like a friend, felt instructor had lots of energy, felt more confident using instructor for tutoring, believed the instructor inspired confidence, felt instructor respected students, liked that instructor shared personal experiences, believed instructor understood student level, appreciated that instructor kept student aware of his performance, ...]	29

As patterns emerged through both deductive and inductive coding processes, student perceptions began to resonate as a single narrative in which course structure and design, multiple means of engagement, and various support mechanisms became central themes all connected, in essence, to the narrative's "plot" centered around an inclusive culture of collaboration and instructional care — I called this collection of patterns the "ALP learning community." This data was encouraging as it supported my central methodology of narrative inquiry as a method to examine and look "to the larger and smaller contexts in which stories are told" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 583) which became the situational features of the central narrative. This community became the known, relational space (Clandinin, 2006) for those contexts which students perceived. The results did reveal that course design, intentional strategies of engagement, and tutoring supports were all significant factors to student success, but the results also revealed that the three strategies were not mutually exclusive; rather, the factors produced greater effects functioning as one organic system.

Though students' response data positioned the deliberate use of engagement strategies above course design and supporting mechanisms, it would have been premature to point to student engagement as having been the single most significant factor. (Engagement may have been the main character, but it could have been acting alone!) I set out to determine whether students would perceive all three strategies as having factored into their success; results from the data indicated they did. More compelling was how the students' "story" perceived the three strategies as truly connected; simply, "the ALP class" — what Butler considered to be a deliberate, embedded, and collective community of

practice became merely the mutual expectations experienced by the students within the class.

### **Three Students' Stories**

Though much of this chapter investigates the student narratives via thematic patterns developed from the coding processes and illustrates the key relationships between the three strategies, students' perceptions and awareness of those strategies, and overall student success, maintaining a level of "attentiveness and wakefulness" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 581) to the relational experience with the students was also vital to my overall analysis. As the collective details of the students' experiences became embedded within the dimensions of the "narrative inquiry space" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47) during coding, they confirmed the resulting thematic patterns of the study. Moreover, this study was initially and certainly the students' story. Their lives, their experiences became the preface to the overall, shared narrative and need to be told.

Following are representative encounters with three of the students in the 12-student cohort I interviewed for the study. Though all twelve student stories were unique unto themselves, these brief "stories" serve to best exemplify the dimensions within the narrative landscape of what would become the collective experience for the students.

#### **Crystal's Story**

Already feeling like she was at a disadvantage because she had not been in school for five years, 23 year-old Crystal was one of two non-traditional students in the 12-student cohort interviewed for the study. Crystal was enrolled part-time at Butler during the fall 2016 semester and was nervous about having to take two English classes together, but she believed she would need the additional support of the Fundamentals of English course if

she were going to have any success. Crystal was married, was not working while she was going to school, but she was the main care-provider for her young son whose physical disability required round the clock attention. Admittedly, Crystal was not confident about her ability to succeed in the ALP course set; she also feared that she just wouldn't "fit-in" with the younger, traditional-aged college students in her class. She was also hesitant about how both her instructor and peers would respond when she would need to bring her son to class.

Although she "liked reading," she was not surprised during enrollment when she tested into ALP; she knew she had "a lot of issues with writing." At first, she was confused about how the classes were supposed to work. She told me that advising had helped some, but that it was Dr. Jones, during the first day of the ALP class, who helped explain how things would work and who made her feel comfortable with both courses.

Crystal said her fear of not fitting in went away almost immediately in the class for two reasons. She pointed to the instructor, Dr. Jones, as someone who was "really understanding" about her son's condition. She knew as long as she communicated what was happening with her if she had to miss class because of her son that Dr. Jones was willing to work with her. She knew she would still be held accountable for the work in the class, but she believed she would never be penalized if she had to miss class as long as she was open with Dr. Jones about what was happening. As well, the relationships she developed early in the semester with her classmates was something she pointed to as the most satisfying aspect of the ALP class for her. She said the fact that "we knew everyone's name by the end of two weeks" and that everyone had to participate made her feel very comfortable around her peers.

Listening to others talk about their own struggles also made Crystal feel confident about her ability to succeed in the class. Several times during her interview she spoke about the honesty with which Dr. Jones spoke about personal, academic struggles while in college. She knew at that point that if Dr. Jones could make it through those issues, she could, too. Becoming close friends with one of the younger, female students in the ALP class helped her create a support system that carried over into the spring 2017 semester. Crystal talked of how they met outside of class often to go over each other's essays and go to the tutoring lab together.

For Crystal, realizing she had found a place where she felt not only accepted, but also engaged as both peer and friend pointed to how essential having a shared setting ALP students could utilize for engagement and support. Knowing she had to engage and interact with both her peers and her instructor helped her become more confident with herself and, as she indicated, "made me feel that I can improve. It's not the end of hope."

### **Ann's Story**

19 year-old, Ann, was very hesitant about even starting college and was very nervous about taking a college English class because, as she admitted, "I really felt like I got one year of English in during my high school education." She knew her confidence in English was low, and she was aware of how difficult reading was for her because of her dyslexia. However, Ann was encouraged by the ALP program during enrollment; she knew she would rather work a little harder during one semester than take two separate classes over the next year. "I was excited that I even had the opportunity to do that."

Ann knew a little of how ALP worked from a high school friend of hers who had been in an ALP section during the spring 2016 semester, and what was most attractive to

her was the size of the ALP class. She had grown up in a small, rural community with a high school enrollment that nearly matched a typical Butler class of 25 students; thus, she was accustomed to a more intimate learning environment. She knew that ALP class sizes were smaller, but she was also nervous. Living in a small town, she took comfort in that she knew most everyone, and the ALP class, even though a smaller group of students, would mean having to get to know a whole new set of people.

Ann's impression of her first days in the ALP class were of Professor Baldwin, her instructor. For Ann, Professor Baldwin helped clearly connect what she needed to do for both classes, and she felt the professor made sure all of the ALP students understood what had just been discussed in the EG 101 class each day. "You don't feel like you're wasting everyone else's time," she said about being able to ask questions when she didn't understand. As the semester progressed, Ann mentioned Professor Baldwin taught them not just English, but also about the college experience. She believed that made her feel more comfortable going to some of her other classes which were much larger.

For Ann, the multiple opportunities she had to engage with other students in the ALP course set helped her both in and outside of the class. She mentioned during her interview that she felt more comfortable in her role as a dormitory RA because of the different activities in the ALP class which helped her get to know her peers. She enjoyed being able to work in groups on different projects with different people on topics that were relevant to them; she believed that helped her open up around others. Also, she credited Professor Baldwin with making sure everyone had a say during discussions and pointed out "[Professor Baldwin] really tried to build up our confidence." Ann admitted the class wasn't easy, but the instructor "made us feel at ease. [Professor Baldwin] would help us."

Ann's narrative helped to articulate how an engaging, interactive set of activities among a cohesive group of students strengthened her confidence in the subject matter and in herself as a person. It also complemented the overwhelming majority of deductive coding patterns concerning students' awareness of high engagement as a critical factor. More important, it placed interaction at the heart of the students' learning community.

### **Tim's Story**

Tim would be the first to admit that he was never that excited about coming to college; for that matter, he wasn't very interested in going to his high school classes, but he completed and felt that college was naturally the next step. A low score on his placement test during enrollment had both Tim and his father frustrated that he would be taking a developmental English course. When his advisor told him that ALP might be the best option, Tim thought it might be the best way to "get it [EG 101] out of the way." He would also be the only student in the cohort of 12 I interviewed for the study who told me he was very confident with his skills in English going into the semester. That changed when he started the ALP class.

When Tim found himself in a class situation where he was asked to take on the responsibilities of engaging with other students and, as a group, help each other analyze various texts, edit peers' essays, and assist with presentations, he knew his confidence level had lowered. He was in a totally new academic setting to which he found he had to adapt. The ALP class was the first opportunity for Tim to recognize his academic experience as being "more hands-on" and truly his own. What he found most challenging was simply convincing himself that he actually enjoyed the interaction. He also felt a new level of expectation from himself; he felt he would be letting down his peers if he wasn't engaged.



Tim did not find the class content and work required difficult; he understood the work and was finding success early in the course. Tim's true ability level was probably beyond that of developmental, but he would agree that he had always just settled with "getting by." ALP changed that for him with a new set of expectations: this is a new situation where he had to rely on himself and earn the trust of his peers. He became excited about "a class that actually gets to talk to each other and everyone else and interacts, then you actually can get things done faster and learn more." Tim's evolving awareness of his situation within the ALP class as a place where interaction and engaging with both peer and instructor was not only necessary, but also critical to how he began to perceive his relationship to that situation as personally relevant to his role as an academic learner.

### **An ALP Learning Community**

Clandinin (2006) wisely encouraged those engaging in narrative inquiry to consider the "ethics of narrative inquiry" (p. 52). Because narrative inquirers must understand this ethic "as being about negotiation, respect, mutuality and openness to multiple voices. We need to learn how to make these stories of what it means to engage in narrative inquiry dependable and steady" (p. 52). It would have been inaccurate for me as the researcher to assume to know and interpret the students' story; rather, it was important through this analysis to establish the context for the students' story for "enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 42 in Clandinin, 2006, p. 46) and allow their experiences to provide the unbiased account. As well, it was critical for me as a researcher to be conscious of how I was "going to be useful in those relationships" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47) with the students and their narratives. Caine, et al.

(2013) indicated that doing so “requires a ‘believing-in’” (p. 580), or a willingness on behalf of the researcher for “exploring and understanding lived experience” (p. 580).

As I offered in both the Rationale and Data Analysis sections of Chapter 3, the Narrative Inquiry methodology required not only my participation in the overall conversation, but also my ability to ground the narrative “within the experiences of the participants” (Caine et al., 2013, p. 577). It became essential to examine the students’ “experience, interaction, and continuity enacted” (p. 577) within the narrative space, or setting, of the ALP course set. Thus, the students’ awareness of what led them to the ALP setting and their place in it, how they interacted within that space and eventually thrived, and how they perceived it now as part of their lives became the essential “transaction” (Caine et al., 2013, p. 578) I shared with them. The remainder of the chapter sets the context of this story by offering a more detailed analysis of students’ perceptions of the three strategies in their own words followed by an analysis of the additional factors revealed through the interviews and the observations I noted throughout the interviews.

