AN IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION OF HOW THE RISE PROGRAM IMPACTED
STUDENTS OF COLOR WHO TRANSFERRED TO 4-YEAR UNIVERSITIES

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Susan Heredia, Ph.D. Date

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Abstract

of

AN IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION OF HOW THE RISE PROGRAM IMPACTED STUDENTS OF COLOR WHO TRANSFERRED TO 4-YEAR UNIVERSITIES

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Valerie Melitta Moore

This thesis utilizes extensive historical and contemporary research as well as case study interviews to explore the engagement experiences of seven underrepresented students that participated in the RISE program at City College (SCC). An in-depth analysis of each student’s personal testimony captured firsthand accounts of their authentic academic experience as it relates to the RISE program. These interviews revealed common trends amongst participants’ responses that encompassed the beneficial services and support they received while utilizing resources in the RISE program. Amongst these influential factors were: academic counseling, sense of community, available resources, student identity, family, leadership, opportunity, confidence, motivation and encouragement. The findings point to themes aligned around the benefits of student support services that assist underrepresented students, issues of student identity, the value of supportive relationships, and impacts.

______________________________, Committee Chair
Geni Cowan, Ph.D.

______________________________
Date
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Father. I lost you in the midst of writing this. I wanted to give up. I stumbled and I faltered. I wondered many times, “what is the point?” In those moments of despair and frustration, I could hear your voice telling me to “keep going.” So, I did. I would always tease you that you wanted this Masters degree more than me. Ultimately, I used that as my motivation. Your unwavering support and passion for my education is the reason I finished. Thank you for always believing in me, even when I didn’t believe in myself. You are near, even when I don’t see you. You are with me, even if you are far away. You are in my heart, in my thoughts, in my life, always. Now my angel, forever my Daddy. I Love you.

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart ~Jeremiah 29:13
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No matter which name I choose to call out, you always answer. How blessed I am to have a Mother as wonderful as you. Thank you for always showing me the beauty that you see. If I become half the woman you are, I will still be winning. I Love you (LvU).

Tiffany
My favorite sister. My only sister. Thank you for being ridiculous and brilliant all at the same time. I am my sister’s keeper. Love you.

Lorenzo
I will have you do a book report on this one day in the near future. Love, auntie.

Gavin
Thank you for your constant love and support through the hardest year I have ever faced. In you, I’ve found the love of my life and my closest, dearest friend. I Love you BB.

Dr. Cowan & Dr. Chavez
Thank you for challenging me and helping me realize the bar I had set for myself was far too low.

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My mentors, thank you for taking me in and sharing your vision, bestowing your wisdom, and lighting a spark in me for my education that had gone out. For that, I am eternally grateful. ~Mahalo

RISE
My inspiration and motivation to continue cultivating a community that not only thrives on success but that is humble through adversity. You hold a very special place in my heart.

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Thank you for your patience, support, encouragement, laughter, tears, wine, and above all, your unconditional love. I am truly blessed.
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Overview and Background of the Topic

For many historically underrepresented students, access to higher education and academic success continues to be a challenge (Bok, 2003; 2009). Historically, students of color have struggled to reach their academic goals for numerous reasons. One leading contributing factor is access to programs and resources to ensure their success in higher education. Campus support services that accommodate this particular demographic of students are essential. According to research far too many students falter at various stages along the “education pipeline” from middle and high school through college. “Many of those students who are underserved by the nation’s education system, including low-income students, underrepresented minorities, those who are first-generation in their families to go to college, and students with disabilities” (Savitz-Romer, Jager-Hyman, & Coles, 2009, p. 5). This statement identifies the need for student support services to seek out and provide services to underrepresented students in order to minimize this disparity in higher education.

The majority of students of color and other underrepresented students who enter postsecondary education do so in the community colleges. However, a large number of them leave and do not transfer to four-year institutions. For more than three decades, American colleges and universities have made firm efforts to increase their numbers of students of color, particularly African American and Hispanic students. Although these numbers have increased, bringing students into higher education differs from ensuring
that they succeed. The key to cultivating academic success for students of color is institutional commitment to create and sustain support services that target this particular population. “The stronger the educational goal and institution commitment, the more likely the student will graduate” (Tinto, 1993).

According to the Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics (2010), the percentage distribution for undergraduate enrollment of U.S. residents in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity for the fall semester are as follows: White 62%, Black 15%, Hispanic 14%, Asian/Pacific Islander 6% American Indian/Alaska Native 1%. Of these students who are enrolled, those who complete their bachelor’s degree in a four to six year time period varies; White 69%, Black 39%, Hispanic 50%, Asian/Pacific Islander 62%, and American Indian/Alaska Native 39% (United States Department of Education & 2010). These facts display the need for programs addressing specific issues underserved students might encounter during their college transition.

The seven participants in this study were all students in the RISE Student Services program at City College (SCC), which consisted of students of color, first-generation, and socioeconomically disadvantaged. “City College (SCC)” was the pseudonym used by the researcher in order to protect the privacy of the institution and the integrity of the study. RISE, which stands for Respect, Integrity, Self-Determination and Education, is a student service program that offers resources such as academic counseling, tutoring, computer lab, college tours, book lending, and peer mentorship in order to assist students in achieving their academic goals. The aim of the RISE program is to improve college
persistence and graduation rates as well as increase transfer rates to four-year universities.

Statement of the Problem

It was the purpose of this study to explore the effects the RISE program at City College had on underrepresented students’ academic success. There is a disparity amongst students of color in terms of completing college successfully (Harris III, F., & Wood, J. L., 2014). Student Support Services can help bridge the gap of inequality of underrepresented students in higher education. The goal of this study was to explore and highlight effective practices within student services that assist students of color in achieving their academic goals.

With the support of the literature, this study addresses the following research questions:

1) What role do Student Service programs such as RISE play in underrepresented students’ academic, personal, and professional lives?

2) What principles of practice are essential to the success of Student Service Programs such as RISE in helping underserved students reach their academic goals?
Significance of the Study

This study aims to support and encourage the continual development of innovative campus-wide retention programs that support students of color. Maintaining the ideology focused on the students overall success is vital and significant. This type of initiative calls for the support and involvement of the entire institution in shaping such programs. Also, evaluation of existing programs on campuses that do an effective job of transferring students of color from low performance status should take place.

Based on research, the continual development of student support services is imperative in order to create a shift in the success of historically underrepresented students. These services can ultimately increase retention rates, along with recognizing the difference in demographics and cultures amongst students, and identify student persistence towards their academic achievements. To meet this end, these services can help students develop their own sense of student identity to build the kind of confidence that is required to be successful in college.

One such support service is the RISE program at City College (SCC). RISE is a student service program that offers resources such as academic counseling, tutoring, computer labs, college tours, book lending, and peer mentorship in order to assist students in achieving their academic goals. The aim of the RISE program is to improve college persistence and graduation rates amongst students of color as well as to increase their transfer rates to four-year universities. The seven participants’ in this study were all students in the RISE Student Services program at SCC, which consisted of students of color, first-generation students, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. It is the
purpose of this study to explore in-depth how the impact that the RISE student service initiative at City College had on students of color who chose to transfer to 4-year universities in pursuit of bachelors degrees. This thesis focused specifically on the impact the RISE program had on historically underrepresented students overall academic success in the areas of community, campus engagement, academic progress, transfer, and social transition.

**Definition of Terms**

*Students of Color/Multicultural Students*

Domestic students who identify as African American, Latino/a, Polynesian, Filipino American, and/or Multiracial. Throughout the study the terms “students of color” or “multicultural students” is used interchangeably due to the common theme: being different from the mainstream. According to the literature, students who are different from mainstream White middle-class students have the status of outsiders and are prone to marginalization and institutionalized oppression (Ladson-Billings, 2000). The status of an outsider also means that these groups of students are perceived to be having a deficit and have “at risk” label attached to them (Levine & Youniss, 2009).

*At-risk student*

An at-risk student is a student who, by virtue of their circumstances, is statistically more likely than others to fail academically.

*Community college*

A two-year college, also referred to as a junior college. Anyone who is 18 years
old or holds a high school diploma (or equivalent) is eligible to attend a community college. Students can transfer from community colleges to either the CSU or UC systems (Ed Source, 2015).

Civic Engagement

A person’s involvement with his or her community that can take the forms of civic, political and electoral behaviors (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002). Civic behaviors include participating in service-learning and community service programs, taking part in community events and gatherings, fundraising initiatives, and mentoring other community members.

Curriculum

The courses of study offered by a school or district. California has developed a set of standards that are intended to guide curriculum and instruction. The final decisions about school curriculum are the responsibility of the local school board (Ed Source, 2015).

Achievement gap

Refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students, such as white students and minorities, or students from higher-income and lower-income households.

Organization of the Thesis

The organization of this study begins with an overview of the subject being studied, a statement of the problem, the significance of the study, and a definition of
terms in Chapter One. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature available in order to give a detailed background on community college, student persistence and retention, and student support services. In Chapter Three, the methodology of the study is discussed. The design of the study, data collection procedures, and how the data was analyzed is presented. Chapter Four presents the data based on the interview results of the study, as well as the findings and interpretation. The thesis ends with Chapter Five providing the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2
A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The following literature review demonstrates the role of support service programs in community colleges. To do so, the literature first reviews a history of community colleges in general and then provides an overview of support service programs in community colleges. More specifically the focus is on the specific struggles underrepresented students face in secondary education and in transitioning to a four-year college/university. Furthermore, the literature examined how current support service programs in higher education have impacted underrepresented students who transferred to a four-year university, by building a sense of community, more diverse student demographics and student persistence.

