The Perception of First-Generation Community College Students with Regards to the Academic Impact of Student Support Services: A Phenomenological Study

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The Perception of First-Generation Community College Students with Regards to the Academic Impact of Student Support Services: A Phenomenological Study

A Dissertation by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

April 2021

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The Perception of First-Generation Community College Students with Regards to the
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ABSTRACT

The Perception of First-Generation Community College Students with Regards to the Academic Impact of Student Support Services Programs: A Phenomenological Study

by Rubinder Garcha

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the perceptions first-generation students (FGS) have of the academic impact of student support services (SSS) received while attending community college (CC) in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills.

Methodology: The methodology used for this study was a phenomenological approach in which FGS’ perceptions about the academic impact of SSS while attending CC in the northern region of California were explored. The FGS who were interviewed for this study were consistently participating in the SSS. The study’s findings revealed the best practices utilized in SSS and might provide reasoning to adapt additional best practices that could especially be used while working with FGS.

Findings: The analyzed data resulted in eight themes and 75 references. All participants contributed to six themes that emerged, identifying the academic impact on FGS with regards to the received student support services.

Conclusions: After completing the literature review and interviewing 10 FGS who had been consistently participating in the SSS, the study results concluded that SSS had a significant academic impact on first-generation CC students in the northern California in the areas of student academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills.
**Recommendations:** Based on the findings from the study, five recommendations were put forth for future research to advance the understanding and best practices of SSS that may lead to make a significant academic impact on FGS retention and graduation rates.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“I am a first-generation college student and my journey in college hasn’t been easy” is a common statement heard from many students in community colleges (CC) across the United States (Estoque, 2017). However, first-generation students (FGS) are one of the fastest-growing demographics in 2-year colleges in the country which makes the chances of hearing that refrain even greater (C. J. Williams, 2017). A FGS is someone whose parents did not attend college, and they are the first in the family to attend college (Engle, Bermeo, & O’Brien, 2006). Based on the research that was completed by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), only 25% of students with college-educated parents attend CC compared to nearly 50% of FGS (Escarcha, 2018). While FGS are known as equally intelligent and motivated as their peers who are non-first generation, they tend to lack necessary resources and academic developmental skills to navigate the U.S. education system. Students without college-savvy adults to guide them can struggle to persist in college and attain a degree.

CCs continue to be the schools of choice for more than half of U.S. college students, especially FGS (C. J. Williams, 2017). However, the lack of college experience in the backgrounds of FGS creates obstacles to their academic success. Therefore, student support services (SSS) programs have been implemented to provide intrusive student support to this unique demographic of students, thereby contributing to their academic success, persistence rates, and improved retention (Nall, 2017). Notwithstanding these noble gestures, FGS continue to drop out of 2-year colleges; therefore, retention remains a challenge for 2-year institutions (Craider, 2014).
Although SSS programs assist FGS in meeting their academic goals, it behooves us to become acquainted with their perceptions about these programs to understand how they help them to succeed academically complete a degree, and transfer to four-year institutions (Hazari, 2014). The perceptions of FGS are instrumental in determining their academic success. Likewise, research explains that understanding FGS perceptions are useful in learning their academic barriers, behaviors, and inferences that are made by educational leaders, staff, peers and others (Hazari, 2014). Understanding the perceptions of FGS on SSS programs could help college leaders better design student resource services to improve overall academic success, including student achievement (GPA), student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills (Gibson & Slate, 2010).

**Background**

This section covers eight components: (a) a brief history of FGS in community college; (b) defining FGS; (c) barriers encountered; (d) theoretical framework; (e) research variables; (f) student support services programs; (g) the academic impact of SSS programs; and (h) a gap in the literature. The background section provides an overview of these components, and they will be discussed in more detail in Chapter II.