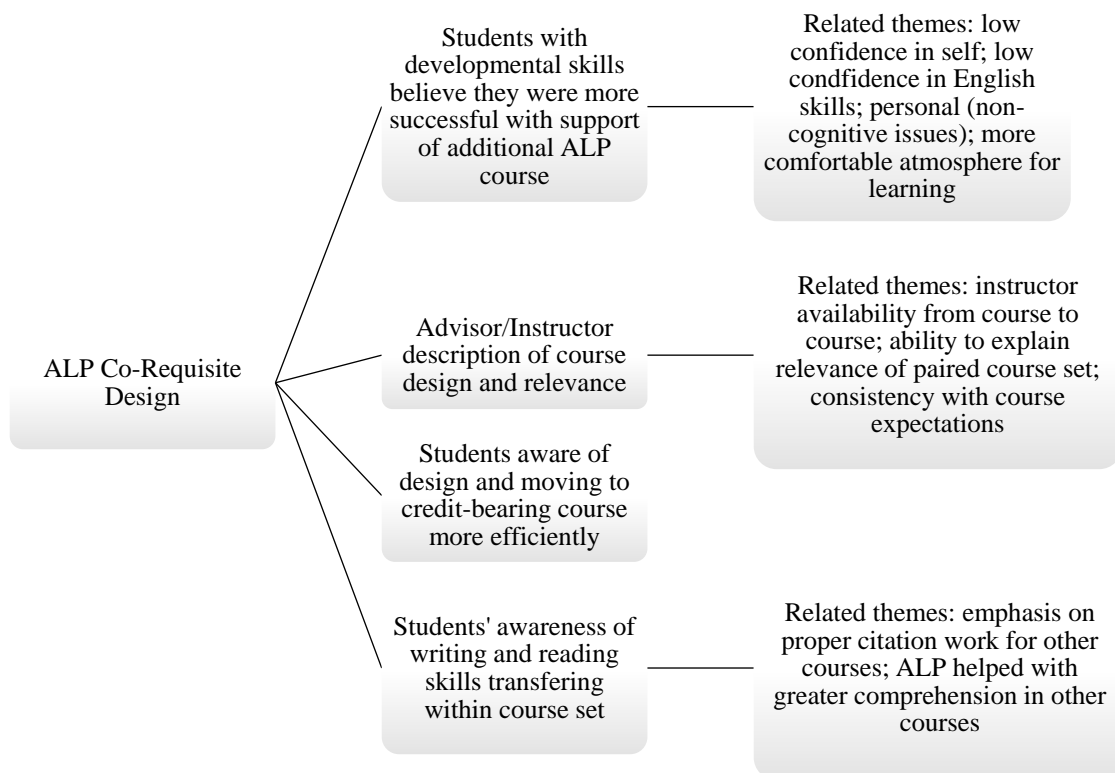
### **Initial Perceptions of an ALP Co-Requisite Design**

Butler’s developmental education task force team took a very prescriptive approach with the design and implementation of its ALP English program. Meeting twice a month for two hours, members tackled issues ranging from how best to link the three course record numbers, or CRNs, for the course set (an EG 101 capped at 13 students; an EG 101 and EG 060 paired set capped at 12 students) for the BANNER system to determining what options would be available for the additional reader in the course. Minutes from several task force meetings revealed that when Butler had scaled its ALP program, there had been coordinated discussions between the English department, the developmental English

faculty, and advising on how to best market the concurrent offering to prospective students. Though advisors had been given a set of talking points to use with students regarding ALP, results from the student interviews indicated there was some inconsistency as to how developmental English students were advised about the program. However, the student data did suggest most students understood the relevancy of the concurrent enrollment as shown in Figure 4.1 (see page 80). The English department wanted ALP enrollment to become mandatory for all developmental English students; nevertheless, there remained two stand-alone sections for students whose schedules would not work with the two-day-a-week ALP timeline. However, most developmental English students did enroll in one of the 32 ALP offerings in fall 2016.

#### **Themes: An ALP Co-Requisite Design**

As the course design was the first of the strategies students encountered for the class, their experiences confirmed they felt trepidation early on; however, most responses acknowledged that the students, within the first few weeks, felt a clear awareness and understanding of the need to be in the class. Most students were also excited their time to a credit-bearing course would be cut in half. After analysis of the data regarding students' perceptions of the guided, co-requisite course set as a factor in their overall success in the course, the following themes emerged:

**Figure 4.1***ALP Co-Requisite Design*

Student perceptions of the co-requisite design were mixed, but students were pleased when they realized they would be able to complete the for-credit, EG 101 course during the same semester.

*Crystal* - Well, I was pretty mad at first when I had to take the two English classes, but they just said that I really didn't do good enough on the test to take Comp. I, so I understood.

*Jake* - They didn't explain it to me that well. I didn't realize I was taking two classes until I got back home and looked at my schedule.

*Julie* – [The advisor] showed us videos of previous ALP classes that took it which helped a lot because it helped me understand about... yeah, now I know why I need this class.

Knowing the qualitative data from Dadgar et al. (2013) indicated the smoother the pathway to credit-bearing the greater the opportunity for students to succeed in the program, students' perceptions of both the design and their ability to navigate that design was critical. Data from the narratives confirmed the structure was at first confusing to students, but most students understood their placement in the course, and, in retrospect, understood the benefits.

*Evette* - I always had to do more work because I had always been behind in stuff. So, I was used to doing it; I was like, okay, this is fine; if it's going to be, then this if fine.

*Maria* - I was a little discouraged because I thought that I wasn't as good as everybody else and that I would have to take a remedial English class, but I understood that I needed help in English.

*Mark* - [The advisor] gave me two options: you can either do that course and then the English Comp I after, or you can do two at one time and get it all done. He did explain that it was going to be like taking two English classes at the same time.

Students also understood that the design would get them to the credit-bearing course (English Composition I) more quickly. Several students mentioned concerns regarding the work load and the time they would need to commit, but they were more aware of the benefit of getting the course completed in one semester.

*Tim* - They [the advisor] further explained to me that it was both gonna' count, so I didn't have to take them in two semesters. Or if I took them in two semesters I was going to be behind, so I was more worried about being behind than I was taking two English classes. I'd rather work harder during one semester than drag it out and stress about being behind

*Billy* - I felt like I had lost a whole semester in Fundamentals of English, and I felt that I would have lost another one had they not done English (EG101).

*Samantha* - I'd rather work harder during one semester than drag it out and stress about being behind. I'd just rather do it.

The perception students had of having to take two classes and having the additional work load was evident in the responses to overall course design and challenge, but students' responses indicated that all had adapted to the design and understood it as a stable environment early in the semester.

*Ann* - It's like the assignments you had..., sometimes there were two essay due; not necessarily the same topic but together? I mean, she would have us writing an essay that was related to the other essay in the other class. That was confusing at times, but you got to the point where you would figure that the essays were related; she just had us writing more.

*Beth* - I thought it was going to be hard because I was thinking homework-wise, but then the teacher made it go along with what he was doing in the actual Comp. I class, so it really wasn't that hard. It did make it easier; I found that doing it, the ALP class, I would get my homework in Comp. I done in that class, too.

*Mark* - They [advisors] further explained to me that it [ALP] was both going to count, so I didn't have to take them in two semesters. Or if I took them in two semesters I was going to be behind, so I was more worried about being behind than I was taking two English classes.

The intentional co-requisite design was new for most students and unique for courses at Butler. From my observations during the interviews, students did not appear bothered with any apparent inconsistency from either advisors or instructors as to the concurrent requirement. Student responses of how they perceived the ALP class to be different from other courses pointed to class size, the collaborative and inclusive culture, and greater opportunity to review and practice basic skills as critical factors to their success in the course.

*Lisa* - It was definitely different..., but in a good way. We were able to connect more as a class since it wasn't such a big class, and we did more activities together, and we go more in depth with the reading and with our papers.

*Billy* – I don't really have other differences with how other classes compare to ALP because it was completely different from the other things I took at the time.

*Ann* - The class size for sure. I think we had maybe six, or a smaller class, so that was different. We got a lot of one on one time. We could ask any questions we needed to, and we could almost ask [Professor Baldwin] to show us anything that we were struggling with, [Professor Baldwin] could show us, or [Professor Baldwin] would ask us 'what do you guys need help with?' and [Professor Baldwin] would go over that in the class period which you can't get in a normal class.

*Samantha* – [Dr. Welch], like, touched base for both classes, so what was going on in one... it wasn't dramatically different. We'd go into the ALP class and into the other class and do something completely different, but then they went hand in hand; it was a pretty cool experience.

As students became more comfortable with the co-requisite design, relationships formed between students and the instructors in the ALP class created a familiar atmosphere which, for most students, were complementary factors they identified as having been helpful in the course.

*Billy* - A few aspects would be the climate was very helpful in organizing what we needed to do and when to do it. Having the ALP class right after Comp. I helped break down all those ideas that were thrown out in Comp. I; and, ah-ha, that helped me to understand those for the next day in Comp. I.

*Tim* - I mean it made me see differently how..., at first, when I started I thought it was just typical high school behavior, or like this is a stupid class..., I mean, this is going to make me feel bad, but it really didn't afterwards. Half-way through the semester my view on that changed. I felt more confident after taking it.

*Julie* - I know [Professor LeMay's] who for me explained Works Cited pages and how those were supposed to be formatted and provided us with the document on how to follow everything. I think that didn't only help us in Comp. I, but that's going to help us in future classes.

*Evette* - I liked the small atmosphere obviously, and then... I also liked being able to take two classes at once. They were back to back, and I thought that was really beneficial.

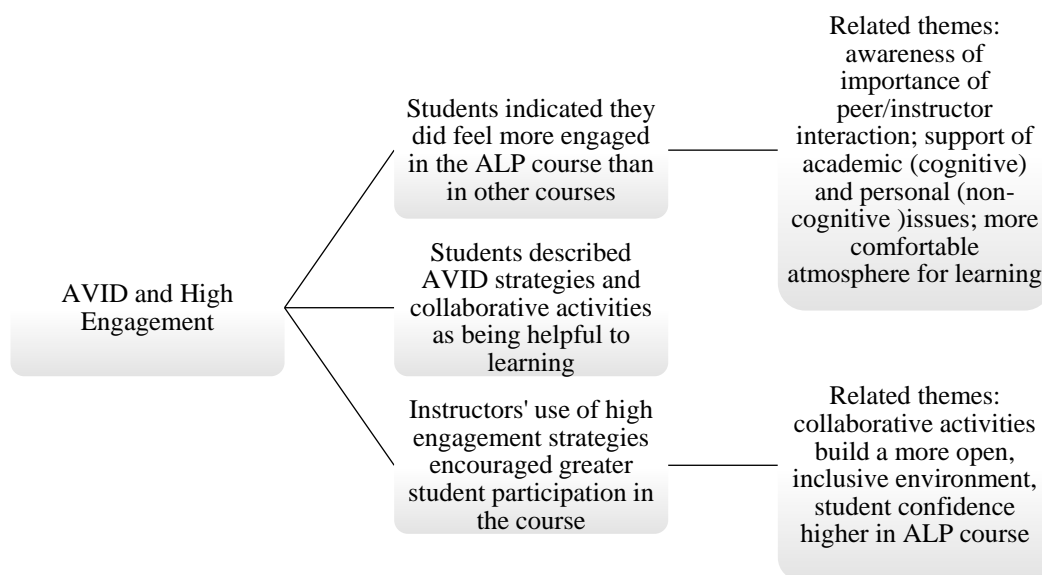


### **Perceptions of AVID and High Engagement Strategies**

Of the three main strategies employed in the overall ALP course set design — guided course design, high engagement, and high support — and from the results of the deductive coding process, I was most interested in understanding why students' perceptions of their levels of engagement had such high frequency rates during coding. I did not enter my analysis anticipating students to know specific terms and acronyms of the methodology, e.g., backwards design; AVID; Think, Pair, Share; or Socratic tutoring, or that knowing the terminology associated with the accelerated program would in fact have even been a factor in their success. However, I did believe students would be able to elaborate about what they perceived to be the designs, activities, and methods enabling them to engage more in the course, with peers, and the instructors as they talked about their experiences.

#### **Themes: AVID and High Engagement Strategies**

Through their own accounts, the levels of engagement students experienced in the ALP class were observable factors in their persistence and success. After analysis of the data related to students' perceptions of how AVID high engagement strategies factored as having been critical to their overall success in the course, the following themes emerged:

**Figure 4.2***AVID and High Engagement*

During the interviews, students seemed more enthusiastic when talking about activities that had them engaged in both peer-to-peer as well as larger class groups. Thus, without specifically stating that a specific AVID strategy used in the class (though some students did) was a factor in their level of engagement in the class, I determined students would be able to describe a practice or specific activity which helped them engage more with learning and with the class.

*Mark* - [Dr. Burns] makes sure that people get in groups and talk to each other and makes sure that you, like, talk to the other people; he doesn't sit there and lecture the whole time. [Dr. Burns] would normally just have people number off one through... however many groups he wanted. [Dr. Burns would] do it that way, or [Dr. Burns] did lines where we'd face each other, read off a prompt, and we each would discuss what we think about it. I think [Dr. Burns] called it Speed Dating.

*Tim* - [Professor Smith] told us an acronym..., I think it was WICOR, yeah, that's it..., so [Professor Smith] taught us that; [Professor Smith] taught us that [WICOR] revolved around anything in life like your upcoming job and people who are hiring other people to work for them... they use that system, so if you can get it down today in college, that it can help you in the future.