History of Community Colleges

Before addressing current literature about support services in community colleges, it is essential to explore briefly the history of community college. This is important in order to understand the role community colleges play for students geared towards transferring to four-year institutions and fall under the category of underrepresented.

There are approximately 1,738 public and private two-year institutions in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The two-year colleges are not evenly distributed among the fifty states; rather, they are roughly in proportion (though not always) to the population of the state. For example, California, a very large state, has 112 public two-
year institutions, and Rhode Island, a small state in both population and square miles, has but one (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2015). These popular two year colleges focus on offering certificates, associates degrees, and transfer courses that apply to degree programs at four year universities.

These colleges usually also offered general or developmental education programs to assist all students with developmental college level skills in reading, writing, and math. The first junior college was founded in 1902 and focused on providing the first two years of university study. Later, in 1925, the American Association of Junior Colleges expanded the official definition of the junior college to include institutions designed to develop a different type of curriculum suited to the large and ever changing civic, social, religious, and vocational needs of the entire community (Bogue, 1950; Roueche & Taber 1995).

According to the American Association of Community Colleges, most community college missions have basic commitments to: serve all segments of society through an open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students; a comprehensive educational program; serve its community as a community-based institution of higher education; teaching, lifelong learning (2015). Additionally, they were dedicated to meaningful learning, excellent teaching, and enabling individuals to achieve their hopes, dreams, and full potential and to being a leading partner in creating a dynamic, prosperous community of enlightened, leaders and thoughtful, effective, and global citizens (Taber, 1996). Although community college missions may vary across regions today, they all influence the types of community-building activities developed by
each institution. Overall, community colleges today provides easy access, fairly low tuition, and an open-door policy for a variety of student populations (Cohen & Brawer, 1996).

With 112 colleges admitting roughly 3 million students, which included 120,000 first-year students in 2008, California has the largest junior college system in the nation and is an important location in which there should be studies on the issue of transfer for minority students from low-performing high schools (Alvarado, Driscoll, Gandara & Orfield, 2012). Consequently, California’s Master Plan for Higher Education, first adopted in 1960, is arranged around the notion that community colleges will act as the first step to enrolling in a four-year degree program for many of this state’s youth. Given that 61% of all of California’s public school freshmen enroll in a community college, it becomes apparent what role these college environments will play in preparing the greater part of this state’s possible four-year college graduates to transfer to bachelor’s degree-granting institutions (Alvarado, et al., 2012).

Nonetheless, it was estimated that only 20 - 25% of these students will actually make that transfer within six years (Adelman, 2005; Wassmer, Shulock, & Moore, 2003). The way in which students who attend two-year versus four-year colleges are grouped, is not equal across the board for all ethnic or socio-economic groups. Typically, statistics show affluent white and Asian students are more inclined to enroll in California’s four-year colleges, whereas more Black and Latino students, who oftentimes are socioeconomically disadvantaged, typically enroll in the community colleges. A primary example is the percentage of students who attended college in-state and enrolled in the
University of California, one of the most selective public institutions in the state. In 2008, only 9% were African Americans and 8.8% were Latinos whereas 14% were Whites and 36% were Asians (Alvarado, et al., 2012). Because this data is only referent to the University of California system, statistics might be higher for the California State University system.

Overview of Support Service Programs in Community Colleges

Increased attention is being paid to the student support services, functions, and outcomes of community colleges, particularly as they affect student persistence and completion. For years researchers have demonstrated that student support services are critical to students’ academic success in college. A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (2002) found that among students who enroll in community colleges with the intent to earn a credential/degree or to transfer to a four-year institution, almost one-half do not reach this goal within six years. Low-income and minority students are particularly vulnerable to dropping out. The U.S. Department of Education (2002) also found that while enrolled many underrepresented students require two or more remedial classes (primarily in English or Math), experience difficulty covering college cost, and struggle to balance competing priorities (school, family, work). All of these factors increase the probability of these students dropping out.

An initiative and strategy used by community colleges to increase student persistence and achievement outcomes is student support services. These types of services are a standard feature at most higher education institutions. According to a study
done by the Pathways to College Network (2009), effective support services have an integrated network of academic, social, and financial supports. When implemented in a coordinated, targeted, and comprehensive structure, these initiatives have been shown to improve student achievement. Early research on the collegiate experience by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) suggested that institutions can enhance the academic experience of under-prepared students by providing extensive instruction in academic skills and advising. Personal guidance and counseling can help community college students confront academic as well as nonacademic challenges.

Students also connect and develop strong social networks with other students. Just as peer tutors are used to provide academic guidance and support, they can also advise their peers on some personal problems. Students who are counseled by fellow students find that the camaraderie and friendship established through the peer relationship can often provide the level of encouragement and support needed to help cope with challenging situations. For example, Houston Community College’s Minority Male Initiative has helped young Black and Latino men develop stronger peer networks that strengthen their academic and social development (Houston Community College, n.d.).

Financial Aid is another key component in student support services. Most students, with an emphasis on students of color cannot enroll in college without ample financial assistance. In a study conducted by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE, 2008), 45% of the respondents indicated that finances were critical to continuous enrollment in college. Additionally, over three-quarters of survey participants said financial aid advising was one of the most important support services,
but at the same time, expressed frustration with their experiences with the financial aid services offered on their campuses.

One of the most widespread integrated student service programs is Student Support Services, funded under the federal TRIO programs. “The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds” (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Student Support Services (SSS) is an educational program that provides first-generation students with opportunities that help them successfully complete their degrees/credentials, offering academic development, counseling, financial guidance, and career development opportunities. In an evaluation of SSS programs, one of the five colleges examined was a community college, and it was found that these programs played a positive role on students’ overall academic and social integration (Muraskin, 1997). Student Support Services play a key role and are instrumental in the academic and personal success of historically underrepresented students.

Retention and Persistence in Community Colleges

Community colleges are designed to be “open door” institutions, admitting a variety of student characteristics, so they can be more effective for students of the non-traditional nature, due to their flexibility. In the past, access was a crucial issue to resolve; however, today community colleges are frequently filled with low-income, first-generation, low academic achievement levels, or minority students (Community College
Retention, 2011). Thus, retention and persistence became the focus among community college goals. The U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics reported around 50 percent of college students who began a two-year college program in 2003-04 remained enrolled in college, whether they transferred to another institution or remained at the same institution. Although this is a prime example of student persistence, when considering a student’s measurement of success in retention, the student’s academic intention must be considered, as they may not choose to progress toward a degree or credential (Community Colleges Special Supplement to the Condition of Education, 2008).

Another initiative to increase retention is to gain an understanding of the challenges community college students face. A 2010 survey on retention practices conducted by American College Testing (ACT) drew data from over 1,000 two- and four year universities across the United States. Participants were asked to rate the factors that had the strongest effects on the students attrition at community college. Results indicated that among Hispanic and African American community college students, emotional support from family and friends and the amount of financial aid determined reasons for a student to drop out of community college (Community Colleges, 2008). Lastly, the same report considered academic/intrusive advising that institutions were implementing. Intrusive advising is considered to be a proactive method of academic counseling, integrating intervention strategies for historically underrepresented students. This method of counseling helps target academic-probation, disabled, ethnic minority, and low socioeconomic status students, who normally go unnoticed in four-year universities.
Thomas and Minton (2004) mentioned the use of intrusive advising helps underrepresented youth, specifically low-income, first-generation, and minority students. Overall, the article described the criteria for successful intrusive advising experiences as

- advisors should readily make themselves available for formal student/advisor meeting
- advisors should become familiar with the college and its available support services, such as, tutoring, career centers, financial aid, etc.
- and advisors should not only know these resources, but know the staff and faculty who are in charge, individually. (Thomas & Minton, 2004)

In understanding the population, support services can customize their offerings to serve the uniquely diverse student needs and increase student persistence.

To emphasize the importance of academic integration on persistence rating and the relationship between social and academic integration, the issue of student retention and persistence becomes more complicated; especially when looking at the specific needs of disadvantaged or “at risk” students. When referring to students as “at risk” youth, they might come from sub categories of underrepresented ethnic minorities, need remedial education, are non-traditional students or are economically disadvantaged. Many of these underrepresented students may face similar challenges as these “at-risk” youth (Sanchez, 2010). A study by Fike and Fike (2008) demonstrated positive predictors of fall-to-spring retention are variables such as passing developmental reading courses, participating in student support services, receiving financial aid, having one parent with some college education, semester hour enrollment and student age. When
colleges factor in such variables into student performance there is some profit in predictions for student retention. Retention rates and graduation rates go hand-in-hand when assessing the prime issues of academic failure amongst underrepresented students. Common barriers amongst this demographic must be identified in order to accommodate these student’s needs.

**Challenges Faced by Underrepresented Community College Students**

Historically students of color have struggled to reach their academic goals for numerous reasons. One leading contributing factor is access to programs and resources to ensure their success in higher education. According to research far too many students falter at various stages along the “education pipeline” from middle school to high school and through college. “Many of those students who are underserved by the nation’s education system, [are] low-income students, underrepresented minorities, those who are first-generation in their families to go to college, and students with disabilities” (Coles, Jager-Hyman, & Savitz-Romer, 2009, p. 5). This statement identifies the need for student support services to seek out and provide services to students of color in order minimize this disparity in higher education.