**A Brief History of First-Generation Students in Community College**

CCs are known as two-year significant educational landscape colleges (Cooper, 2010) for students in our country and play a crucial role in American higher education. CC have been in existence since 1901, and the Truman Commission Report that was issued in 1947 argued that every citizen, youth, and adult is enabled and encouraged to pursuer higher learning in the United States (The President’s Commission of Higher
Education, 1947). This report was a call to provide affordable public higher education opportunities with comprehensive programs to serve community needs (The President’s Commission of Higher Education, 1947). Since then, CC have grown exponentially and offer various degree programs, certifications, and training programs. Today, CC have become a gateway to opportunity for millions of students who come from various demographics.

The FGS demographic has grown fast over the past few decades in the U.S. CC system (Cooper, 2010). CC is known as a 2-year college that serves as a pathway to postsecondary education for many students, especially low-income, disadvantaged, disabled, and first-generation students. Because CC makes education accessible to students by offering open admission policies, locations near home, and lower tuition-rates they are a reasonable choice for FGS (Ma & Baum, 2016). Given their distinct, and sometimes contradictory missions and the vast array of constituencies they serve, it is difficult to classify CC and the methodologies they use to develop educational outcomes for students in a one-size-fits-all business model. Nonetheless, a strategy for growing student persistence and academic development lies in the purview of SSS programs.

Researchers have studied and defined FGS since the early 1980s. FGS are considered to be one of the student populations that needs attention when it comes to retention, persistence rates, and academic success among college students. Also, research about FGS shows that retention and persistence have been ongoing issues, causing CC to retain ongoing statistical data records to review the retention and persistence rates of each demographic of students (Craider, 2014). This development has caused CC retention centers to offer many theories of why students leave the institutions without completing a
degree. Models of student retention and persistence suggest that academic success is a result of three factors: (a) those factors that are relative upon college admission, such as the availability of SSS, including financial aid, academic climate, tutoring, student orientation by the faculty, availability of required courses, housing and roommate arrangements, and access to a mentor or academic advisor; (b) those that precede college enrollment, like family values regarding education, including parental education background, attendance of a high school that fosters a college-going culture, and the intent to attend college and to have the academic success in high school to matriculate into a postsecondary education institution; (c) factors that are relative to personal development, such as self-identity affirmation and social mobility informed by academic and personal goals (Astin, 1993; Castle, 1993; Tinto, 1993).

**Defining the First-Generation Student**

There are varying definitions for the term FGS, based on the existing research. Nevertheless, all definitions focus on identifying parental educational background to determine if a student qualifies as “first-generation.” The U.S. Department of Education’s Higher Education Act of 1965, and its amendments in 1998, clearly defines a first-generation college student as a student whose two parents did not complete a bachelor’s degree (Sundquist, 2019). In such cases, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) definition is not supported by all colleges. Most colleges have their own definition of first-generation based on the student population and the parent and family education background of the students they serve.

According to Cunningham, Cooper, Leegwater, and Smith (2012), an FGS is someone whose parents did not attend postsecondary education or those whose parents
did not earn a degree. First-generation does not mean that a student is from a minority population but that they are “more likely than their peers to be racial/ethnic minorities” (Cunningham, Cooper, Leegwater, & Smith, 2012, p. 3). Researchers have also used definitions of first-generation based on their background or personal experience (Cooper, 2010; Craider, 2014; Nall, 2017). Keeping their own experiences in mind, these researchers created definitions based on existing research that supports their studies.

Engle et al. (2006) used a common definition of FGS in the research defined as “a student whose parents did not attend college and he or she is the first in the family to attend college” (p. 7). A FGS definition employed by Engle et al. is used in this research to identify the target FGS population because this research is informed by personal and professional experience and contributes to FGS research in academia.

**Barriers Encountered by First Generation Students**

All students encounter academic challenges on the way to higher education. However, FGS are more likely to experience academic barriers in college due to their family’s educational background compared to non-first-generation college students (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). A National Center for Education study found that students whose parents completed high school and attended college are more likely to enroll in college immediately after graduation, compared to students whose parents have less than a high school education or never attended college (as cited in Bettencourt, 2018).