When asked specifically about what about the ALP class made them feel more engaged, students often gave very honest, compelling, very personal reactions to how engagement strategies affected overall learning.

*Beth* - ...trying to think how to put this in words, uh... like I was saying, I wasn't really engaged with anyone, but in this class every day it opened me up personally, like I was always to myself, always reserved most of the time, and it opened me because you're constantly talking to someone and you're thinking, oh, this is so much easier... it happens with everybody. And that helps us personally; opens our minds. We finally have a mouth to use... we're not afraid to use.

*Maria* – Okay... because of the levels of our English... we're not the same, but we're the same range, so we feel comfortable speaking to each other, and, uh, learn from our mistakes. So, yeah, that's what made me feel more comfortable compared to other classes.

*Tim* – I don't know, I just think I had a really good teacher, and a really good... like, people in my that class, that, I don't know, we were all there for the same reason. We weren't there because our coach put us in that class or someone put us in; it's because we wanted to better ourselves for our future.

*Crystal* – Well, we pretty much just had the group work with two or three people, and with different groups each week. That makes it help us know people more in the class.

There were specific AVID high engagement strategies students mentioned, but students tended to best respond to strategies that resonated with some level of relevance to their own experiences or learning and that had them involved in collaborative activities with peers.

*Ann* – Groups. We did group projects here and there, and we would have to talk to one another. After we did something, it was like, okay, you need to discuss with this person. We're like, oh, gosh, oh no! And there was this activity called Speed Dating that was an activity we would do... like, we learn something, and then, alright, now stand in two lines in front of one another and tell each other what you learned. So, we were like, okay, and she related it to the topic, but every question we were asked was different. So, you know, everybody started to laugh because we had different remarks, and it helped us all open up which I found interesting because everybody was pretty nervous in that class, like nobody wanted to talk, but then everybody was like, okay, I can do this!

*Tim* – [Professor Smith] brought in current events topics, and since my major is political science, I really liked what was going on 'cause the election was going on right then, so [Professor Smith] brought in that kind of stuff and got us engaged. It wasn't like you just opened a book and you read a story and write a paper about it from something in 1960, it was everything was like going on around you, so you were engaged...

*Beth* – [Dr. Jones] would put us in groups to do a presentation... just a quick presentation of what we'd come up with. At times, we would have to just come up with whatever we felt... just sort of go with the flow of the presentation... [Dr. Jones] didn't give us a specific thing on what to do. We would also have time when we would do essays and correct each other's in our little groups.

*Lisa* – We always did group work and we had the teacher there all of the time to help when we needed it. The teacher I have now for English is not a full-time teacher so we frequently get told “time outside of class is my time, so I don't feel like it's my job to make sure I'm constantly answering emails.”

As the semester progressed for students in the ALP class, it became clear that students felt much more confident with the collaborative atmosphere of the class and began to recognize how that atmosphere and their engagement with it affected their learning.

*Tim* – It was the type of class where we all talked and worked in groups. I would add different ideas to the class, like whatever I thought I would just say. A class that actually gets to talk to each other and everyone else and interacts, then you actually can get things done faster and learn more too.

*Maria* – [Dr. Burns] would make us go up on the board a lot, just like on the spot, so that got me more engaged. And [Dr. Burns] made everyone answer the question... now that I'm thinking about it, we had to collaborate a ton with each other, like any question [Dr. Burns] would ask us, like “well, now collaborate with your partner,” and [Dr. Burns] would assign a partner and we'd talk about it. [Dr. Burns] would go from each partner to each person and talk about it even more, so it made people... you had to talk in class.

*Julie* – It wasn't just about English; it was more about the college experience. It was like getting you comfortable with what going to classes and, like our teacher was really good about making a point that “you need to come to class” and do that kind of stuff. I don't know; it just made me more comfortable with like even going to my Art class because that's a big class... so, it just got me more comfortable in that kind of setting.

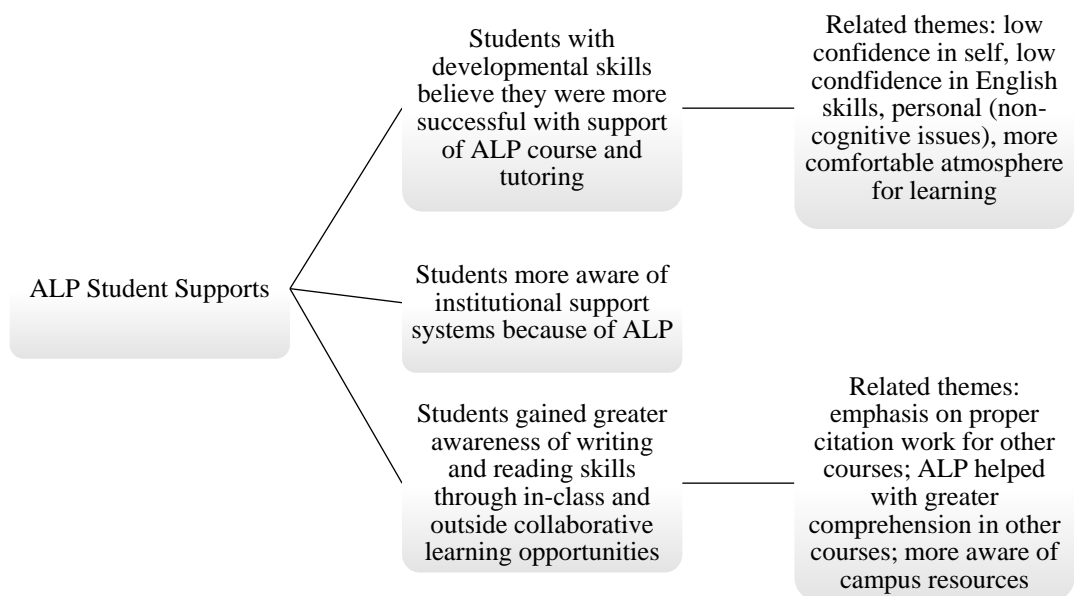
### **Perceptions of Tutoring and Supports for ALP Students**

During the process of gathering my data it became apparent there were various interpretations of what mandatory tutoring came to mean among instructors for the 32 ALP English sets. Determined during the developmental task force meetings, all ALP instructors utilized a common syllabus template within the institution's CANVAS learning management software (a course shell is required for all Butler courses) which included links to the OWL (Butler's online writing lab), information for accessing Butler's tutoring centers, as well as the individual instructor requirements to students for utilizing the tutoring services. Though there was verbal consensus among the developmental English instructors for having students seek additional support mechanisms, several factors affected a consistent, across-all-sections requirement for mandatory tutoring or outside supports. Minutes from several meetings of the developmental education task force indicated there was a lack of clarity among instructors for how to best meet the requirement given certain factors. Informal, follow-up discussions with several of the ALP instructors also confirmed they understood the challenge to make this requirement consistent for all students. These factors included (but were not limited to) set institutional tutoring hours in English which conflicted with students' academic and work schedules (a common issue for many

students), student self-awareness and fear of having to go to a tutoring lab, and instructors adopting a one-on-one tutoring approach during the ALP class due to smaller class populations and class schedules. Because of these issues, instructors compensated by using other tutoring methods including the OWL, Butler's Online Writing Lab (staffed by both full and part-time English faculty); office hours, email correspondence, classroom time for one-on-one and peer tutoring groups; and by encouraging students to form study groups outside of class.

**Themes: ALP student supports**

Even with the informal structure to tutoring and support, student comments seemed to confirm that having some level of access to additional support (even when it was part of the actual class period) was beneficial and a factor to their success. Though the data gave no indication which specific tutoring support mechanism (the in-person lab, a study group of peers, meeting with the instructor, or an online writing lab) was most significant, the results trended more positively than negatively. As well, it is noteworthy that when students spoke of tutoring and additional supports, they spoke of them in collaborative settings with peers, other students (outside of class), and instructors. After analysis of the data regarding students' perceptions of mandatory tutoring and additional outside supports as having been factors to their overall success in the course. These themes are shown in Figure 4.3 below:

**Figure 4.3***ALP Student Supports*

Yet, given the randomness of the intended tutoring strategy, students did utilize additional supports and perceived these to be helpful. Records from both of Butler's face-to-face tutoring labs as well as the OWL, Butler's online writing lab, indicated that all 12 interviewed students utilized either the face-to-face labs or the OWL a minimum of six times during the semester.

*Jake* - We had to use the OWL, the online writing lab. We also had NetTutor, and then we had campus tutoring. We had to pick one place where we had to sit there for an hour and discuss. And you know, no one really uses resources on campus. They don't realize it is there, which I... it was really helpful.

*Billy* - I also took my papers to the tutoring lab. There's this guy in there; he was really good about... he was younger, so he knew where I was coming from with some of my view points, and they were also not judgmental... so like they knew.



When we took it in there, they would be like, okay, you need to correct this and this and this, but they would sit down with us and explain why we needed to put our period here instead of here because... they made it make more sense to you.

*Beth* - ALP helped a lot because ALP made you get out of your box. You're in your box, and they made you get out and do other things. So everybody was like, well, I have to take this because it's for a grade; I have to go do this [tutoring lab].

*Maria* - I have a really good friend in there [ALP class]. [She] and I got together a lot to work on our papers, and we went to the tutoring lab for all that. We hung out a lot to write our papers and looked at each other's papers to edit together, and then we studied together.

And students who did face obstacles to attend outside tutoring sessions found ways to compensate and seek supports of their own.

*Samantha* - I've, actually from the ALP class, met my friend, [student in same class], now, and we always sat together in class because we were both at the same level, so we would always go to each other's house, proofread our papers, and then I did go to tutoring after I figured out where it was. And another source that I have is [Ms. Benet] in the library. Any time I had to do source work, I'd have [Ms. Benet] go ahead and help me revise my papers if anything was missing, and so she would tell me, hey, this is missing; you need to make sure this is fixed. So I did overall utilize all of those [outside supports] and now going into other classes, I still go to tutoring. I really appreciate just from the one class understanding that there's more sources that just the students and the teacher himself in the classroom.

*Julie* – I found the course rather challenging. I felt the best help I had was from the teacher being one on one with me instead of making me do it directly on my own.

*Crystal* – There was a learning center, yeah, it's the tutoring center. You know, you go in there and talk to other students; they're not adults, so they're other students that to there to help us learn. There was one time when we had to use one of the resources from campus.

*Ann* – I met my teacher more. I used that because I felt more confident with using her because [Professor Baldwin] knew what the paper needed, right? Like with everyone else, they didn't know exactly what... I was afraid of that so I didn't use them very much.

*Tim* – When we did our group work, we often met in the computer lab to finish our work, and [Professor Smith], well, we could visit [Professor Smith's] office and talk about our papers.

### **Additional Factors to Success**

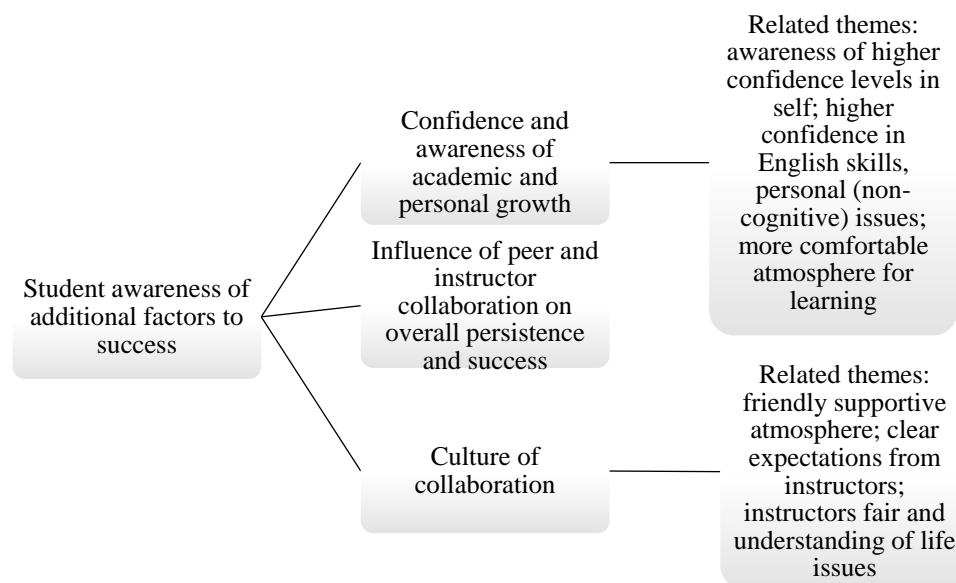
To varying degrees, students did perceive the three-pronged strategy which Butler implemented in the ALP course set as having contributed to their overall success, yet within the overall student narrative there were additional factors which lay just below the surface of the narrative, and which, at a more personal level to students, became very meaningful factors to their persistence and success in the course. These factors were apparent at both a cognitive and non-cognitive level and, perhaps, made lasting impacts on students. Of these, it was clear that the relationships students built among peers and with individual instructors was key.