**First-Generation and Low-Income Students**

First-generation and low-income college students struggle at the college level because they are often disconnected to the programs, services, and resources that could increase the chances of academic success. This population also lacks adequate support
systems, which could also increase student success. For instance, a way this is seen is from low-performing high schools involvement in addressing the issue of students failing to transfer from community college and from community college failing to provide a challenging coursework taught by resourceful and knowledgeable faculty.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics in 2004, 4.5 million low-income, first-generation college students constitute approximately 24% of undergraduate students within the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004). Further research shows, low-income, first-generation college students were nearly four times more likely to leave higher education after the first year than students who had neither of these risk factors (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004). As retention rates drop, universities have become more concerned with ways to increase student retention rates, student success in college and comfort level on campus for demographically underrepresented and first-generation college students.

During the college transition first-generation college students face a specific challenge in gaining academic self-confidence and a sense of belonging (Rendon, 1994). First-generation students face obstacles while navigating their college careers such as longer time to graduate, financial stresses, outside influence on career choices and also a lack of help-seeking behaviors (Kolajo, 2004; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009). Due to a lack of resources first-generation students are more likely to live off-campus and take classes part-time while working full-time; limiting the amount of time they spend specifically on campus. Further research by Lohfink and Paulsen (2005), showed that further decreases in financial aid, particularly grants, scholarships, and work-study
increases the likelihood of first-generation students dropping out. Furthermore, first-
generation students also face barriers in academic achievements and social integration, as
well as confronting obstacles in respect to cultural adaptation as a result of discontinuities
between cultures.

**Basic Skills Students**

In a study by LAO, (2008), up to 90 percent of first-year community college and
up to 97% of students of color (Hagedorn, 2007) will require taking remediation classes
in math and English can this course work can take up years before completed. Thus,
prolonging not only their time in community college, but the time until they are able to
start taking credited college level courses applicable for transfer or degree/certificate
attainability. As a result, often these same students spend wasted time and run out of
financial aid in the process, causing the student to drop-out and stop progressing toward
their educational goals (Hagedorn, 2007). Therefore, it is up to the community college to
successfully transfers its students from these low-performing high schools to a four-year
institution, yet challenges arise that significantly differ from those faced by community
colleges who have a sufficient track-record in transferring students (who may be minority
students, but not from low-performing high schools).

The lack of preparedness of underserved students exiting high school requires
them to take more remedial courses, causing them to remain longer in college and
possibly discouraging them from completing their program (Chen, 2005; Twigg, 2005; &
Venezia, 2005). Consequently proving, underserved students fail to be adequately
prepared for the college environment. This possibly deters students from completing their education (Twigg, 2005). Although programs that attempt to repair students’ shortfalls have shown some positive results, many underserved students continue to demonstrate undesirable educational outcomes (Green, 2006). Underserved students are more likely to attend college part-time or periodically, begin their college education at a community college, or delay their college attendance due to the lack of preparation for the college lifestyle (Chen, 2005). These students are in dire need of educational programs that are appealing, while challenging them academically in preparation for the transition from high school to college.

In a separate study, Venezia and her colleagues (2003) very thoroughly brought attention to post-secondary schools failing to educate students on basic information in terms of successfully matriculating into the community college environment, enrolling into courses required for transfer and overall the competition of a degree. As a result, students will find themselves taking courses they only do not need, but do not lead to a degree or certificate. Although Venezia’s study is admittedly somewhat dated, research since this publication has done little to dispute these findings (Kirst, 2010; Wiehe, 2010). Thus, these findings are still relevant to community colleges over a decade later. In this aspect, community colleges, in turn, are viewed by both high school students and staff as a “default” option that does not require an in-depth application, special coursework or other preparations. Often times, students who do attend community college tend to decide too late that they will attend. Therefore, these students have little to no information about how to navigate the community college experience and are frequently
and academically unprepared for a college-level workload. In addition, students are unprepared for the expectations of college or the skills necessary to study or complete their courses.

Furthermore, Venezia and her colleagues (2003) found in the study, the high school to college transitions, many high schools struggled to find counselors who were adequate or well informed about college enrollment requirements and how to prepare for the college setting. Furthermore, these counselors implicated to students, there would be opportunities in higher education without indicating to the students the expectancy of having to perform at a college level beyond that of the general education graduation requirements (Venezia 2003). Additionally, the study brought to attention, students enrolled in schools serving low-income populations had little idea about what would be expected from them or what to expect in community college.

African American, Latino, and Other Students of Color

To raise retention rates at community colleges, it is essential to integrate student populations into their given campus, in particular students of color (Szelenyi, 2001). Studying community colleges where the disproportion of transfer for African American and Latino students originating from low-performance secondary schooling takes place, is important too, as it teaches important lessons that should be taught by colleges who have effectively addressed this considerable task and because this is a fast growing area of school-age populations across the nation and in California. In fact, in 2008 Latinos were a particularly large group of the college-going age in California, and Latinos and
African Americans together consisted of almost half (46%) of all high school graduates in the state. It is crucial to find a successful way to educate these student populations at a college level degree (Alvarado, et al., 2012).

In order to establish programs that assist student integration onto campus, community colleges must first identify common barriers for students of color. For example, Cerven, Nations, Nielson, and Park (2013) found that students of color are largely first-generation and lack familial support. Seidman et al. (2012) exposed another barrier and elaborated that the majority of students are commuters and “typically do not become involved and/or integrate themselves socially and academically on campus” (p. 158). A disconnect between home and college can lead to high dropout rates for students of color, as they struggle to cope with the new pressures of the community college (Cooper, 2010). Lower performance and persistence rates of first-generation and minority students are likely attributed to the fact that they are less likely to engage in the academic and social experiences associated with success in college (Pike & Kuh, 2005). Such engaging activities include studying in groups, interacting with faculty and other students, participating in extracurricular activities and using support services.

Role of Community Colleges in Transfer

Despite the popular belief that most students who begin college soon after high school express a desire to complete a bachelors degree, the majority fails to complete this belief. As a result, many California students who graduate from high school and enrolled in community college and who plan on transferring in order to earn a Bachelor’s degree,
either leave college or change their educational goals. Inside the Black and Latino community, it is especially true. Although holistically understood that community college transfer rates are low, it is, however, very difficult to pin point a specific rate of transfer due to the complexity of merely defining how many students realistically plan to transfer. Many students switch colleges, drop out then to return later, are part-time students over a number of years, and change their minds about educational goals. In a study of community college transfers, taken from significant national datasets, Adelman (2005) found that 60% of first-year students enrolled in the community colleges, moved to at least one or more community college campus, making it difficult to track these students.

Cohen and Brawer (1996) found administrators at higher-transfer colleges often are more highly probable to indicate that transfer was the college’s main goal (88% vs. 45%). As one would expect, suburban colleges with a considerable number of students whose parents have, at the minimum, some college education tend to have support in the community for such a goal. In a study, Serban and her colleagues (2008) implemented a case study of seven California community colleges that had higher transfer rates than expected. The study reflected what has been found in other literature; a thriving college-going environment, dedication to the institution and students, and effective student support services. One thing to note, however, is that these researchers found a strong relationship between a high school and four-year college to be a significant component of their success. Cohen and Brawer (1996) also identified many specific steps taken by colleges to cultivate these relationships, such as the use of student ambassadors to high
schools and parent’s nights in order to establish a familiarity with the high school community.

In order to establish a transfer going culture Handel (2006) conducted a student study at the university of California and California community college. After the completion of the study, it was concluded that the following principles should be implemented at community colleges:

…establish transfer to a four-year institution as a high institutional priority; ensure that transfer is seen by students as expected and attainable; offer a rigorous curriculum for all students that include writing critical thinking math and mathematics and the sciences; provide high quality instruction, including innovative and research based pedagogies; develop intensive academic support of programs based on models of "academic excellence"; create an environment of belonging in which students feel stimulated to achieve high academic levels; establish strong community family linkages that foster intellectually stimulating and secure and culturally rich environments for students on and off campus. (Handel, 2006, p. 5)

Although Handel’s recommendations are sound and reflect practices of high transfer colleges; however they do not necessarily target the needs of Latino and African-American students, specifically those students who fall under the category of underserved demographics in low performing high schools. In a 2007 review of the transfer function of the community colleges, the California Postsecondary Education Commission made note that low income students and Latinos in particular were transferring at especially
low rates and made several suggestions to strengthen the transfer function for the students:

…improve matriculation programs that identify and provide more targeted
guidance to both students and intending to transfer; provide a clearer path to the
four-year degree by continuing to develop community college guarantee programs
such as transfer partnership with bachelorette degree granting institution; provide
a more robust counseling System targeted at populations that are showing the
poorest outcomes. (Alvarado, Driscoll, Gandara, & Orfield, 2012, p. 8)

A variety of student personalities are related to four-year institution transfers.
More specifically, academic under preparation, poverty, being a first-generation member
within the family to attend college, English as a second language learner, a parent and
having other family responsibilities are all barriers for a students’ ability to attend and
successfully complete college (Alexander et al., 2007; Gándara & Contreras, 2009).
Academic preparation and background are crucial to determining how successful a
student’s experience will be in college; even more important is the institutional
environment and the climates in which personal relationships will thrive (Astin, 1984;
1993; Hurtado & Carteer, 1997; Pascarella &Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 199).