There are different types of barriers that students encounter while attending college which can be academic, social, emotional, career, and financial in nature. Nevertheless, available research indicates that the most common obstacles that FGS encounter include academic self-efficacy, academic preparedness, academic integration,
social integration with peers, lack of parental support, and financial concerns (Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014). These barriers affect academic success and persistence and graduation rates.

Lozano-Partida (2018) researched the obstacles on the path to higher education for FGS and found that academic barriers have the highest impact on FGS’ persistence and graduation rates. Colleges need to design and improve programs that provide additional support and resources to FGS (Lozano-Partida, 2018). Another study concluded that to improve transfer rates and remove barriers for FGS, CC should: (a) ensure students have access to rigorous high school curricula; (b) expand access to and strengthen college and career counseling; (c) facilitate access to the financial aid system; (d) reexamine academic advising programs to erasure they are serving the needs of FGS; and (e) reduce barriers to transferring to 4-year colleges by developing comprehensive transfer and articulation policies (Turk, 2017).

**Theoretical Frameworks**

The purpose of SSS programs is to increase the number of disadvantaged low-income college students, first-generation college students, and college students with disabilities in the United States that successfully complete a program of study at the postsecondary level (Coleman, 2015). These services support the foundational aspirations of these general education goals by narrowing program services (Coleman 2015). Although there are no other student services like SSS that target the overall academic achievement of FGS, Tinto (2004) and Hodge (2017) encourage SSS to continue to meet the unique needs of FGS. Wanger and Dintersmith (2016) illustrated that in the 21st century, it is imperative for institutional administrators to incorporate
students’ perceptions on programs to improve retention, increase persistence rates, and support academic success. Hence, the researcher used marginality theory, sensory stimulation theory, holistic theory, and facilitation theory to frame the concepts that explained issues associated with the impact of SSS on FGS academics. A brief explanation of each of these follows:

- **Marginality theory** describes that students who build perception that they do not belonged in college are likely to achieve negative outcomes (N. J. Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009). Schlossberg’s marginality theory emphasized that importance of postsecondary institutions to reach out to new students, especially the ones who are less likely to be prepared for college, to make them feel included (Dunn, 2002).

- **Sensory stimulation theory** has basic premise that effective learning takes place when the senses are stimulated and this theory states that if multi-senses are stimulated, greater learning takes places (Laird, 1985).

- **Holistic theory** indicates that an individual’s character incorporates many factors including emotions, intelligence, desire, and intuition (Laird 1985), all of which can influence behavior. In higher education, these factors must be initiated to provide meaningful experiences and develop meaningful learning.

- **Facilitation theory** explains that learning will occur by the educator acting as a facilitator, that is by establishing an atmosphere in which learners feel comfortable to consider new ideas and not fear by external factors (Cummings, 2014; Laird, 1985).
Research Variables

The variables that are addressed in this research are:

- Student academic achievement is the extent to which a student has achieved their short or long-term educational goals such as 2.0 or higher cumulative GPA, degree competition, certification attainment, and transfer to a 4-year university (Cummings, 2014). Educational leaders aim to develop strategies, goals, interventions, programs, and enhance SSS to increase students’ academic achievement rates (Illahi & Khandai, 2015). The research states that the United States has witnessed and responded to growing and intensified public demand to raise student academic achievement in the past 20 years (Illahi & Khandai, 2015). Research recommends a social adaptation method to colleges and universities personnel to improve student achievement.

- Student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (The Great Schools Partnership, 2016). Student engagement provides the ability to acquire and practice the necessary skills to build a successful career. Further, research shows that student engagement builds better relationship with other students, staff, and faculty and help the students understand governance within the institution education system (“Importance of Student,” 2019).