## Student Awareness of Academic and Personal Growth

Although in meetings with the developmental English instructors we discussed concepts such as “grit” and “growth-mindset” (Dweck, 2006) as possible results to emerge from our strategies, we had not developed a meaningful rubric that would provide us with any measurable or accurate data. I believed there would be additional factors resulting from our ALP design, and I determined these data points could come from student responses and their personal experiences. Many of my observational notes pointed to the confident manner by which the students could talk about their experiences in relationship to the three strategies. Without naming specific strategies, the students could articulate their relationships to them and the strategies’ effect upon them. Figure 4.4 below shows the additional factors students revealed during the interview which grew out of their ALP experiences:

**Figure 4.4**

### *Additional Factors to Student Success*



Students noted several differences between the ALP course and other courses they had taken. A smaller class size (the ALP sections were capped at 12 students), their awareness of the skills levels of others in the class, and the collaborative activities used in the class were important factors, among others, to the students.

*Billy* - I didn't have as much confidence in myself, uh, until about before midway... after the first quarter of the semester, I started to feel more confident and believing that I would be successful. As for the why, I do not know. I just felt that way; I just had a... I guess you would say a different vibe after taking that course. It was definitely different, but I just, I just changed after taking it.

*Beth* - I felt safe. At first college, English in college is a little challenging for me than in high school, so I feel a little safe to have two English classes with the same teacher and the same classmates.

*Lisa* - You feel like a tight-knit group. You could really say anything; you, uh, it just really had that atmosphere that was different from other classes.

*Jake* - There was... you had different sections of learning that you could comprehend faster. You know there was this group project where you would work with groups, and then there was the one on one with the teacher, and just throughout the whole course you learn something new every day that you can apply to your other classes which, you know, it's interesting, it's neat!

*Tim* - I felt like I knew what I needed to do. We did a lot of reading along with the essays and that was tough, but I kind of got into a pattern that I knew what we would be doing... that was good because I didn't have to guess at what I was

supposed to do; that's stressful for me, and, especially with work... yeah, I mean, I just felt comfortable because I knew what I needed to do.

Students also seemed to have a sense the curricular structure of the ALP course set and its principle of backwards design was integral to their work in the class. Most of the students, though somewhat confused with the co-requisite design at first, pointed to the structure as having been an asset to their learning and overall success.

*Tim* - We would go into class and, like, oh, we have so much information to learn, but once you applied it, that, uh, you already learned, you grasped the information really quickly which was one of the big context clues that we all used that helped us a lot and with our regular English class as well.

*Evette* - They [Professor LeMay] explained more in detail what the actual main class is about... [Professor LeMay] would explain more about fragments, grammar, punctuation stuff, things that wouldn't get explained in the actual Comp. I class because you're expected to already know that.

### **Instructor Influence on Student Learning**

Although the experiences concerning relationships built between students and instructors were significant to how students perceived high engagements strategies, there were factors unique to the student-instructor relationship.

*Billy* – More of a, uh, guide I would say. A guide, meaning, uh, guiding us through exactly how to properly do everything of what college-level material is supposed to be instead of old practices in high school... [Dr. Burns] just made it more fun and engaging because, well, [Dr. Burn's] a very funny person, so it just... well, without [Dr. Burns] being who [Dr. Burns] is would be less entertaining and less engaging.

*Samantha* – [Dr. Welch] played a big part in it because [Dr. Welch] made sure the... [Dr. Welch] had the energy for everyone in the class, and just... [Dr. Welch] made us... [Dr. Welch] made you feel welcome. Rather than making it tasks and everything throughout the semester, [Dr. Welch] actually made it entertaining. I mean if you asked [Dr. Welch] to help you with something, [Dr. Welch] always did. [Dr. Welch] never said “no” to helping explain something like reformatting a thesis statement.

*Lisa* – If I’m sitting with my teacher, and [Professor Baldwin] is telling me exactly what this is, and, you know, I just learn better. That’s how I learned more with [Professor Baldwin’s] role because [Dr. Burns] was actually engaged with one another in the class. [Dr. Burns] tried to build a relationship with every student there just so everyone would feel welcome and they’re not so shy anymore. [Dr. Burns] played a big part in that... building relationships with one another.

*Crystal* – I think my biggest impact of him was when [Dr. Jones] discussed his journey through college as far as... like, [Dr. Jones] dropped out a couple of times and then didn’t come back, then just decided to try college again, and [Dr. Jones] has done that a couple of times. So it’s always been a thing like... it’s never too late to go back to what you really want to do. Hearing that from somebody who has actually succeeded, and it’s not somebody who just conceded right away, I think that left a big impact on me.

*Evette* – Definitely not doubting myself... anytime. Anytime I think I’d do something wrong and erase and try to fix it until I think I have it right, but [Professor Smith] helped me to understand, like, you don’t have it all wrong. You

only have to understand what part you're missing. That helped me zone in on myself in his class and other classes to, like, this is what I'm missing; I don't have to start from the beginning.

*Beth* – [Professor LeMay] knew us pretty well before we knew [Professor LeMay].

*Ann* – [Professor Baldwin's] pretty energetic, so even if you did come in kind of tired, it was cool experience because [Professor Baldwin] was very upbeat.

[Professor Baldwin] just wanted everyone to do good, and if you weren't doing to good, [Professor Baldwin] would just try to talk to you whenever no one else was around if that was comfortable with you. [Professor Baldwin] would just make sure that you were doing the work even if you weren't trying to do your work.

[Professor Baldwin] would encourage you to do it, like [Professor Baldwin] wants you to do it more.

*Crystal* – [Dr. Jones] just seemed to believe in us. I mean, [Dr. Jones] didn't let us get out of stuff... [Dr. Jones] was a hard-ass when [Dr. Jones] need to be, but [Dr. Jones] was also very understanding... as long as you kept in touch and [Dr. Jones] knew what was going on, [Dr. Jones] was just very understanding.

*Jake* – [Dr. Welch] didn't like play a, you know, an instructor, in the class. [Dr. Welch] almost seemed like... this might be weird, but like a friend almost because [Dr. Welch] would sit down with us, and [Dr. Welch] would have us all put our desks together and sit like a group with us.

### **A Culture of Collaboration**

Most poignant to this researcher were the experiences students shared regarding at what point in the semester they felt they would be successful in the course. It became clear

that not just the strategies, but the consistency of the environment of the class in which students thrived was its own unique factor. Students described a classroom culture built on care and inclusivity. This environment fostered positive academic outcomes; additionally, students noted specific, personal learning outcomes resulting from their interactions within the ALP course.

For some students, seemingly small factors were vital — the smaller class size was an important factor to many; others mentioned the freedom to ask multiple questions as essential to their learning.

*Ann* - I came from a school with twenty-eight kids... like twenty-eight in my graduating class. I was really nervous about getting to know people and that kind of thing. And it [the ALP course] was more like a small-town environment, and that's what I was used to.

*Maria* - I mean, you can ask questions, but not everybody would ask those questions we were asking in front of a big class because... they aren't dumb questions, they were questions we should probably know how to do by this time, but, yeah, I liked it.

*Ann* - It was more like a friend [the class], family environment. We all got really close; it wasn't just about the English class. We got to know one another at a personal level. I'm even in a class, my Comp. II with another kid... I know him; I know things about his family... like what's going on in his personal life.

This collaborative culture created, for most of the students interviewed, the environment where they found new levels of self-confidence in their abilities to do college-level work. Though not often reflected in their responses, the students appeared eager to respond to



questions and were articulate commenting on their own experiences during the interviews. Students perceived their higher levels of self-confidence were factors not only in their ability to complete the ALP course set, but also their other courses.

*Evette* – So throughout high school they said that college was going to be very hard, and, uh, it's going to be the hardest thing you're going to do, but after the first week I thought, this isn't going to be that bad! I can do this!

*Julie* – I'm like, okay, when I finally sat down when we did our group projects and we talked to one another, you're getting information from every student that's comprehending knowledge differently. So that made us like, whoa, that makes sense now. And then like, that's when all of us, well, I think personally all of us in the class were like, this is going to be easy! I was like now this makes sense. Now I know how to do it from here on out. So everything I learning in ALP, everything I was taught like communication, reading skills, speaking, grammar... I applied it to my other classes which made connections and made me do better my second semester than I did my first semester.

*Crystal* – I'm like, okay, I'm not, you know, fresh out of high school, but I can still get this done, and then I think it was more so after the semester because it was my second semester of school... being able to see that I was actually doing well over all in school, and not having a struggle and just being back at school, uh, I think it's cool. Being back at Butler has really helped me understand there are teachers who are for you, who will help, and so in ALP class and any other class I've had, I've had all very good teachers. Having them right behind me, like always offering their

help. Outside of their classes has been like... keep going to school, you're going to make it, you're almost done... so.

*Billy* – Well, the ALP class definitely made me feel more successful, like I can go to college. There were certain students I knew that couldn't go to college because of certain reasons, and it made me think, I can do this... yeah, I can really do this.