It is detrimental that there is a students’ need to feel a sense of belonging on the
campus; that they are welcomed and that faculty and staff implement this idea in
colleges, in order for the student to have the potential to succeed. A sense of "belonging"
cannot be overstated in importance. Hurtado and Pojuan (2005) described the kinds of
college campus climates that create a sense of belonging for minority students, some of
which include courses that address meeting adversity and the importance of social and academic support networks (i.e. counseling, wellness centers, club etc.). A meta-analysis of studies reviewing students into two-year colleges found that together social and academic integration were undeniably critical factors that help increase persistence and transfers in committee college students (Napoli & Wortman, 1996). Nevertheless, there is weight in this notion when having supportive peers, not feeling alone and attending a college campus that is racially isolated draws a fine line.

When looking at percentages, Wassmer and colleagues (2004) found among Latinos and African-Americans attending community college with high minority student enrollment were, less likely to transfer within six years; compared to the percentage of Latino and African-Americans attending community colleges with high percentages of White and Asian students; demonstrating that these other factors persuade or propose that there are significant risks associated to community college transfer rates within academic preparation and socio-economic status.

One identified problem that has been lacking in information, in regards to who is anticipated to transfer, is to more accurately identify students for transfer-counseling. At Seaside Community College, there are about 32,000 students enrolled consisting of a broad variety of student demographics and consisting of extreme wealth as well as diminutive sizes of low income housing due to long-standing rent control laws (Alvarado, et al 2012). Nearly two-thirds of students in Seaside expressed transferring to a four-year institution as their educational outcome. Although it was speculated by Alvarado and colleagues in their preliminary research of the community college, it was discovered that
Seaside Community College was indeed successful in transferring Latino students from low performance high schools into four-year initiations. To further explain the possibilities of such results, the study found that Seaside Community College maintained strong relationships in outreach, visiting many urban schools from far distances, educating and counseling students on the benefits of attending their college (Alvarado, et al., 2012). The dedication and close care of Seaside Community College’s outer high school communities show how supportive peers and faculty help students to persist. Additionally, the counseling department at Seaside Community College was a significant resource for students who would like to transfer.

At Seaside Community College, the majority of counselors served their students with the belief in mind they were more than just the name, “transfer counselor”; they intend to be held accountable for the students who intend to transfer (Alvarado, et al., 2012). Additionally, all counselors on campus attested they provided personal and academic counseling (Alvarado, Driscoll, Gandara, & Orfield, 2012). Moreover, counselors in the Latino center at Seaside Community College concentrated their endeavors, supporting students who were taking developmental education and basic skill courses, by encouraging them and more specifically exemplifying themselves and others included of people who have successfully completed all the coursework, despite the fact that it took some years to complete.
Role of Campus Support Services for Underrepresented Students

Consequently, community colleges can retain students of color by utilizing support services. Cooper (2010) compiled the results of various studies conducted on the subject and found that students of color benefit from support services that connect them back to their college campus. A key feature of an effective support service program is the relationship it develops between student, peers, staff, and faculty to provide encouragement to students to persist through their academic career (Alvarado et al., 2012; Cooper, 2010). Cerven, et al. (2013) articulated how such services can encourage students of color: “when students have meaningful connections with members of the college community, they have a web of social and academic support that helps them persist” (p. 8). For example, some campuses many incorporate emphasizing the importance of diversity in their student orientations, incorporate the appreciation of cultural differences within seminars or develop a bridge between English as second language students to assist them in transitioning into the community college atmosphere (Szelenyi, 2001).

Alvarado, Driscoll, Gándara, and Orfield (2012) concluded that special support programs for minority students, with an emphasis on transfer driven counseling, and programs with a solid focus on basic skills also build community for students of color. Similarly, Alvarado et al. (2012) emphasized that an institutionalized commitment to serve this population, through culturally appropriate interventions, counseling, and resources that target students’ specific needs, was imperative for students to be successful. By developing different components to student service programs, students
become more involved on campus and in turn find resources that assist in their persistence through their program.

Furthermore, research also indicates that the educational experiences and environment provided to students in college greatly shapes the outcomes of their education. Student success depends in part on an institution's ability to successfully convey high expectations for students from all backgrounds, develop an inclusive, multicultural campus climate, curriculum, and “college-going identity” (Lipton, Morrell, Oakes, & Rogers, 2002, p. 108-9). Looking at support services, it is crucial that such support programs provide a holistic aide. In a study of seven California, community colleges with high transfer rates it was found, in several of the colleges, role models played an important part in delivering the transfer message. At one of the smaller, rural institutions, several interviewees explained that they tell students, “I was just like you and if I can do it, you can” (Gabbard, 2006; Poisel & Stinard, 2005, p. 13). By providing students with mentors who have the same experiences or struggles, gives students reinforcement and acknowledgement that their goals are attainable.

Likewise, colleges and universities dedicated to the civic purposes of higher education support changes in culture, curriculum, and encourage student success initiatives (Compass Compact, 2008). For example, student service programs may encourage faculty members to have open dialogue on the issues related to students of color, to become familiar with cultural norms. This may also help faculty and staff understand the amount of time students spend on campus since community college students spend less time on campus, which limits the available time for them to engage
on campus and receive student services. Thus, connecting students with community through services, faculty and staff is pivotal and invaluable. This engagement could create avenues for students of color to advance in higher education and change their overall academic excellence.

Another important factor in student retention, identified in the literature, was the importance of assisting and connecting high school students to the community college (Alvarado et al., 2012). Typically these students are “African American or Hispanic; financially independent; first-generation; have low degree aspirations; attend college part-time, [and] delay enrollment into college following high school” (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 154). Thus, maintaining a strong outreach effort with urban high schools, which interact with the same demographic of underrepresented students, allows for students to connect to a community prior to entering the institution (Szelenyi, 2001). “It may be that creating a sense of family (or belonging) for underrepresented minorities is more important in some cases than simply creating a more generalized transfer culture” (Alvarado et al., 2012, p. 3). For these reasons, student support services should be utilized to ease the transition from high school to community college for incoming students in need of such support.

It is also crucial for campus support services to provide much needed encouragement for individual students and a “safe haven” for groups of students, especially underrepresented, who might otherwise find themselves out of place in a setting where they distinctively stand out (Wise, 2011). Building a social support system is also often a personal challenge for underserved students during the college transition.
Social support systems are essential to underrepresented students in public research universities because they often face more hostile campus climates than do their majority peers (Harper & Hurtado 2007). As for new students, these centers can serve as secure, recognizable points of entry that facilitate students to safely pilot the unfamiliar environment of their campus (London, 1989; Terenzini et al., 1994). Lacking family support is a huge obstacle minority students must overcome (Cerven, Nations, Nielson, & Park, 2013).

Through further readings the literature indicates that academic experiences and campus climate and culture greatly shape a student’s educational outcome. Creating and sustaining such student support systems will help students develop a sense of student identity and create avenues for campus and community engagement (Lipton, Morrell, Oakes, & Rogers, 2002, p. 108-9). Emotional support was identified as the willingness to listen, show empathy, respect, and foster self-esteem. These factors build trust amongst the students and can be obtained through mentoring, proactive advising, individual counseling, and activities that involve students, parents, faculty, and school staff (Coles et al., 2009).

Based on the literature reviewed, the continual development of student support services is imperative in order to create a shift in the success of historically underrepresented students. Support services can untimely increase retention rates along with recognizing the difference in demographics and cultures amongst students, and identify student persistence towards their academic achievements. To meet this end,
these services can help students develop their own sense of student identity to build the kind of confidence that is required to be successful in college.

Research has found that once students believe the notion that they are “students” and that they can be successful, they pursue the assistance and the resources to build the academic skills required to be successful in higher education. Before helping them build academic skills, students have to be receptive (as students) to the information that is given to them. Creating a community where these students feel valued, encouraged and supported promotes campus engagement and overall success for the students and the institution.

Summary

Reviewing the literature has pointed out that there is a high percentage of students who do not receive the proper support from high schools where demographics include high percentages of minority students. Furthermore, the literature displays what students must have in order to be successful and what happens when students lack such resources such as mentors, counseling, social support and academic support. This study will shows firsthand accounts of what student support services can provide for students who transfer to a four-year university.

Based on the literature reviewed, it can be concluded building a sense of community on campus increases retention rates for students of color at the community college level. A method of building a community feel for students is through the use of student services programs. The literature presented that a large portion of community
college students do not receive support at home, have either full-time or part-time employment, have families, or are unprepared for college. Forming a community on campus, through the use of student services, encourages students to engage with the campus and assists them in achieving their academic goal. In turn, this leads to an institutional increase in retention rates.

Furthermore, by understanding the three subtopics initially identified as crucial to increasing retention rates at community colleges: creating a sense of community, understanding student demographics and student persistence toward academic achievements, student services can provide the appropriate tools to assist students of color during the process of achieving their academic goal. This research is significant because students of color have been underrepresented for years, which has substantially impacted dropout rates (Cerven, et al., 2013). With the results of this research, community colleges can effectively assist students of color with the sources needed to obtain their academic goals and can increase retention rates.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the description of the methods and procedures used to obtain the data, how the data were analyzed and interpreted, and how the conclusions were drawn. This section is to justify the means in which the study was obtained and will help in giving it purpose and strength, as it will then be truthful and analytical. The credibility of findings and conclusions extensively depend on the quality of the research design, data collection, data management, and data analysis. All these helped in the processing of the data and the formulation of conclusions.