- Student persistence refers to the student’s registration status to be enrolled in classes until completing their degree program (Cummings, 2014; Hodge,
SSS programs are known to be one of the effective practices to maintain persistence rates by colleges (Cooper, 2010; Craider 2014; Nall, 2017). The growing diversity in California requires more attention to the persistence rate of specific student populations that struggle more than their peers in college.

- Student satisfaction is described as a short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of student’s educational experiences and services (Weerasinghe, Lalitha, & Fernando, 2017). Research reveals that it is important for higher education professionals to understand students’ perceptions about their satisfaction with college experiences, including SSS, and educational experiences to provide much needed, high quality educational programs especially for first-generation, low-income, disadvantaged, and at risk student populations (Cummings, 2014; R. M. Evans 2016). By paying more attention to these students’ satisfaction, such services can increase student success in college and persistence to a degree by providing them with additional resources and opportunities for becoming integrated into college environment (Craider, 2014; Kelley- Hall, 2010).

- Development of academic skills are known as study habits, learning strategies, time management tools that help students succeed academically (Freeman & Conner, 2020). Academic skills are equality important as other academic success factors for the students’ successful educational experience. In addition, academic skills are one of the most direct ways students can affect
their learning which can later lead into college persistence and degree or certification competition (Falcon, 2015).

**Student Support Services Programs**

CC are mandated to offer SSS programs based on student demographics served by colleges (Cooper, 2010). SSS programs provide “academic, professional, and personal support services, such as, but not limited to, advising/counseling, financial aid support, mentoring, cultural experiences, and tutoring” (Nall, 2017, p. 7). The strategy behind SSS was to increase student persistence rates and improve academic success. These services are a standard feature at most institutions of higher learning. Research suggests that SSS programs play an important part in supporting successful outcomes among participants (Coleman, 2015). SSS programs cater to FGS due to their low academic-performance, retention and drop-out rates, and lower persistence.

There are various types of SSS programs designed to serve the FGS population to provide a smooth transition from high school to college, develop academic skills, provide knowledge about various programs and requirements, assist with educational finances, and further transition into higher education. The goal of SSS programs is to improve retention and increase graduation rates of their participants by enhancing their college experience (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2019). Some of the common SSS programs that serve FGS in CC include:

- Extended Opportunity Programs & Services program
- Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education program
- Counseling
- Financial aid
• Career centers

• Federal TRIO programs, including Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search

Further, the USDE (2019) requires SSS programs to offer the following services: (a) academic and transfer advising, (b) degree program course selection, (c) tutoring, and (d) financial counseling. Other additional services offered by SSS programs to support the academic, personal, and professional growth of students are cultural enrichment activities and individual counseling and mentoring.

**Academic Impact of Student Support Services Programs**

SSS programs are designed to serve the academic needs of students to increase their retention. Research illustrates that providing quality interactions between students and SSS is a key contributor to college retention and academic achievement (Habley, 2004). SSS programs have had a positive statistically significant impact on the persistence of college students. B. Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan, and Rak (1997) examined the persistence of approximately 3,000 full-time first-year students involved in SSS at 30 different institutions and the same number of students with similar characteristics at 20 institutions that did not offer SSS programs. There was a marked difference between the academic performance of students who participated in SSS programs and those who did not. The researchers also found that students who participated in SSS programs had a 7% increase in persistence during the second year over those who did not participate in SSS programs (B. Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan, & Rak, 1997).
Tinto (2004), analyzed the advantages of SSS programs to influence student persistence. He described that one of the many advantages of SSS programs is that they provide FGS and low-income students a feeling of belonging that contributes to their success (Tinto, 2004). Further, SSS programs are known as successful “retention programs” that emphasize ensuring the progress of their participants by providing services that are advantageous to their collegiate experience (USDE, 2020). For institutional administrators to gain a better understanding of the persistent challenges to student success, they must acknowledge and understand student perceptions of their SSS program experiences. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) asserted that conducting a qualitative research approach gives students a voice. Learning FGS perceptions about SSS programs can influence individual students’ decisions to continue their education and complete a degree (Coleman, 2015).