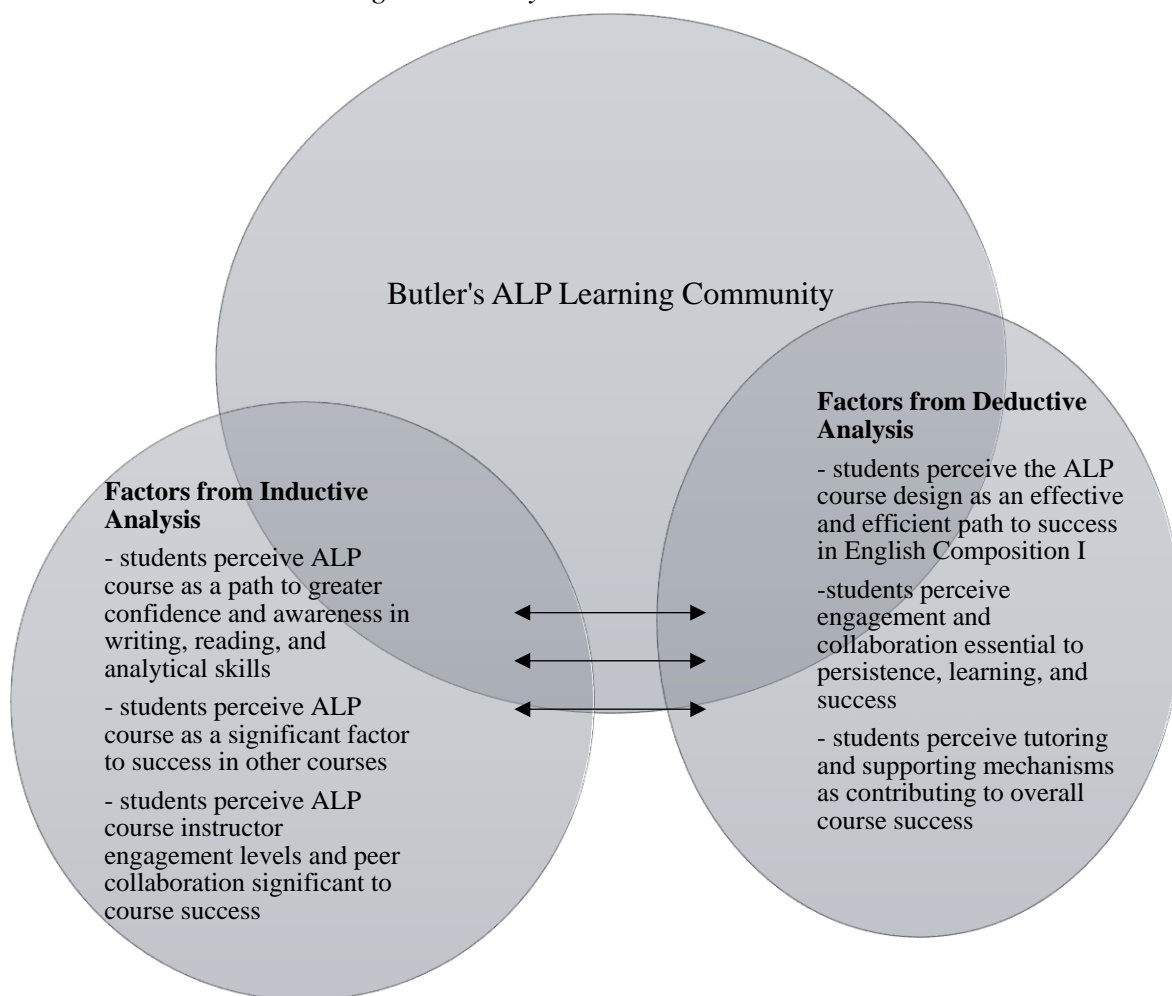
*Samantha* – Right. It's just like after [Dr. Welch] made us feel at ease. [Dr. Welch] would help us. If we were willing to put in the work, [Dr. Welch] was going to help us out. It was all about if you're willing to put it in, you're going to get stuff out in return. And that's, like, when I knew. It wasn't going to be that difficult. It's definitely going to be a challenge, but it wasn't going to be overwhelming.

### **Final Thoughts on Analysis**

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) concluded the goal for the researcher in narrative inquiry is “the search for form” (p.153), the structure holding the story together in a cohesive whole. In a work of literature, the structural boundaries of beginning, middle, and end are often intertwined but seldom recognizable or measurable in their constituent parts. Also difficult to measure, this study tested whether the “form” which emerged from the narratives of 12 students matched the theoretical form which was the ALP class and its three intentional strategies. However, a recognizable form materialized; for students, it was the form of an ALP community. Its boundaries — the three intended strategies — were also intertwined and significant to the whole. But there was more to the story.

Caine et al. (2013) cautioned “that the story told is not fixed text; it is composed in, and out of, the living” (p. 578), and Clandinin (2006) further noted that for every text there is relative social context. For the 12 students interviewed for this study, the learning

community created within the ALP class defined that context. Hinchman & Hinchman (1997) suggested “Narratives, then are what constitute community. They explain a group to itself, legitimate its deeds and aspirations, and provide important benchmarks for non-members trying to understand the group’s cultural identity” (p. 235). Though the strategies did associate with students’ perceptions of what helped them persist and succeed during the fall 2016 semester, the students’ “story” spoke more deeply of the inter-relatedness of the three strategies, of other factors which emerged from the three strategies, and of the influence of the strategies beyond the ALP classroom. Figure 4.5 below displays the shared relationships of the factors overlapping into the ALP community.

**Figure 4.5***Butler's ALP Learning Community*

I believe their “story” confirmed my hypothesis that students would perceive the three-pronged, strategic approach to Butler’s accelerated English program was a factor to their overall persistence and success; moreover, their collective narrative indicated the approach cultivated additional factors such as student confidence levels, student opportunities for greater instructor and peer collaboration in learning, and students transferring skills learned in the ALP class to other college courses. These factors fashioned, for students, the Butler ALP Learning Community. For this study, I had asked

students to tell me the story of their community for which they were the authorities (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); I discovered I had listened to Butler's story.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

Clandinin (2006) emphasized the more poignant questions which the researcher engaged in narrative inquiry need clarify for an audience. Reaching the end of a narrative, audiences may often be left wondering “‘so what’ and ‘who cares’” (p. 52). These questions are best answered by turning the attention to the “social significance” (p. 52) which emerge from the story. Ultimately, in this study, I sought to answer the question — *how did students who completed the accelerated learning program (ALP) perceive the three-part, structured approach to the course as having been the contributing factor(s) that helped them to persist and complete the course successfully?* I wanted to determine whether the accelerated learning model Butler Community College designed and implemented to assist its developmental English students in reaching the college-level English within one semester was successful from the students’ perspective. We had the quantitative student data from the semester including GPA, retention, and completion rates, but numbers and percentages told only one part of the story for Butler. This study revealed the other part.

Prior to the ALP pilot semester in 2013, several discussions occurred between the developmental English planning committee, the English department, and the departmental and division level administrators. The focus on much of these discussions were of issues related to scheduling and linking course sections through Butler’s BANNER system, determining optimal student numbers for the concurrent EG 101 course, setting retention and success goals, and choosing and training instructors committed to the ALP curricular design and methodology. However, we were also suspect of a course design focused solely

on efficiency thus conceivably affecting the intended rigor and quality of the college-level experience. With that in mind, and having recently become an AVID higher education institution, we deliberately infused what we knew to be effective high engagement strategies (Cuseo, 2015a; Cuseo, 2015b) in the ALP course methodology along with affective strategies from Dweck's (2006) book on growth mindset. Thus, it was our intent to build a program to move students more quickly through their developmental coursework, to utilize multiple AVID high-engagement strategies in the curriculum, and to support student learning outside the classroom with intentional tutoring opportunities.

During the original ALP pilot, ALP faculty members created an ALP Community of Practice team and began meeting monthly to review overall progress, discuss issues in practices, determine ways to best support students outside of class, discuss and build rubrics for student assessment, and to norm student writing samples. Their goal was to ensure the rigor and quality of the course were meeting the cognitive expectations of the course and that they were identifying better ways to support any non-cognitive student issues. However, for me, there was a missing element to the data supporting Butler's ALP program. To truly learn what the critical factors were to success in the model, I knew we needed to listen thoughtfully to students who had successfully navigated the two-course set and to let them tell us their story about their experiences. My decision to utilize Narrative Inquiry as the methodology proved most helpful for this. Becoming a co-participant in the students' narratives (Caine et al., 2013) allowed me access to their lives as they perceived them during their semester as ALP students and aided my ability to better tell their story.

We knew data from other program models (Adams et al., 2009; Cho et al., 2012; Hern, 2012) showed positive results, but, again, these structural designs did not wholly

consider the human element. Community college students, especially those who require levels of remediation, truly face cognitive and non-cognitive challenges when entering higher education, but their potentials to learn and succeed are no different than other students. Jenkins and Cho (2014) emphasized how much “students benefit from non-academic supports that help them create social relationships, clarify goals for college and careers, develop college know-how, and address conflicting demands of work, family, and college” which should “be offered in a way that is integrated into students’ primary academic experience” (p. 9). The developmental English faculty understood the necessity to introduce tutoring as part of the ALP curriculum and to make it as purposeful as possible.

Through this study, I confirmed the 12 students who participated in the interviews did respond positively to the three strategies as having factored into their overall success — quite simply, they felt genuinely engaged in all aspects of the class. Though most admitted there was more work with the concurrent format; however, as they progressed through the semester (their narrative timeline), they preferred, and were often excited about, the opportunity to complete the work in less time to move efficiently to additional college-level coursework.

*Maria* - ...something that I found quite exciting... you know, you’re taking two English classes back to back, and you’re all in this English class with 25 people the most, and you’re sitting there, and then you go to this ALP thing, and there’s only a certain number of students in English that go to ALP. You’re like, whoa, why is it just these people? Why isn’t everybody taking it? It’s like something I never knew which is why certain people got into the ALP program. Were they chosen ones? I



found that kind of exciting because everybody was like, what's ALP? You know, we had our English class; we're all friends, and everyone who's in ALP is in English together. It's like, what's due next class? And other students are like, what's ALP. So we have to explain what ALP is to them. They're like, well, I never took a class like that which, for me... I'm taking a class that no one has ever taken before which I found very exciting.

*Tim* – I really appreciate that you combined it with English Comp. I. Having it work hand-in-hand with the other class I think is why I was so successful in English Comp. I. And then having the break between English Comp. I and English Comp. II... you carry that... the focus on your struggles in the ALP class... that helped me to be successful in English Comp. II. So I don't think I would have passed English Comp. I and English Comp. II had they not been integrated together.

The students perceived the specific high engagement activities which fostered an atmosphere of inclusivity, activity, and personal responsibility to have been the most significant factor of the three in the course design. As *Julie* indicated:

... we were able to connect more as a class since it wasn't such a big class, and we did more activities together... we got more in depth with the reading and our papers.

*Crystal* – I feel like ALP should be offered to a lot of students if they get the chance to; I feel like it would be a neat experience for others to go through. Everybody learns differently, and I just feel that at some point in their lives when they might drop college, they would need to take that class.

My findings supported what Pruett and Absher (2015) recommended regarding developmental students and how their levels of engagement relate to retention and eventual success — “Students who persist in college ask questions in class and contribute to class discussions, make class presentations, and work with other students on project during or outside the class” (p. 39). Recognizing from their narratives that engagement was critical to both the students’ navigation through the concurrent courses and their participation in various support systems, the argument might be made that all Butler developmental programs should introduce purposeful strategies to engage students in the whole learning process.

Not surprisingly, when prompted to detail the levels of engagement within the ALP course, student experience narratives encompassed both personal and collective perceptions.

*Evette* – The thing that I liked the most was anytime we were doing a really good job, or we actually comprehended after [Professor Smith] explained something, [Professor Smith] would acknowledge that.

Thus, the common narrative of the student interview cohort indicated the creation its own unique community of place and interaction. This supported the argument in my Rationale (see page 45 in Chapter 3) from Carr (1986) in Hinchman and Hinchman (1997) regarding the use of the plural “we” when speaking as part of a specific community.

*Maria* - I do like the smaller classes, but that’s just me. I mean, I came to college thinking it was going to be like the movies... big ‘ole stadium classes, but it’s really not, which I like. I don’t like having a lot of people, but then I liked how we did the team work with editing each other’s papers.

*Tim* - ...we were all there for the same reason. We were learning from one another; we were learning from the teacher, but then the teacher was learning stuff from us, too, which I found very satisfying because she would be like “you know, I’ve never thought about it that way,” so we taught the teacher even though we were learning... that was really interesting. I found that very cool.

Fundamentally, what the 12 students experienced during their ALP semester was finding themselves in a community which both engaged them at a more personal level and supported them in their learning.

### **Considerations and Challenges**

Though the study revealed significant connections between the strategies and student success at Butler, I understand this study neither confirms a panacea for Butler developmental English students nor for development English programs at other institutions. Bailey (2008) reminded us of how little we still know about students in developmental programs. It did, however, offer supporting data to what Jaggars et al. (2015) and Hern (2012) found for students enrolled in more structured, accelerated programs and their abilities to persist and succeed. The results from Jaggars et al. (2015) study of three accelerated models emphasized “compressing or shortening the student’s sequence while providing academic and affective supports that help him or her succeed in that more rigorous environment” (p. 15) of the college-level course. Butler’s results also mirrored two critical principles from Hern’s (2012) California study: one, developmental students are more likely to persist and complete in a more structured, shorter pathway to college-level work; and, two, intentional support mechanisms developed around “intervening early with struggling students, grading policies that allow students to recover from a weak start,

and building in time for one-on-one work with students” (p. 64) are an integral feature of the program.