Setting of the Study

This study followed a qualitative research design. This approach was chosen for the purpose of identifying and describing participants’ authentic depiction of their academic experiences. This approach was chosen over a gathering of largely quantitative data in order to gain a more comprehensive look at students’ experiences. Although quantitative research can provide a data-driven snapshot of a problem, a great deal of it already exists in the current research regarding this subject, and students’ personal experiences were intended to be the focus of the study. In a neutral, nonthreatening setting, one-on-one interviews were conducted with each participant. As described in detail in the next chapter, data collection was based solely on each participant’s genuine response to interview questions, which highlighted their personal academic journeys.
Each unique testimony permitted not only a greater depth of understanding of their respective ideologies of interest, but also more valid findings.

**Research Design**

**Population and Sample**

The student population chosen for this research was at-risk community college students who participated in RISE as a student support program and who successfully completed two-year degrees and transferred to four-year universities. The purposeful sample of seven students selected from this population was a group of SCC RISE alumni who fit this demographic. Although this sample was particularly small, the narrative questions provided to each participant in the interviews were intended to elicit extensive feedback for an in-depth perspective of each student’s experience and to provide personalized, qualitative data for the research study.

This sample was selected not to represent the overall population of at-risk students, but for the subjects’ consistency with the aforementioned student population. Because existing research shows that students at risk for attrition are often ethnic minorities, first-generation college students, and socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals, this purposeful sample aimed to reflect these demographics. The intended interview sample consisted of male and female. These individuals represented the most likely groups of students to face academic challenges in colleges or universities. Participants were African American, Polynesian, and Latino/a individuals who had successfully completed their undergraduate degrees. The methods were selected to
provide data that is informed with rich human experiences. The numbers and statistics often involved in quantitative research findings do not always depict exactly how students themselves view their own success. In order for academic institutions to determine the best ways to assist students, it is important for research to consider and highlight students’ individual voices and opinions. Therefore, this study’s methodological approach was mainly qualitative.

**Composition of the Sample**

In order to clearly show the campus climate at City College and give the reader a clear understanding of the demographic data, a series of graphs (Figures 1-3) and a table (Table 1) have been introduced.

In Figure 1, the data indicates the range of ethnicities out of a total population of 24,242 students at City College. The African American student population in 2013 was 3,064 (12.8%); the Latino/a student population was 6,541 (27.45); the Filipino student population was 679 (2.8%), and Pacific Islander student population was 323 (1.4%).
In Figure 2, the charts indicate the percentage of First-Generation College Students. Although numbers decreased from Fall 2009 to Fall 2013, 40% of the college student population has declared themselves to be First-Generation college students as of 2013.
Figure 2  SCC College Students, by First-Generation Status (Fall 2009 to Fall 2013)

SCC College Students, by First Generation Status (Fall 2009 to Fall 2013)

Data Source: California Community College Chancellor’s Office Data Mart (Fall 2013)

Charts in Figure 3 indicate the Household Income Levels of SCC Students.

According to the charts, 9,884 of the student population fall below poverty-level income levels as of Fall 2013. The percentage of students living in households with middle income or higher has been declining over the last five years. The percentage of students with household incomes below the poverty line has increased over the last three years; in Fall 2013 it was over 40%.
According to the data analysis shown in Table 1 with regard to access, Pacific Islanders and Filipinos have the lowest proportionality between their participation in feeder high schools and their enrollment at SCC. African American students showed approximately 20% lower rates of course completion than Whites and Asians. African American and Latino students also experienced the greatest adverse impact in terms of progression from basic skills Math and English to college-level coursework. In addition, African-American students show much lower rates in degree/certificate completion, and
African-American and Latino students comprise the two lowest-performing groups in transfer rates. These identified disproportionate impacts are summarized in the Table 1.

Table 1

SCC Summary of Student Equity Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equity Indicator</th>
<th>Lowest Performing Group (Adversely impacted)</th>
<th>Highest performing Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Pacific Islander and Filipino students have the lowest proportionality.</td>
<td>Two or more races Whites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful Course Completion</td>
<td>African-Americans (53% success)</td>
<td>Asians (73% success) White (72% success)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL &amp; Basic Skills Progress Completion</td>
<td>Whites (34% progress completion)</td>
<td>Asians (51% progress completion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math &amp; Basic Skills Progress Completion</td>
<td>African-Americans (10% progress completion) Hispanic (18% progress completion)</td>
<td>Asians (31% progress completion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English &amp; Basic Skills Progress Completion</td>
<td>African Americans (24% progress completion)</td>
<td>Asians (49% progress completion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree/Certificate Completion</td>
<td>African-Americans (33% completion)</td>
<td>Filipinos (69% completion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer/Completion</td>
<td>African-Americans (32% completion) Hispanic (33% completion)</td>
<td>Asians (58% completion)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Student Equity Plan (2014). Sacramento City College, Planning, Research & Institutional Effectiveness Office.*
Individual Participant Profiles

A brief description of the participants’ ethnicity and gender are presented in order to introduce them prior to explaining the findings of the study. Following participant descriptions is each interview question, followed (in brief) participant responses and an overall analysis of the trends found in their responses.

1. Anthony – African American Male
2. Bailey – African American Male
3. Gladys – Mexican/Latina Female
4. Jackie – Mexican/Latina Female
5. Jesus – Mexican/Latino Male
6. Lia – Polynesian/Tongan Female
7. Mark – Filipino American Male

All the participants selected their pseudonyms, which are used throughout the chapter to provide confidentiality and protect their identities.

Design of the Study

As mentioned above, this study used qualitative research through participant interviews to relate SCC RISE alumni experiences to existing research on student success, attrition, persistence, and graduation. Participants were asked four open-ended narrative questions (see Appendix B) aimed at eliciting information about their experiences as RISE students with transfer, personal challenges, campus resources, and academic success. These interview questions reflected the aforementioned research
questions and encouraged participants to freely express their perspectives of how RISE affected their academic outlook. Students were able to identify some of the issues and struggles they faced in their efforts to achieve their academic goals with the goal of suggesting how community college professionals can continue to work towards reducing overall student attrition.

**Data Collection Procedures**

For this study, research subjects participated in confidential, recorded, one-on-one semi-structured interviews. These subjects were selected purposefully from the SCC RISE alumni database and were contacted via email distribution. Many RISE alumni students keep in touch with counselors at RISE and often visit after graduation to share their stories. Knowing these alumni’s basic backgrounds, the RISE counselors identified a group of twenty students who matched the research criteria for this study. Ten random students from this sample of twenty were contacted via email to participate in the study, and seven responded, agreeing to participate. Criteria for selection were historically underrepresented former City College RISE students who had transferred to 4-year universities and completed bachelor’s degrees. The students represented first-generation status, ethnic minority groups, and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. Also, because student confidentiality and anonymity were both of utmost importance in this research, all students’ names have been changed for the purpose of concealing their identities.


**Instrumentation**

All interviews were recorded with a digital recording device. After the initial identification of potential study participants, the researcher was the sole individual involved in the data collection process. During the study, data was maintained on an encrypted, secured laptop with a passcode to protect the confidentiality of participants. Only the principal investigator possessed the passcode and access to this data. Participants’ feedback will be presented in summative form, and participants will be assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

Participants’ recorded interviews were transcribed into separate Word documents, and these files were stored on a password-protected computer. The transcribed interviews were then reviewed extensively for trends in responses to the interview questions. Recurrent wording and phrases linked to the study’s research questions were highlighted in these Word documents and this wording was later transferred to a table and organized by response. Similarities among alumni responses were delineated and later elaborated on in the subsequent chapters of the study.

**Limitations**

Although the research has reached its aims, there were some unavoidable limitations. First, this study was conducted only on a small sample of seven individuals who were RISE alumni. Although a significantly larger sample of alumni would have
been more likely to give a better representation of the overall population, this small sample allowed for an in-depth perspective of each student’s experience. If a larger sense of the overall population was desired, more students would need to be interviewed. In addition, because the participants for this study had largely moved to other parts of the state or country since their community college careers, it was more difficult to plan and schedule their personal interviews. In this study, there was also more emphasis placed on explaining why people think and behave in certain ways. In turn, this made it more difficult to neatly fit participant responses in standard categories.

**Summary**

This chapter described the methods and procedures used to obtain the data, how the data were analyzed and interpreted, and how the conclusions were drawn. In addition, it explained the setting of the study and its research design. Included in this research design was the population of alumni subjects who participated in recorded interviews for the purpose of narrative data collection. The chapter gave details about the instrumentation used for this data collection as well as the procedures utilized for data analysis. Finally, limitations in the research were discussed.
Chapter 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This research study explores the effects of the RISE program at City College on underrepresented students’ academic success. The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1) What role do Student Service programs such as RISE play in underrepresented students’ academic, personal, and professional lives?

2) What principles of practice are essential to the success of Student Service Programs such as RISE in helping underserved students reach their academic goals?

The data from the study are presented and explained in this chapter. When exploring and describing the participants’ academic endeavors, the results are organized and presented in a descriptive narrative that focuses on commonality and trends found throughout the research. Throughout the chapter, participant quotations are extensively used to provide examples and illustrations of their academic experiences while involved with the RISE program at City College. The participants defined a feeling of connectedness and a sense of belonging while reflecting on the RISE program at City College (SCC), which motivated them to stay focused in order to achieve their academic goals. Four factors were found to be instrumental in shaping the participants’ sense of belonging while engaged in the RISE program: (1) community; (2) counseling; (3) available resources, and (4) transfer.
This chapter will first provide an overview and breakdown of the student demographics at City College to offer a context for the participants’ individual profiles. Within this campus breakdown, ethnicity, first-generation status, household income levels, and student equity indicators are discussed. The chapter will also present a brief description of each participant’s profile, including information about ethnicity and gender. As mentioned in the previous chapter, all participants met the purposeful demographic criteria for this study which included ethnic minorities, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and first-generation college students. These particular characteristics placed participants in the category of “at-risk” in higher education (Sanchez, 2010, p. 29). Nonetheless, each participant successfully attended a 4-year university and obtained their respective degrees after transferring out of City College.