**Gap in Literature**

There is a gap in the literature regarding perceptions FGS have on the effectiveness of SSS programs in CC and how they improve their overall academic success, including student achievement (GPA), student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills. Available research emphasizes that the FGS population has been growing fast in the last few decades in CC (Hodge, 2017). For that reason, journal and research studies recommend further evaluation of SSS programs to determine their quality vis-à-vis FGS in CC (Hodge, 2017).

Additional research on SSS programs is needed so as to better understand ongoing challenges with student retention. Future research must not only focus on best practices but also on resource allocations in this era of culpability and declining resources for many
postsecondary institutions. In addition, the successful implementation of SSS programs in CC will depend on the ability of administrators to develop and institutionalize effective programs that help FGS achieve academic success (N. J. Evans et al., 2009; G. Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridgges, & Hayek, 2006). Moreover, research related to SSS programs, especially those that are designed to serve FGS, demonstrated the need to implement best practices and hire SSS staff who are “fully committed to the vision and a goals articulated by CC leaders” (Cummings, 2014, p. 121) and to what is best for sustaining student learning, development, and holistic development. To date, research has not examined the perceptions of FGS regarding the SSS services they have experiences. It is the intent of this study to address that gap.

Statement of the Research Problem

Students entering postsecondary education embody the growing diversity of the United States (Payne, Hodges, Hernandez, 2017). Research identifies new challenges for higher education, such as changing student attendance patterns and rapid demographic shifts (Cooper, 2010; Payne et al., 2017). Compelling research on U.S. higher education emphasizes a growing lack of parity concerning student academic success at many colleges and universities (Scanlan, 2019). Higher education institutions offer SSS programs that are designed to provide “academic, professional, and personal support services, such as, but not limited to, advising/counseling, mentoring, financial-aid support, and tutoring” (Nall, 2017, p. 7) to develop academic success and retention. Nall (2017) identified academic success and retention as continuing challenges for higher education institutions. Further, research by Hodge...
(2017) and Nall (2017) suggested that the insights and perspectives of FGS need to be considered and validated to meet the needs of our changing student demographics.

What, then, seems to be the reason that institutions are concerned about student academic success and retention? According to Leone and Tian (2009) and Nall (2017), student retention and academic achievement has been growing in significance in higher education throughout the country, and administrators have been actively researching and implementing strategic ways to increase student completion rates and decrease student dropout rates. Seeking to earn a college degree in the United States has increased, while choosing not to pursue postsecondary education has decreased (Mortenson, 2005). Of touted concern in higher education, especially in CCs, is a growing demographic of students with lower persistence and graduation rates, identified as FGS (Levin & Levin, 1991).

Research indicates that a majority of FGS choose to enroll at CC when it comes to an option of selecting a college (Ma & Baum, 2016). CC are mandated to offer SSS programs based on student demographics. Therefore, CC have SSS programs that are designed to serve FGS and provide additional support on their academic journey. Still, research reveals that FGS are not succeeding academically and retention continues to be a problem, in spite of SSS programs that are intended to provide them with academic support (Craider, 2014; Nall, 2017). Further, researchers have asserted that academic success issues could play a role in a student’s decision to leave an institution (Nall, 2017; Payne et al., 2017). In order to increase the overall academic success of FGS, SSS programs need to enhance FGS experiences and thereby contribute to their overall academic success. The problem is that there is not current research that identified the
needs and perceptions of FGS so that those can be considered in the planning and implementation of SSS.