As well, results confirmed what Cuseo (2015a), Cuseo (2011), Adelman (2006), and Conley (2005) stated about engaging students in all aspects of their coursework to encourage greater ownership, self-advocacy, and a greater commitment to learning.

*Mark* - I think once I got back my first big paper, I realized that I was going to do good, and I was proud of myself. It gave me confidence because I've always had low confidence every time I turn in a paper... I thought the ALP class helped me do well on my paper... that was my biggest moment.

Personal ownership and commitment surfaced as unexpected outcomes from my results: the students' recognition of higher confidence levels and success as college-level students. This outcome can be linked to the purposeful inclusion of multiple student tutoring supports students identified as helpful. When students did make use of either in-class or out-of-class support systems, including tutoring, they did perceive these to have been helpful to their successful completion of the course (Daws & Schiro, 2008; Rose et al., nd).

*Beth* - ALP helped a lot because ALP made you get out of your box. You're in your box, and they made you get out and do other things... the fact that [Dr. Jones] made us get out of our box and use our resources the campus provides helps a lot... ALP was first to tell me, hey we have all these resources: use them, you need them; they're helpful because sometimes teachers won't be available to help you.

Unique to this study were students' perceptions of a more honest and companion-like relationship between students and instructors.

*Ann* – I would say that I got to know the people in the class more because not all of the Comp. I class is taking the ALP class, so I feel like I am closer to that group of ALP people than the other kids in the Comp. I class.

Though not novel, it is significant that such close bonds were established earlier in the semester and continued. The student's perception of the ALP class providing that sense of continuity was apparent in the majority of the students' narratives.

*Billy* – ... the climate was very helpful in organizing what we needed to do and when to do it. Having the ALP class right after Comp. I helped break down all those ideas that were thrown out in Comp. I; and, ah-ha, that helped me to understand those for the next day in Comp. I... if you took the ALP class before, like in two different semesters, I would have forgotten everything. I would have needed more confidence in Comp I to succeed.

The fact that students went directly to their ALP class with the same instructor would seem the most likely reason for the phenomenon; however, students' responses indicated more affective causes. These centered around instructors' willingness to share personal academic history, their abilities to set clear expectations (often in collaboration with their students) of both the course content and policies, and their abilities to create an atmosphere where students feel both welcomed and nurtured.

*Lisa* – I felt more engaged in that class than others because I could ask any question I wanted to at that time in order to do good.

*Ann* – That's really great for a class to be fun and educat[ed] at the same time. And I am still in contact with that teacher. I think it's because of that class, so... and

[Professor Baldwin] was also my Comp. II teacher. [Professor Baldwin's] also written for me some, uh, recommendation letters for some scholarships.

However compelling the perceptions' unique linkages to the strategies, there remains a central set of questions regarding these results. The first of the two questions concerns a core definition of engagement and the levels at which and to which students are truly "engaged" in their own learning process. Butler was fortunate to have become an AVID higher educational institution prior to launching its ALP English program, but prior to AVID, Butler instructors had obviously been engaging students in learning opportunities to some level. But AVID offered two critical insights to student engagement and instruction at Butler: first, AVID helped us give better identity and structure to the practices and strategies which further supported overall student engagement. In some cases, instructors discovered these were strategies they already used. Through the AVID training, they learned how recognize what strategies worked for specific sets of students, and they learned how to make them more purposeful to student learning within their own curricula. Second, AVID training emphasized that engagement, when paired with purposeful and accessible student supports, created optimal levels of student engagement — levels which saw students becoming their own academic advocates.

*Billy* - ...but that was one of the most engaging classes I've had here. It's the discussions we had within the class, like we all had to participate; we didn't have to, but we all did because it was... well, the other students realized it would help them if they did engage like I did myself. I thought it would actually help, so I would engage.

This second point supported what Caine et al. (2013) recognized about the social space within the narrative to which “participants relate and live through stories that speak of their experience” (p. 577). The challenge surrounding engagement for an institution like Butler was not only whether students perceived they were aware they felt engaged in their learning, but also whether the awareness of their being engaged in their learning was actually helping them persist and be successful. CCSSE data could provide data for the first indicator; higher levels of student success and completion should be the relevant companion to it. Ultimately, their narratives offered a glimpse of their progressive timeline from an early awareness of a lack of skills and confidence to greater self-confidence and success. Their narratives revealed how their interactive engagement with content, peers, and instructor made for them a known and more stable learning environment. And their narratives told of how they found and utilized a common set of supports. Their stories proved most compelling to Butler’s problem of practice: we wanted to know if what we had designed would work and why. The data herein offered at least one glimpse to the positive.

### **Implications for Practice and Future Research**

As one of Butler’s timeless institutional values — *Students Finish What They Start* — it was the intent of the English department to develop an efficient and effective program for developmental English students comprising rigor, engagement, and support. During initial meetings in 2012 and as we moved toward scaling what became the Butler ALP English program, the developmental English task force well understood the need to not only build a solid program, but also to determine a multi-level assessment model. This

study grew out of those early meetings as the committee understood part of the model included the need for student feedback.

Understanding there remains a greater likelihood students will drop out and not return if they are relegated to a series of non-credit bearing courses requiring additional time and money, Butler continued to study and explore opportunities to enhance their developmental education programs. This study offered a first glimpse into student perceptions of practices which did prove effective for student persistence and college-level success within one department; moreover, it implied that success as having come from an institutional-wide commitment and support to developmental education as being mission critical. At Butler, we determined from the current research in accelerated programming and our institutional involvement in AVID that the use of multiple strategies would be more effective at creating opportunities for student to persist and succeed in ALP. We adopted the three-pronged approach believing to some degree these factors would help students persist and complete. Because we now know students' perceptions did point to the three strategies as having been significant factors and that the strategies operating together produced additional factors students determined to be significant, the results of this study should support further development and assessment of the accelerated English program at Butler in three critical areas.

#### **“All-in” focus**

Bailey et al. (2015) strongly emphasized the need to design efficient programs and pathways for remedial students and noted the importance “to accelerate all students into college-level program-relevant coursework as quickly as possible” (p. 212). When scaling the ALP English program, Butler made the determination to go “all-in” retaining only two



stand-alone EG 060 for developmental students with unique scheduling circumstances. This approach accomplished three key effects. One, full-scaling helped with the scheduling of the concurrent course sets and instructor placement. Two, advising needed to be more well-informed of the ALP curricular design and more prescriptive when enrolling students who tested at remedial English levels. Three, greater collaboration among the English faculty (full-time and part-time) became more common as faculty worked to ensure quality support for the program and, specifically, for how to build greater curricular consistency and student opportunity among its tutoring support services.

### **Commit to engagement**

As an institution, Butler had committed to its AVID campus plan of having every instructor and advisor trained in WICOR and high engagement strategies.

Determining how to best infuse into classrooms high engagement strategies with an emphasis on activities which create collaborative learning opportunities in which all students participate into developmental education courses became a focus for Butler's faculty development team in 2015. It was clear from the interview data that high-engagement activities are not common across the institution.

*Jake* - ...like in my other classes it was... I mean, the instructor just usually talks for like most of the time, so you really don't have much... I mean, you can ask questions, but not everybody would ask those question we were asking [in ALP].

Levin & Kater (2013) keenly noted the importance of keeping an awareness of the balance between the perceptions instructors often have about how well they engage students in learning and students' actual perceptions of whether they are engaged. Student "persistence was much better in classrooms where instructors were perceived by students

as authorities in their subject area, and provided explicit instruction, imposed rigorous demands, provided consistent encouragement, and gave constructive feedback on their writing” (p. 94). Their data supported the findings of this study which emphasized the importance of instructors balancing college-level content knowledge and academic expectations with the support of non-cognitive issues often associated with developmental students.

### **Develop active networks of student support**

Hern and Snell (2013) pointed to the fact that “students come into the community college classroom with a history of uneven, fraught, and even traumatic educational experiences” (p. 26) for which most institutions feel unprepared. Community colleges must develop the mindset that any interaction between a student and the institution can and should be a tutoring/mentoring moment, especially for students in developmental pathways. This study revealed the capacity of an intentional collaborative atmosphere to form among students and instructors and affect student confidence, persistence, and eventual success. The data supported what Caine et al. (2013) suggested about the ability of narrative inquiry to offer “the possibility for understanding how the personal and social [interactions and experiences] are entwined over time” (p. 51) for students in this study. Thus, we can recognize this as a unique situation having emerged from the collective narrative created the opportunity “in which we catch the moment of curriculum making shape the stories lived and told” (p. 51). Collaboration among institutional divisions and campus systems could add greater dimension to overall student support. Offering and supporting multiple support mechanisms such as tutoring (in-class, instructor-led, peer-to-peer, online, or designated labs) mentoring (all student stakeholders), and making sure

students know of these options and ways to access them, creates a culture of collaboration campus wide. However, the capability to provide multiple mechanisms for student support both in and out of the classroom becomes a challenge if it is not an institution-wide priority and becomes an active practice for all employees. Cuseo (2012a) encouraged institutions to “adopt practices intentionally designed to overcome institutional inertia induced by isolated and insulated infrastructures” (p. 11).

Community colleges (as well as any higher education institution serving developmental English students) which have or are developing accelerated programs for English should consider these results not as exemplary, but as possible starting points...an additional piece to the developmental puzzle. Community colleges are unique in terms of service areas, student populations, and community/stakeholder partnerships, and each institution needs to determine what strategies would best serve students. But institutions understand the need to make developmental pathways more cost effective and efficient for students. This study suggests institutions should strongly consider using multiple strategies including program design, student engagement, and support mechanisms within the program, and, whatever the strategies, that institutions engage in periodic assessment of the effectiveness of those strategies including the students’ perspective.

### **Next Steps**

After this study, I intend to share it with Butler’s developmental education task force, the English department and interested departments of the institution with developmental programs, and with the institution at large. The message I plan to share is concise: high levels of engagement and student support should complement instructional methodologies throughout the institution. Realizing this plan means purposeful training.

All faculty should undergo Socratic tutor training to help them understand the multiple venues where tutoring occurs and how best to direct students in how to engage in them. Faculty should undergo training in how to establish and maintain more inclusive, collaborative classroom atmospheres. It should be the goal of Butler that all students would develop an “expectation for engagement” in all courses.

Both the Butler developmental education task force and the ALP English faculty should continue to assess the three-pronged strategy in overall design, methodology, and purpose. Tutoring mechanisms and engagement strategies need to be better defined within the program and the institution. These strategies should also be part of institutional and program assessment processes to determine what within the strategies are most effective as best practices. Though such qualitative data is essential, having additional quantitative data of these strategies would assist the institution with reports at the state level, with budgeting, and future program scheduling.

### **Final Thoughts**

For this researcher, this study has been bittersweet. I did not want my research to simply fulfill the requirements of a plan of study; I wanted it — at least to some degree — to have a positive effect on developmental student success in English. Having spent years in the developmental English classroom and having witnessed more frustration than success for students, the opportunity to pursue this type of study was timely. But this study is a mere piece in a very large developmental puzzle that continues to take shape within community colleges, so if it has contributed in some small way, it will have succeeded. For that I am pleased.

I also know much more might be done. Had I to begin the process again, I would approach the narrative inquiry method from a more phenomenological stance and conduct follow up interviews with students at both the midpoint and end of their next semesters to determine whether the strategies of high engagement and student support were continuing to be factors implicit in their persistence and success. A follow-up, roundtable discussion with all 12 participants would also have provided a significant perspective regarding the common narrative and would have further clarified the elements of time, place, and action common to each student's version of the narrative. Engaging a larger cohort of students with even greater numbers of non-traditional students might have exposed other factors our strategies did not address. Videotaping the interviews would also have revealed cues related to their confidence levels (often suggested in their body language and ease of answering prompts) and abilities to articulate about their experiences in Butler's ALP program. I believe students would have much more to reveal. I would want to know if the institution was meeting the expectations of students (who at one time bore very low confidence in their abilities) who now thrived in classroom environments where they felt invited to actively engage in their learning. Students with developmental needs should no longer believe that their path to success in higher education be either long or may lead to a dead end; we, as educators, must not only direct, but accompany them to and along that path.