Findings and Interpretation of the Data

Several trends emerged from the interviews conducted with the research participants for this study. In their responses to the four interview questions, alumni explained their experiences related to the ways in which the RISE program assisted them in overcoming challenges, utilizing program resources, and feeling a deep sense of community at their college.
First-Generation Challenges Overcome through RISE

Conflicting expectations inside and outside the college environment. As mentioned in the Chapter 2 Review of Literature, first-generation community college students face a number of different challenges throughout their academic journeys (Kolajo, 2004; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009). One such challenge faced by first-generation students is a sense of conflict between who they are as college students and the expectations of family and other outside influences on their lives. Community college student support service programs such as RISE can assist students in overcoming this particular challenge. For instance, when asked to explain what challenges (if any) she was able to overcome by utilizing RISE’s services, Gladys explained that developing a sense of belonging in RISE helped her face obstacles at home and the conflict they created when juxtaposed with her college life. She explained:

I’m a first-generation college student; my parents always encouraged me to go to school but they did not have the institutional knowledge to help me navigate through college. They are immigrants from Mexico, their rancho Las Jicamas Guanajuato only has primary education so they came to this country to work so that we could go to school and succeed. At the same time they did not want me, a Mexican woman, to continue my education past the age of 26 because they wanted me to be married and have children. A challenge I faced was balancing my personal responsibilities and school work. RISE helped me with that.

As evidenced in Gladys’ narrative, campus support service programs like RISE can assist first-generation students in creating a bridge between their academic lives and their
worlds outside of school. Although her family encouraged her to get an education, the intricacies of college life and the challenges it creates for students were unknown to her family. As such, their encouragement was inconsistent with the expectations of the academic institution. In cases such as these, community college faculty and staff in support service programs can act as liaisons to help first-generation students make sense of their academic goals (Cooper, 2010).

Similarly, in his interview, Jesus explained that his life outside of college was extremely different from his experiences at school, and RISE allowed him to negotiate these differences. He stated: “Given that a significant number of the people I grew up with have experienced prison, gun violence, and death, I consider myself extremely lucky and fortunate. I owe that fortune to RISE because it gave me the resources I needed to reframe my outlook towards the world and the understanding I have of myself.” As an at-risk community college student, Jesus was able to use RISE to his advantage to resolve the conflicts he faced between his personal life and academic career.

**Navigating the college system.** Many other first-generation students also face the challenge of deciphering the often-confusing community college system. When asked about what role (if any) the RISE program played in their decisions to transfer to a 4-year university, the study’s participants shared a number of contributing factors. Some participants expressed that the RISE program played a vital role in their decisions to transfer because it allowed them to navigate through the confusing process of moving on to a four-year university after community college. Lia stated:
RISE was essentially the most instrumental factor in my decision to transfer to a 4-year University. As a first-generation student I did not have any previous knowledge of the college process. RISE equipped me with the knowledge necessary to navigate the community college, transfer process, and college application process. The college tours RISE offered assisted me in, not only choosing what college to apply to, but provided me with a sense of confidence. For first-generation students like Lia, campus support service programs provide a simplified means of steering through the often overwhelmingly bureaucratic community college system. Without the direct, personalized contact Lia received from faculty counselors and staff at the RISE program, she felt she would not have been able to self-assuredly select the best academic future for herself. Similarly, Jesus explained:

The academic advising helped me understand the different processes of the transfer system that I was not aware of—such as how to use Assist.org, how to take classes that would count towards my major, the transfer requirements, and how to stack my academic plan to help me have the highest possible GPA during the semester I applied to transfer. Hence, I was able to move through the system quickly and seamlessly.

Lia’s and Jesus’s experiences suggest that student support services can play a vital role in helping students move smoothly through the community college system. Research indicates that programs like RISE can provide specialized support for historically underrepresented students to assist them in persisting through their academic programs (Alvarado et al., 2012).
Building confidence. Many other first-generation college students run the risk of dropping out of school due to a lack of confidence in their personal or academic abilities (Rendon, 1994). Before encountering the RISE program, Bailey shared that his experiences in college were not fully supported by a sense of self-assurance. However, becoming involved in the RISE program gave him a feeling that opportunities existed, which built his confidence as a community college student. He explained: “everything was more accessible for me when I entered the RISE office. I never felt limited on my skill set after speaking with the counselors…” This sentiment pointed to the crucial role of support service programs in building students’ faith in themselves and their abilities rather than picking at their academic deficiencies. When community college support service programs set high expectations for the students of diverse backgrounds, these students may develop a “college-going identity” that can help them build the confidence they need to succeed academically (Lipton, Morrell, Oakes, & Rogers, 2002, p. 108-109).

In Jesus’s case, self-confidence was built as result of constructing a strong student identity. He explained: “the community and campus opportunities I had through RISE helped me recognize what I had to offer to the world; these opportunities helped me develop a sense of student identity that I previously did not possess. Once I developed that understanding of myself, I was able to access more resources and develop the skills that then led to further academic engagement and success.” Research indicates that when support services assist students in developing a strong student identity, these students further engage with their academic community and become more successful (Lipton, Morrell, Oakes, & Rogers, 2002).
RISE Resources that Led Participants to Academic Success

The RISE program at City College provides various resources to ensure student success in higher education. Participants in this research study identified a number of resources offered by the program that they believed contributed to their overall academic success.

Access to technology. Several research participants pointed out that one particular resource that allowed them to excel in their courses at City College was access to technology. This resource was deemed to be extremely important in ensuring participants’ abilities to pass their college courses. As Anthony stated, “the technology support was priceless, as I didn’t own a computer, have internet, or a printer at home. RISE provided those resources for me. Nowadays, a student is rendered nearly helpless without technology.” Similarly, Lia explained:

I was able to utilize the computers inside RISE to complete my papers and other homework as we did not have a computer or laptop at home. I was able to print there. It was much more convenient for me to do this in RISE versus going to the library as I was already comfortable with RISE.

Many first-generation students like Anthony and Lia also fall into a lower-income category, making access to technology like the aforementioned resources quite difficult. Research shows that first-generation students in a low-income category are much more likely to drop out of higher education after their first year in college than students with neither of these risk factors (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004). Without the ability to access technological resources on campus in a welcoming environment,
students like Anthony and Lia face the added hurdle of figuring out how to succeed in their classes.

_Tutoring services._ Another vital resource offered to students by the RISE program is academic tutoring across the curriculum. Many students utilize this resource each semester as a supplement to their coursework and as a support during times when they are confused about assignments or worried about potential academic failure. Bailey used tutoring during his time at RISE and described his experience as such:

RISE offered free tutoring which was a great resource for me to utilize when I was struggling in mathematics. I have always struggled in math so it was a joy to work with a student tutor who was kind and patient with me.

Community college students like Bailey who arrive at the matriculation process unprepared for college level work are often placed by City College’s assessment test into basic skills math and English courses. As Hagedorn (2007) pointed out, over 90% of first-year community college students and students of color will be required to take basic skills math and English classes, which could take years to complete. Without additional resources like academic tutoring from support service programs, students like Bailey might end up struggling with course concepts or become gradually disengaged from their classes due to the amount of time these courses take to complete.

In a similar way, Lia felt supported by the academic tutoring offered by RISE. She pointed out:

RISE had an excellent tutor that was able to assist me with the fundamentals (i.e. structure and developing an outline). He also always knew the right words to get
me motivated to start writing the paper, which was difficult to do because I dreaded writing papers. Who would have thought that the skills he helped me with would one day help me write 10-, 20-, 30-, and 40-page papers.

This type of encouragement from her fellow peer tutor provided Lia with the motivation she needed to get past her anxieties about writing—a skill she later learned would be needed throughout the remainder of her college and university careers.

Ultimately, research shows students who have the support of their peers during their college careers are able to build friendships and gain the “support needed to cope with challenging situations,” including difficult coursework (Houston Community College, n.d.). Lia’s sentiment clearly reflects the crucial nature of student support services at community colleges to offer tutoring programs for students who might otherwise lose their footing in college level coursework.

**College and university tours.** Another resource offered to students in the RISE program—one that oftentimes makes a lasting impact on many students who utilize it—is college and university tours. RISE provides a tour series of Northern California four-year universities during the fall semester and a three-day Southern California tour in the spring semester. Each individual tour allows RISE students to join a cohort of their peers on a trip to explore the physical layout of each campus, learn about resources offered, and hear personal testimonials from current students at each campus who transferred out of the RISE program at City College. In this way, many City College students begin to see the plausibility of transfer more clearly as a result of interacting with peers who have succeeded academically. Lia was one research participant who benefited from these
tours. She stated: “Travelling to four-year colleges made me feel it was possible to actually transfer to a prestigious university. It gave me the exposure I would have never received.” In a similar way, Gladys explained:

RISE inspired me to apply to universities across California through the college tour trips and mentorships. I knew that I wanted to go to college and that it was important, but I didn’t know of any universities except UC Davis and Sac State because they are close to home. During the SoCal college tour trip, I was inspired by the students of color that I met at the various university campuses. They shared their personal stories about how difficult it was for them to get to college…They also shared their success strategies… This trip opened my horizons and made me feel that if they can do it, I could do it too, and I admired the fact that these students were using their education to help our community.