## References

- Adams, P., Gearhart, S., Miller, R., & Roberts, A. (2009). The accelerated learning program: Throwing open the gates. *Journal Of Basic Writing, 28*(2), 50-69. Retrieved from <http://0-eds.b.ebscohost.com.library.unl.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=1393ce2b-7c3b-4877-9840-f5207ad19da3%40sessionmgr106&vid=6&hid=120>
- Adelman, C. (2006). *The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.
- Bailey, T. (2009). Challenge and opportunity: Rethinking the role and function of developmental education in community college. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 145*, 11–30.
- Bailey, T. R., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). *Redesigning america's community colleges: A clearer path to student success*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Bailey, T., Smith Jaggars, S., & Scott-Clayton, J. (2013). Characterizing the effectiveness of developmental education: A response to recent criticism. *CCRC Community College Research Center, Teacher's College, Columbia University*. Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/response-to-goudas-and-boylan.pdf>
- Bailey, T., Jeong, D. W., & Cho, S. W. (2010). Referral, enrollment, and completion in developmental education sequences in community colleges. *Economics of Education Review, 29*(2), 255–270. doi:10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.09.002.

- Barragan, M., & Cormier, M. S. (2013). Enhancing rigor in developmental education. *Inside Out: A Publication of the Scaling Innovation Project*, 1(4). Retrieved from <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/enhancing-rigor-in-developmental-education.pdf>
- Belfield, C., Jenkins, D., & Lahr, H. (April 2016). Is corequisite remediation cost-effective?: Early findings from tennessee. CCRC Research Brief, No. 62. *Community College Research Center, Columbia University*. Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/corequisite-remediation-cost-effective-tennessee.pdf>
- Belfield, C., & Crosta, P. M. (2012). Predicting success in college: The importance of placement tests and high school transcripts. CCRC Working Paper No. 42. *Community College Research Center, Columbia University*.
- Bettinger, E. P., Boatman, A., Long, B. T. (2013). Student supports: Developmental education and other academic programs, *The Future of Children*, (23)1, Postsecondary Education in the United States (SPRING 2013), Princeton University, pp. 93-115. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23409490>
- Bettinger, E., & Long, B. (2003). The effect of remediation on student outcomes: The plight of underprepared students in higher education (Working Paper, cited with authors' permission). Cleveland, OH: Case Western University.
- Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How college work: The cybernetics of academic organization and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Bonet, G., & Walters, B. R. (2016). High Impact Practices: Student engagement and retention. *College Student Journal*, 50(2), 224-235. Retrieved from <http://>

libmetafind1a.unl.edu:50081/ebsco-e-b/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=1409a6f0-2d4f-4438-ad7c-38c0f43abbc7%40sessionmgr101&vid=1&hid=104

Boylan, H. R. (2002). *What works: Research-based best practices in developmental education*. Boone, North Carolina: Continuous Quality Improvement Network with the National Center for Developmental Education, Appalachian State University.

Boylan, H. R., & Bliss, L. B. (1997). Program components and their relationship to student. *Journal Of Developmental Education*, 20(3), 2. Retrieved from <http://0-eds.a.ebscohost.com.library.unl.edu/ehost/delivery?sid=13307b84-6aff-4448-9ac7-5ee6b70cda28%40sessionmgr4006&vid=4&hid=4108&ReturnUrl=http%3a%2f%2fed.s.a.ebscohost.com%2fehost%2fdetail%2fdetail%3fsid%3d13307b84-6aff-4448-9ac7-5ee6b70cda28%2540sessionmgr4006%26vid%3d3%26hid%3d4108%26bdata%3dJnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl>

Bracco, K. R., Austin, K., Bugler, D., & Finkelstein, N. (2015). *Reforming developmental education to better support students' postsecondary success in the common core era*. San Francisco, California: WestEd. Retrieved from <https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/reforming-dev-ed.pdf>

Caine, V., Estefan, A., & Clandinin, D. J. (2013). A return to methodological commitment: Reflections on narrative inquiry. *Scandinavian Journal Of Educational Research*, 57(6), 574-586. doi:10.1080/00313831.2013.798833

Calcagno, J. C., Crosta, P., Bailey, T., & Jenkins, D. (2006). Stepping stones to a degree: The impact of enrollment pathways and milestones on community college student outcomes. CCRC Working Paper No. 4. *Community College Research Center*,



*Columbia University*. Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/stepping-stones-enrollment-pathways.pdf>

California Acceleration Project. (August 2015). Acceleration strategies that produce powerful results: A planning resource for community colleges. *The California Acceleration Project*. Retrieved from [http://accelerationproject.org/Portals/0/Documents/ Powerful%20Acceleration%20Strategies%20CAP.pdf?ver=2016-05-11-134003-230](http://accelerationproject.org/Portals/0/Documents/Powerful%20Acceleration%20Strategies%20CAP.pdf?ver=2016-05-11-134003-230)

Carini, R. M., Kuh, G. D., & Klein, S. P. (2006). Student engagement and student learning: Testing the linkages research in higher education, *Research in Higher Education*, 47(1), pp. 1-32. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40185882>

Carr, D. (1986). Narrative and real world: An argument for continuity. *History and Theory*, 25(2), 117-131.

Cho, S. W., Kopko, E., Jenkins, D., & Jaggars, S. S. (2012). New evidence of success for community college remedial english students: Tracking the outcomes of students in the accelerated learning program (ALP). CCRC Working Paper No. 53. *Community College Research Center, Columbia University*. Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/ccbc-alp-student-outcomes-follow-up.pdf>

Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Walnut Creek: California. Left Coast Press, Inc.

Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry: A methodology for studying lived experience. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 27, 44-54.

- Clandinin, D. J., Cave, M. T. & Berendonk, C. (2017). Narrative inquiry: A relational research methodology for medical education. *Medical Education*, 51: 89–96.  
doi:10.1111/medu.13136
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2001). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.
- Clandinin, D. J., Huber, J., & Murphy, M. S. (2011). Familial curriculum making: Reshaping the curriculum making of teacher education. *International Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 17(1), 9-31.
- Conley, D. T. (2005). *College knowledge: What it really takes for students to succeed and what we can do to get them ready*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches*. 4 ed. Los Angeles, California: Sage.
- Cuseo, J. (2015a June). Academic-support strategies for promoting student retention & achievement during the first-year of college and beyond. www.researchgate.net.  
doi:10.13140/RG.2.1.3230.9929
- Cuseo, J. (2015b November). Effective teaching strategies for the first-year seminar & first-year courses. www.researchgate.net. doi:10.13140/RG.2.1.2036.3607
- Cuseo, J. (2012a). Closing the gaps: The relevance of AVID for higher education to the current needs of american higher education. *AVID for Higher Education*. Retrieved from [http://avid.org/dl/hed/hed\\_closingthegaps.pdf](http://avid.org/dl/hed/hed_closingthegaps.pdf)
- Cuseo, J. (2012b). *AVID Decades of College Dreams*. Retrieved from [http://www.avid.org/\\_documents/ssi\\_essentials\\_research\\_scholarship\\_cuseo.pdf](http://www.avid.org/_documents/ssi_essentials_research_scholarship_cuseo.pdf)

- Cuseo, J. (2011). *The significant six: Effective & distinctive features of the AVID postsecondary system*. San Diego: AVID Press.
- Custer, H. H. (n.d.). WICOR: AVID's foundation for high engagement teaching & learning. *AVID for Higher Education*. Retrieved from [http://avid.org/dl/hed/hed\\_reviewofliterature.pdf](http://avid.org/dl/hed/hed_reviewofliterature.pdf)
- Dadgar, M., Venezia, A., Nodine, T., & Bracco, K. R. (2013). *Providing structured pathways to guide students toward completion*. San Francisco: WestEd.
- Daws, T., & Schiro, P. (2008). *Tutorial support curriculum resource guide: Creating rigorous tutorials to increase student achievement in academic classes*. San Diego: AVID Press.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: New York, Ballantine.
- Edgecombe, N., Smith Jaggars, S., DeLott Baker, E., & Bailey, T. (2013). Acceleration through a holistic support model: An implementation and outcomes analysis of FastStart@CCD. CCRC *Community College Research Center. Institute on Education and the Economy. Teachers College, Columbia University*. Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/acceleration-through-holistic-support-model.pdf>
- Fowler, P. R., & Boylan, H. R. (2010). Increasing student success and retention: A multidimensional approach. *Journal Of Developmental Education*, 34(2), pp. 2-10. Retrieved from <http://0-eds.a.ebscohost.com.library.unl.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/>

pdfviewer?vid=8&sid=d7c04b8d-5760-4556-9afc-a624f3fc1831%40  
sessionmgr4008

- Gilgun, J. F. (2016). *Writing up qualitative research*. Twin Cities, Minnesota: University of Minnesota.
- Hern, K. (2012). Acceleration across california: Shorter pathways in developmental english and math. *Change*, 44(3), 60-68. doi:10.1080/00091383.2012.672917
- Hern, K. (December 2011). Accelerated english at chabot college: A synthesis of key finding. California Acceleration Project. *The California Acceleration Project* (December 2011). Retrieved from <http://accelerationproject.org/Portals/0/Documents/Chabot%20Accelerated%20English%20Synthesis.pdf>
- Hern, K., & Snell, M. (2013). *Toward a vision of accelerated curriculum & pedagogy: High challenge, high support classrooms for underprepared students*. Oakland, California: LearningWorks. Retrieved from [http://www.learningworksca.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/AcceleratingCurriculum\\_508.pdf](http://www.learningworksca.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/AcceleratingCurriculum_508.pdf)
- Hinchman, L. P., & Hinchman, S. K., eds. (1997). *Memory, identity, community: The idea of narrative in the human sciences*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Jaggars, S. S., & Hodara, M. (2011). The opposing forces that shape developmental education: Assessment, placement, and progression at CUNY community colleges. Working Paper No. 36. *Community College Research Center, Columbia University*.
- Jaggars, S. S., Hodara, M., Cho, S., & Xu, D. (2015). Three accelerated developmental education programs: Features, student outcomes, and implications. *Community College Review*, 43(1), 3-26. doi:10.1177/0091552114551752

- Jenkins, D. (2014). Redesigning community colleges for student success: Overview of the guided pathways approach. CCRC *Community College Research Center. Institute on Education and the Economy. Teachers College, Columbia University.*
- Jenkins, D. and Cho, S.W. (2013). Get with the program ... and finish it: Building guided pathways to accelerate student completion. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2013: 27–35. doi:10.1002/cc.20078
- Jenkins, D. (2011). Redesigning community colleges for completion: Lessons from research on high-performance organizations. *Working Paper No. 24. Community College Research Center, Columbia University.* Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/redesigning-community-colleges-completion.pdf>
- Jenkins, D., Speroni, C., Belfield, C., Jaggars, S. S., & Edgecombe, N. (2010). A model for accelerating academic success of community college remedial english students: Is the accelerated learning program (ALP) effective and affordable? CCRC Working Paper No. 21. *Community College Research Center, Columbia University.*
- Kuh, G. D., Cruce, T. M., Shoup, R., Kinzie, J., & Gonyea, R. M. (2008). Unmasking the effects of student engagement on first-year college grades and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(5), pp. 540-563. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25144692>
- Kuh, G. D. (2003). What we're learning about student engagement from nsse. *Change*, 35(2), 24. Retrieved from <http://libmetafind1a.unl.edu:50081/ebSCO-e-a/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=c9281932-526f-4eb0-bb80-db359af5b45a%40sessionmgr4009&vid=2&hid=4211>

- Laird, T. N., Chen, D., & Kuh, G. D. (2008). Classroom practices at institutions with higher-than-expected persistence rates: What student engagement data tell us. *New Directions For Teaching & Learning*, 2008(115), 85-99. doi:10.1002/tl.327
- Levin, J. S., & Kater, S. T. (2013). *Understanding community colleges*. New York, New York: Routledge.
- Mangan, Katherine. (2014, September 18). Uncluttering the pathway to the diploma. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Uncluttering-the-Pathway-to/148849/>.
- Martin, K., Galentino, R., & Townsend, L. (2014). Community college student success: The role of motivation and self-empowerment. *Community College Review* 42(July), 221-241. doi:10.1177/0091552114528972
- Mertens, D. M. (2010). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, 3 ed.* Los Angeles, California: Sage.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook, 3 ed.* Los Angeles, California: Sage.
- n.a. (1999). Advancement via individual determination (AVID) a summary of AVID research and information: Annual report 1998-1999 (pp. 21-23) in *Raising Academic Achievement*. American Youth Policy Forum, Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <http://www.aypf.org/publications/RAA/02avid.pdf>
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods (4<sup>th</sup> ed)*. Los Angeles, California: Sage.