Gladys was able to relate to the students who had transferred to four-year institutions in a way she had not considered before attending the college tour. Research indicates that community colleges should present transfer as realistic and achievable and create an environment that pushes students to attain academic excellence (Handel, 2006, p. 5).

For Jesus, the various opportunities provided by the RISE program, including college and university tours, gave him a sense motivation he did not believe was naturally inherent within him as a first-generation community college student at the beginning of his academic career. He pointed out:

The college tour that RISE offered to universities made the experience real.

Every time we stepped onto a campus, the reality of transferring felt more real.
Then, when I heard the stories of the people who had transferred, I felt like I could do it, too. They were just like me, so I figured: if they could do it, so could I. I would have not had access to those intrinsic tools of motivation if it had not been for the RISE program.

In the absence of academic support from family members and other outside sources of encouragement, community college support service programs like RISE can help students find a sense of inner motivation needed to succeed as Jesus described (Gabbard, 2006; Poisel & Stinard, 2005).

**Peer mentorship.** Peer mentorship is another invaluable student resource offered by the RISE program that a number of the research participants mentioned in their interviews. Many former RISE alumni return to the program and volunteer to work with current RISE students. This peer mentorship takes many forms within the program; RISE mentors conduct leadership workshops, community enrichment activities, and academic conferences as well as guide current RISE students in more informal ways daily by sharing their own experiences, providing students with advice, and offering different approaches to solving academic problems. When asked what resources she used while participating in the RISE program, Gladys identified peer mentorship as crucial to her success. She explained:

The mentorships in RISE were key to my success as a first-generation woman of color in higher education. [There were many] very supportive students and mentors in the program that I admired. The foundation of the program is student leadership; their leadership and drive in their own education inspired my own
self-determination in my education. If I needed a resource, they were there to support me. We would help each other with papers, math, information on how to apply to college, and emotional support.

Research shows that emotional support and mutual respect like the type Gladys explained above allows students to build trust in each other and ultimately become more comfortable with the prospect of achieving their own success (Savitz-Romer et al., 2009).

Mark also described a personal struggle in his life that he was able to overcome as a result of close personal contact with a RISE mentor. The empathy and nonjudgmental attitude of his mentor allowed Mark to persevere through a difficult time in his life. He explains:

I remember getting arrested and going to jail for a DUI…I remember showing up to school on that Monday, and one of the first people I told was [my RISE mentor]…The situation had broken my confidence, and I felt lost…but [my mentor] was able to calm me down… I remember him sitting down with me…and he said, “Look, you know you f____ up, but we’re gonna fix this. Let’s map it out…” He spent the next hour with me…putting together a plan of how to get my situation under control. He didn’t have to do that for me. That’s the type of community those RISE [mentors] build though. As a student, you know they have your back inside and outside the classroom.

According to the research literature, mentoring is a valuable strategy to provide students with the emotional and instrumental support students need to achieve the goal of a college degree. By providing information, guidance, and encouragement, mentors can
play an important role in nurturing students’ college aspirations, helping them prepare for college and, advising them on how to make successful transitions from high school to their first year on campus (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996). In addition, mentoring for students in college helps students to feel more connected and engaged on campus, which can ultimately improve student outcomes (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2009). In Mark’s circumstance, the advice and support he received from his mentor was monumental in his academic success.

**Academic counseling.** RISE also provides two full-time faculty counselors and a staff of part-time faculty counselors who are available to meet with RISE students on a daily basis for scheduled or walk-in counseling appointments. During these appointments, students may ask questions or receive advice about a wide range of academic topics, including but not limited to educational planning, transfer university selection, and the college application process. Many of the counselors who work in the RISE program reflect the student demographics at City College as individuals of color or former first-generation college students themselves. Research participants spoke in their interviews about how counseling contributed to their overall academic success. Jackie explained:

> I used the counseling services, which was extremely beneficial. I continued to seek guidance from RISE’S two counselors well into my bachelor program at UC Riverside and graduate program at San Jose State. The counselors at RISE are the head of the family. They understand your struggle.
For first-generation students like Jackie, student support service programs like RISE can assist them in successfully completing their degrees by providing counseling as a resource (Muraskin, 1997). In particular, Jackie felt as though her counselors took a personal interest in her life and goals, and she remained connected to them throughout her entire academic career and beyond into her professional life. Their support of her academic progress and belief in her abilities carried her through each stage of her learning.

In their interviews, participants also noted the importance of counselors placing confidence in their academic abilities. For instance, Anthony stated:

My first conversation with a director/counselor of RISE asked what I wanted to do. I replied, “Go to UC Berkeley.” That was the most important point of my re-entrance into academia. He gave a simple head nod of approval and said, “Let’s do it.” He was the first person that did not show any doubt that I could actually accomplish what had seemed an unrealistic goal to others.”

Jesus expressed a similar sentiment:

The trust I was given by two counselors ultimately led me to believe that I could do much more in this world than what I had previously assumed. Without their trust, and the ongoing engagement with my peers, I would have simply been another kid out of South Sacramento going nowhere fast.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) suggested that community college counselors can provide both academic and nonacademic support that leads students to meet the
challenges they must confront. A student’s belief in him or herself can be one of these challenges.

All of these resources that the RISE program has to offer were designed to create support mechanisms to increase student success rates and support their abilities to transfer to the four-year university of their choice. Participants utilized these resources and essentially overcame challenges that were in their lives.

**A Sense of Community and a Desire to Give Back**

When asked what aspect of RISE (if any) was beneficial to their academic success, many participants acknowledged that the sense of community they experienced in the program was paramount. Their sense of belonging was influenced not only by the counselors and staff, but also by the physical space in which the program is located and by being around other people of color who were also striving for their success as it reaffirmed their beliefs that they could succeed as well. Mark explained in more detail:

The RISE office is not the easiest place to concentrate! There are students constantly in and out, working on computers, tutoring one another, talking to counselors, conversing with friends, or in general just “kickin it.” But that room offered a form of controlled chaos. The room was a sanctuary where business was handled. As loud and chaotic as that room was, everyone had the same goal: get an education. I remember feeling motivated in that space. Being at home in the chaos of that room. Specifically, when I was in that space, it was with a community of students of color, that in itself was empowering.
This sense of community created by the physical space and diverse student population found within the RISE program allowed Mark to connect with others who shared his ultimate goal—to achieve academic success. Being able to study in groups, interact with other students like himself, and gain support from encouraging faculty and staff contributed to Mark’s overall ability to persist and eventually transfer (Pike & Kuh, 2005).

Other participants’ testimonials showed that shared experiences between students and RISE staff were essential to their success as they helped participants feel as though they had a support system. Anthony explained that RISE’s “communal support and non-judgmental environment provided a safe place to focus on my academics. My professional inclusion with staff and fellow students furthered my academic development and social skills.” Indeed, studies indicate that effective campus support service programs help students create relationships not only with their peers, but also with caring and supportive faculty and staff who are willing to help students persist through their academic careers (Alvarado et al., 20012; Cooper, 2010).

Positive engagement experiences with the RISE faculty and staff allowed participants like Mark to not only reach their academic goals, but they also contributed to their personal and professional growth. When the participants felt connected to a community on social and cultural levels, they were able to identify with the overall campus experience and be accepted into the campus community as they were. For many of these participants, they found their home at RISE. Joining a support service program
for these students created a sense of belonging that they had yet to find, in addition to a place where they could share their interests with others. Jackie echoed these sentiments:

The unique thing that RISE had to offer was family. A place to call home on a campus where initially I did not feel like I belonged. For first-generation college students our presence within the college system is still a struggle. Being a part of RISE allowed me the opportunity to see my brothers and sisters (RISE peers) succeed, making it evident that I would also succeed.

Handel (2006) noted that one principle which should be implemented at community colleges to ensure a transfer going culture is the implementation of an environment where students feel a sense of belonging. Jackie’s comfort level and ability to feel at home at RISE, in part, allowed her to persist and eventually transfer to a four-year university. Her experience suggests that support service programs like RISE would do well to continue providing students with a sense of family and home in their academic environments.

For other participants, RISE created a similar family network that carried them beyond their experiences in community college and into their professional careers. Many RISE alumni, including the research participants for this study, remain in contact with each other well after their experiences at City College and use these relationships to continue supporting their professional lives. Lia explained:

There is a core group of RISE students that have become lifelong friends. These RISE students have become my family. This network has continued to be a very valuable resource in my professional career. Former RISE students are now
professionals in various areas: counselors, teachers, program managers, etc. I can count on my colleagues to provide me with job leads, community resources, and other esteemed knowledge.

Hurtado and Pojuan (2005) suggested that social and academic support networks can help students of color create a sense of belonging while at community college. In Lia’s case, this sense of belonging bolstered her academic and professional achievements beyond community college as well. The warmth and connection she felt to her environment while in the RISE program allowed her to carry this environment forward into her future endeavors and use them to her advantage.

When discussing the importance of the sense of community and family RISE fostered, participants also expressed gratitude and voiced a desire and commitment to give back to current RISE students and their community. This desire stemmed from many places, but particularly from an overall appreciation of the mentors, faculty, and staff who helped the participants through their own struggles as students while at City College. As Mark explained in depth:

One of my biggest sources of motivation to complete this doctoral program is to go back to RISE and update my picture on the wall with the letters “DR” before my name. In hopes that my photo can be a source of inspiration to others. I think that would be the best way to say thank you to all of those people in that program who helped me get to where I am today.

The “wall” Mark mentioned in his interview is a massive collage of photographs in the RISE office of students who transferred out of City College to four-year institutions and
beyond. This wall serves as a focal point in the room that not only congratulates successful students for their academic achievements but also inspires current students to strive for their highest potentials. The faces on this wall reflect the highly diverse student population at City College and encourage current RISE students to see themselves in the successes of others. Mark’s desire to give back to the RISE community is connected to his desire to be a role model for others as his mentors were for him while at City College and to be a face on the wall he frequently stared at while in RISE. Mark’s way of giving back is to provide what Gabbard (2006) regarded as the encouragement students need to believe that they are capable of achievements demonstrated by students before them.

Ultimately, the responses from RISE alumni rendered authentic testimonies to each participant’s personal experiences with the RISE program. These testaments inadvertently reflected the overall RISE mission statement which reads:

- A space on campus where students feel valued, respected, at ease, and confident.
- RISE is a space where students have an opportunity to share their victories, defeats, opinions, and talents regardless of their educational and personal backgrounds. Our goal entails creating student support systems, helping pupils develop a sense of student identity, and creating avenues for campus and community engagement.

Overall, the sense of community built into the RISE program was found to have a profound impact on the participants’ academic experiences.
Summary

As first-generation students, the participants identified a number of challenges they were able to overcome by utilizing RISE as a support service program. These challenges included negotiating conflicting expectations inside and outside the college environment, navigating the often confusing college system, and building confidence in their academic abilities. Participants also identified a number of resources that played crucial roles in their overall success. These resources were access to technology, academic tutoring services, college and university tours, peer mentorship, and academic counseling. As a result of their involvement in the RISE program, participants also noted the importance of a feeling a sense of community and a desire to give back.

Overall, the participants’ responses to the interview questions suggested that academic success is tied to a number of factors, both academic and nonacademic. The narrative feedback provided by participants pointed to the notion that community college support service programs like RISE can assist students with not only the external challenges they face, such as not being able to access computers or printers while writing college essays, but also with internal challenges like personal confidence or conflicting family expectations. Ultimately, RISE provided a sense of community for the research participants that may not have existed for them had they not taken advantage of all that this support service program had to offer.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This thesis utilizes extensive historical and contemporary research as well as case study interviews to explore the engagement experiences of seven historically underrepresented community college students who participated in the RISE program at City College. The study first introduced a review of literature that provided a background on community colleges, the student support services housed within them, and the relation of these support services to persistence and retention for underrepresented students. This review of literature also examined the individual and unique challenges faced by various populations of underrepresented students in order to show how student support services can assist them in achieving their academic goals.

The qualitative methodology was presented, along with the procedures for qualitative data collection and analysis. Interviews were conducted with seven participants who reflected various factors that commonly place students at risk of academic failure or dropout in the community college system. An in-depth analysis of each participant’s personal testimony captured firsthand accounts of their authentic academic experience as it related to the RISE program. These interviews revealed common trends amongst participants’ responses that pointed to the beneficial services and support they received while accessing resources in the RISE program. Participants identified several influential, positive factors linked to this student support service program: academic counseling, a sense of community, readily accessible resources, and
an opportunity to build student identity, family, leadership, opportunity, confidence, motivation, and encouragement. Findings suggested that student support services like the RISE program benefit underrepresented students and help them build student identity, supportive relationships, and the tools needed for academic success.

**Conclusions**

A sense of belonging emerged in the participants’ responses about their experiences in the RISE community. The data revealed that a feeling of connectedness to a community (RISE), positive representation of people of color and adequate support created an encouraging and safe environment for the participants. These components of student services at City College are essential circumstances for promoting engagement among students of color. In an attempt to find their communities, these students often seek out people and environments that are harmonious with their own values and expectations.

Indeed, the participants in this study revealed that they felt most connected to the campus community when they were among other people of color who shared their beliefs and values. In addition, the participants described how a feeling of connectedness, acceptance, being valued and respected as well as the experience of mattering helped them to stay focused and motivated to perform their civic-related activities. These findings are in line with Strayhorn’s (2012) observation that a sense of belonging takes
on heightened importance for marginalized students of color who are prone to feeling excluded on a college campus.

In order to help maximize students’ sense of belonging to their environment, campus student service programs should adhere to the principles of diversity and multiculturalism. Campuses and communities that have broad and diverse values create more opportunities for marginalized students to find their place, their ‘niche’, in these communities and form a sense of belonging.

In reflecting on participants’ interview responses in relation to the existing literature about student support service programs, however, this research revealed that more could be done by community colleges to create programs like RISE that provide many different resources and services in one centralized location. Currently, many community colleges compartmentalize services for students, for instance, providing academic counseling in a designated counseling program, academic tutoring in writing or learning resource centers, and access to technology in computer labs. Support services programs like these, although they provide specific forms of crucial support for students, also require students to navigate their campuses to find them and keep track of each program’s separate policies and hours of operation to utilize them. One very large benefit of RISE as a support services program is that virtually all of these services are housed under one roof, allowing students to access a one-stop location where many of their various needs may be met. The participants’ responses to interview questions certainly suggested that academic success cannot be attributed to any one factor in
particular. Therefore, perhaps community colleges should re-envision current models of support services programs to include multidisciplinary options like RISE on other campuses.

RISE’s one-stop model as a support services program also likely contributed to the participants’ sense of connection to the community environment since they were interacting with the same faculty and staff in the program on a frequent and consistent basis. Participants’ personalized and continual interaction with a small number of academic counselors, peer mentors, tutors, and staff allowed them to create strong and long-lasting bonds with individuals they grew to trust. Much of the literature reviewed for this study reinforced the notion that a sense of belonging to a campus community is important to student success. This study’s in-depth look at participants’ experiences in the RISE program again suggested that other community college support services programs could perhaps develop and nurture this sense of community by providing many different types of services to students in one location rather than offering separate, individual services in multiple locations.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

In an effort to improve persistence and completion among underrepresented students, more research is needed. There is a significant need for a detailed, comprehensive, and rigorous analysis of the comparative effects of different retention strategies, with a special focus on the distinct frameworks of student support services. It would be beneficial to have a larger research sample of underrepresented students to
more accurately find connections and themes in regards to student support services. It would be valuable to expand the analysis to incorporate factors such as different sized community colleges and geographic locations across the country to compare answers and topics that may arise. A survey of community colleges that have actively implemented certain efforts to increase the number of student support services that assist underrepresented students would be beneficial in order to examine if an increase in persistence, graduation, and transfer rates is occurring and to evaluate such efforts.
Appendix A

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
APPENDIX A

Research Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in research, which will be conducted by Valerie Moore, a graduate student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (EDLP) at California State University, Sacramento. This study will examine the educational experiences of a sample of previous Sacramento City College students who actively participated in the RISE Program, transferred and successfully completed a 4-year degree. This study is to relate former SCC RISE alumni experiences to existing research on student success, attrition, persistence, and graduation.

You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one, audio-recorded interview, which will take about two hours of your time. A confidential identification number will be used to identify your interview, and these numbers will be destroyed after your participation. This process will ensure your privacy during and after your involvement in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If at any point in time and for any reason, you would prefer not to participate in this study, please feel free not to. You will not be penalized in any way for deciding to stop participation. Active respondents are welcome but not obligated to contact RISE program coordinator Keith Muraki (contact information below) at any time to discontinue study participation. If you choose to not be in this study, this choice will not negatively affect your affiliation with Sacramento City College present or future.

Some of the questions in the interview may seem personal, but you are not required to answer any question with which you’re not comfortable. Likewise, if any of the interview questions make you feel uncomfortable, you are free to not answer them. In the event that you may feel emotionally distressed by any portion of this study, you may contact Sacramento City College’s Health Services office at (916) 558-2367. This office is located on SCC’s main campus in Rodda North, room 125.

By participating in this research, you may have the opportunity to reflect upon and personally benefit from an understanding of the various factors that assisted you in college. It is hoped that this research may help both students and educators gain a greater understanding of the educational factors that lead to gradual disengagement with college and eventual dropping-out. You may end your participation in this research study at any time.

Your interview will be conducted in a confidential subject number instead of your name to ensure privacy. After the transcription of your interview, the audiotape used to record your voice will be destroyed, and during the transcription period, the tape will be stored in a secure location.
You will receive no monetary compensation for participating in this study.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact thesis advisor Dr. Geni Cowan at gcowan@csus.edu; Valerie Moore at (916) 558-2134 or moorev@scc.losrios.edu. In addition, you may contact RISE program coordinator Keith Muraki at (916) 558-2437 or murakik@scc.losrios.edu.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your signature below indicates that you have read this page and agree to participate in the research.

_____________________________  ________________________________
(Signature of Participant)       (Date)
Appendix B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. What role (if any) did the RISE program play in your decision to transfer to a 4-year college/university? Please explain.

2. How would you describe your academic experiences as a result of participating in the RISE program? Please explain challenges (if any) that you were able to overcome by utilizing RISE’s services.

3. What resources did you utilize (if any) while in the RISE program? Did you benefit from these resources?

4. What aspect of RISE (if any) was beneficial in your academic success?
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