- Perin, D., & Charron, K. (2006). "Lights just click on every day:" Academic preparedness and remediation in community colleges. In T. Bailey & V. S. Moreset (Eds.), *Defending the community college equity agenda* (pp. 155-194). Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Perin, D. (2006). Can community colleges protect both access and standards? The problem of remediation. *Teachers College Record*, 108(3), 339-373.
- Perin, D. (2002). The organization of developmental education: In or out of academic departments? CCRC Brief No. 14. *Community College Research Center, Columbia University*. Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/organization-of-developmental-education.pdf>
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Pruett, P. S., & Absher, B. (2015). Factors influencing retention of developmental education students in community colleges. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 81(4), pp. 32-40. Retrieved from <http://0-eds.a.ebscohost.com.library.unl.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=d7c04b8d-5760-4556-9afc-a624f3fc1831%40sessionmgr4008>
- Roksa, J., Jenkins, D., Jaggars, S.S., Zeidenberg, M., & Cho, S. November 2009. Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/strategies-promoting-gatekeeper-course.pdf>
- Rose, C. P., Moore, J. D., VanLehn, K., & Allbritten, D. (nd). A comparative evaluation of socratic versus didactic tutoring. Retrieved from <http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~cprose/pubweb/cogsci01.pdf>

- Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers (3<sup>rd</sup> ed)*. Los Angeles, California: Sage.
- Scott-Clayton, J. (January 2011). The shapeless river: Does a lack of structure inhibit students' progress at community colleges? (*CCRC Working Paper No. 25*). Community College Research Center, Teacher's College, Columbia University.
- Scott-Clayton, J., Crosta, P. M., & Belfield, C. R. (2012). Improving the targeting of treatment: Evidence from college remediation. *Working Paper 18457. National Bureau of Economic Research*. Cambridge, Massachusetts. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w18457>
- Sheldon, C. Q., & Durdella, N. R. (2009) Success rates for students taking compressed and regular length developmental courses in the community college. *Community College Journal Of Research And Practice*, 34(1-2). Retrieved from <http://0-www.tandfonline.com.library.unl.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/10668920903385806?needAccess=true>
- Shields, D. J., (2005). Developmental education: Criticisms, benefits and survival strategies. *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*, (22)1, pp. 43-51. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42802597>
- Shields, J., Shaw, S., Rapaport, A., Hallberg, K., Reese, K., Swanlund, A., & Citkowicz, M. (2014). Evaluation of the AVID for higher education program: Year 3, 2013-14. *Gibson Consulting Group, Austin, Texas. AIR American Institutes for Research, Chicago, Illinois*. Retrieved from <http://gibsonconsult.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/AHE-Year-3-Evaluation-Final-Draft-8-8-14.pdf>



- Silver-Pacuilla, H., Perin, D., & Miller, B. (2013). Introduction to special issue of community college review: Skills and trajectories of developmental education learners. *Community College Review*, *41*(2), pp. 111-117, doi: 10.1177/0091552113484964
- Smith-Jaggars, S., Hodara, M., & Stacey, G. W. (2013). Designing meaningful developmental reform. *Research Overview/February 2013*. CCRC Community College Research Center. Teacher's College, Columbia University.
- The Kansas Board of Regents. (2010). *Foresight 2020*. Retrieved from <https://www.kansasregents.org/resources/PDF/2263-Foresight2020.pdf>
- Watt, K. M., Huerta, J., & Alkan, E. (2012). Advancement via individual determination (AVID) in a community college setting: A case study. *Community College Journal Of Research and Practice*, *(36)*10, pp. 752-760, doi: 10.1080/10668920903182583
- Waugh, A. (2016). Meta-majors: An essential first step on the path to college completion. *Jobs For The Future, Boston, Massachusetts*. Retrieved from <http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/materials/Meta-Majors07-07-2016%5B1%5D.pdf>
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case-study research: Design and method (5<sup>th</sup> ed)*. Los Angeles, California: Sage.

## Appendix A

### Pilot Cohort Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your overall experience in the ALP English class at Butler Community College.
2. What was different about the ALP English class from other courses you have taken?
3. Were there specific aspects of the ALP class you felt were helpful to your success in the course? If so, please describe them and how they helped?
4. What was most challenging about the ALP class?
5. What was most satisfying about the ALP class?
6. How do you define the term high-engagement? Did you feel engaged in the ALP class? What happened during the class that made you feel more engaged?
7. How would you describe your level of engagement outside of the classroom? Did you meet with the instructor and/or the other students outside of the classroom? If so, can you provide an example?
8. Were there other entities from the college (advising, financial aid, etc.) that affected your overall ability to successfully complete these courses?
9. How would you describe the role that tutoring played in your ALP class? How often during the semester did you go to the tutoring lab?
10. Are there any additional comments you would like to make about your experiences in the ALP course?

**Appendix B**

## IRB Exemption Form

**Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness**

Dr. Gene George, Associate Vice President  
(316) 322.3338 or ggeorge@butlercc.edu



4/4/17

**To:** University of Nebraska-Lincoln Internal Review Board  
**RE:** Dissertation study of Troy Nordman

I have reviewed the research proposal of Troy Nordman to conduct a study of student persistence and completion in accelerated English courses at Butler Community College. The study meets Butler's requirements for responsible research and he has made the appropriate arrangements with Butler administration to conduct the study. I approve the project.

**Appendix C**

Student Consent Form



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

### **Signed Consent Document**

#### **Title of Research:**

The Road Taken That Has Made All The Difference: A Narrative Inquiry of Student Engagement and Success in Butler Community College's Accelerated Learning Program in English

#### **Purpose of Research:**

This study will investigate what students who successfully completed the accelerated learning program in English perceived about the program to have contributed to their persistence and successful completion of the courses. You must be a Kansas resident, 18 years of age or older, and currently enrolled at Butler Community College in order to participate in this research.

#### **Procedures:**

Your participation in this study will require approximately one hour of time. You will be asked to meet with the principal investigator, Troy Nordman, for an informal interview lasting no longer than one hour. The interviews will take place in a designated classroom on either the Butler of El Dorado or Butler of Andover campus site.

#### **Risks and/or Discomforts:**

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

#### **Benefits:**

The results of this study will be beneficial in three key ways: one, it will add to the research of accelerated learning programs; two, it will add to the community of practice among institutions that offer accelerated learning programs; and, three, the data will aid Butler CC and other institutions regarding developmental education policy, curriculum, and teacher training and development.

#### **Confidentiality:**

Your responses and resulting transcriptions to the interview questions will remain confidential. Once transcribed, the voice recordings will be deleted, and the official printed transcriptions will remain with Mr. Nordman in a locked file cabinet for one year and then be destroyed.

#### **Opportunity to Ask Questions:**

You may ask any questions concerning this research at any time by contacting Troy Nordman at [tnordman@butlercc.edu](mailto:tnordman@butlercc.edu) or 316-218-6215. You may also contact Brent Cejda at [bcejda2@unl.edu](mailto:bcejda2@unl.edu) or 402-472-0989. If you have any additional questions or concerns may contact the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6926 or [irb@unl.edu](mailto:irb@unl.edu).

#### **Freedom to Withdraw:**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Butler Community College or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

#### **Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

#### **Signature of Participant:**

\_\_\_\_\_

*Signature of Research Participant*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Date*

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your level of confidence in English before starting the ALP English class at Butler Community College.
2. How did you feel when you were told that you were going to be taking two English courses at the same time?
3. What was different about the ALP English class from other courses you have taken?
4. What specific aspects of the ALP class do you believe were helpful to your success in the course? Please describe them and how you believed they helped?
5. Tell me about what was most challenging about the ALP class for you? What was most satisfying?
6. Did you feel more engaged in the ALP class than in other classes you have had or are currently taking? What about the ALP class made you feel more engaged?
7. How would you describe the role the instructor played in your ALP class? What did the instructor do in the class that you believed help you to be successful?
8. Can you tell me about other types of support you had for the ALP class? For example, did you utilize the tutoring labs?
9. At what point(s) during the semester did you begin to feel that you were going to be successful in the ALP class? Can you tell about what made you feel this way?
10. Are there any additional things you would like to tell me about your overall experience in the ALP English class at Butler Community College?

**Appendix E**

Student Recruitment Email Form



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

Dear [student name]:

My name is Troy D. Nordman, Associate Dean of Humanities, Social, and Behavioral Sciences at Butler Community College. I am also a doctoral student with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the Educational Leadership and Higher Education program. I am conducting a study on factors affecting student engagement in Butler accelerated English programs. To assist with this I will be conducting interviews with current Butler Community College students who successfully completed the EG060/EG101 ALP course set in the fall semester of 2016.

Because you are 18 years of age or older and currently enrolled at Butler Community College, you are eligible to participate in this study. Participation will require approximately one-hour of time on either the Butler of El Dorado or Butler of Andover campus sites in a designated classroom. If selected, you will be asked to respond to a set of ten questions about your experiences in and perceptions of the accelerated English program. The interviews will be digitally voice-recorded. There is nothing else required of your participation.

The information gleaned from the interviews will help the researcher identify specific factors of the accelerated program which lead to higher engagement levels and course success. As well, the results of the study will assist Butler Community College's English Department in assessing the overall curriculum and delivery of the accelerated program. Lastly, student feedback of lived experiences and perceptions will add to the growing research on successful accelerated programs. Your identity and your responses to the interview questions will remain confidential. Once transcribed, the voice recordings will be deleted, and the printed transcriptions will remain with the researcher to complete the study and the Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness at Butler Community college.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time without harming your relationship to the interviewer, your status as a student at Butler Community College or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

By electronically signing below, you are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Completing and submitting your response indicates that you have given your consent to participate in this research. If you choose to participate, you should print of this request for your records.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

Troy D. Nordman, Associate Dean  
Butler Community College  
715 E. 13<sup>th</sup> Street/ Andover, Kansas 67002

Office: (316) 218-6215  
Cell: (316) 258-1961



## Appendix F

### Interview Follow-up Email

[Date]  
Butler Community College  
Andover, Kansas

Dear [student's first name]:

Thank you for taking the time to come in and interview with me. It was exciting to hear you talk about your perceptions of the experiences you had in the ALP course set during the fall 2016 semester, and I'm glad to know your spring semester has been going well.

As promised, I have attached the transcription of our recorded interview. This is available in a Word file that should open easily for you. If you have problems opening and viewing the file, please either call or email me.

As we discussed after our interview, I would appreciate you reviewing the transcription and doing three things:

- Look for any inaccuracies in your wording or phrasing that you would change
- Note any additions or changes that you'd like to make to your responses, and
- Send me any changes or additions that you would like to make to your responses

Again I want to say thank you for your help. Your contribution to this study will help Butler Community College continue to improve how we deliver English instruction to students. Good luck during the rest of your time here at Butler!

Sincerely,

Troy D. Nordman, Associate Dean  
Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Butler Community College 316.218.6215  
tnordman@butlercc.edu