Contemporary research supports the need to study FGS perceptions of the impact SSS programs have had on their persistence in CC (Craider, 2014; Nall, 2017, Payne et al., 2017). Wanger and Dintersmith (2016) illustrated that in the 21st century, it is imperative for institutions to gain an appreciation for student perceptions on programs intended to improve retention, persistence, and academic success. For example, Nall (2017) stated that additional research should be undertaken to determine the quality of SSS programs for FGS. In addition, there are gaps in the research on SSS programs in CC with regard to FGS, especially when it comes to student retention. Craider (2014) and Nal (2017) encouraged further studies to inform best practices and resource allocations for FGS in this era of accountability and declining resources for CC.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the perceptions first-generation students have of the academic impact of student support services received while attending community college in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills.

**Guiding Research Question**

This phenomenological study was guided by the following research question:

*What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of student support services they have received in community*
colleges in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills?

Research Sub-Questions

The following research sub-questions were developed to help answer the guiding research question:

1. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student academic achievement?
2. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student engagement?
3. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student persistence?
4. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student satisfaction?
5. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their development of academic skills?

Significance of the Problem

FGS today are forced with academic, financial, and cultural challenges, even as a college education is ever more necessary for career achievement. For FGS, going to
college requires stepping outside their comfort zone and not knowing what steps to take
to achieve their academic goals. That can instill feelings of disconnection and even guilt
in relation to family members and friends. It also requires a new and at time frightening
set of attitudes and behaviors. Plus, all this can occur while trying to keep up with
college-level work. For that reason, the college provides SSS programs to support FGS
in the college journey.

The SSS programs are designed to meet the academic success needs of FGS
remains an important focus of FGS higher education experts (Cooper, 2010; Hodge,
2017). Research indicates that embedding academic guidance/counseling, financial aid
support, mentoring, tutoring, and social support services in programs that are designed to
serve the FGS demographic are necessary to support advanced academic capabilities of
learners (Cummings, 2014; Nall, 2017). Recent studies validate incorporating FGS
perceptions to make program services relevant and encourage FGS engagement in SSS
programs (Craider, 2014; Cummings, 2014; Nall, 2017).

Although nearly 50% of FGS attend CC in the United States (Choy, 2001),
determining effective and impactful SSS programs to increase overall academic
achievement and graduation rates remain a challenge among CC educational experts
(Craider, 2014, Hodge, 2017). Research regarding FGS and their unique academic needs
spans decades. Primarily, FGS research emphasizes the academic potential of learners in
connection with various SSS programs from the perspective of higher education experts
(Cooper, 2010; Payne et al., 2017; Scanlan, 2019). Limited studies examine effective
SSS programs in 2-year colleges from the perspective of FGS (Craider, 2014). Studies
conducted on the effectiveness of SSS programs consistently emphasize learning FGS
perceptions to improve the efficiency of SSS programs that are designed to serve FGS in their academic, professional, and personal support (Hodge, 2017; Nall, 2017).

This study adds to the body of knowledge pertaining to effectively designed SSS programs for FGS. The study focuses on providing additional data about: (a) the impact SSS programs have on FGS overall academic achievement, including academics, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills; and (b) perceptions garnered by FGS participants of SSS programs regarding academic guidance/counseling, mentoring, financial-aid-support, tutoring, and other services offered by SSS. This study provides additional research about FGS perceptions about their academic expectations and experiences with SSS programs, which provides opportunities for CC leaders to develop strategies to improve the effectiveness of the SSS programs.

The results of this study may provide insight to the redesign of SSS programs to meet better outcomes among FGS which may include improving their academic success rates, improving persistence and retention rates, and increasing degree competition rates. CC administrators and leaders, and higher education leaders overall, can use the study’s results to develop consistent effective strategies for SSS programs to meet the academic needs of FGS. Moreover, the results of this study may influence higher education professionals to increase awareness of the FGS population with the goal of better understanding their college decision-making processes and supporting their academic progress in higher education.
**Definitions**

The following terms are used throughout the study:

*Academic achievement* is the extent to which a student has achieved their short or long-term educational goals such as 2.0 or higher cumulative GPA, degree competition, certification attainment, and transfer to a 4-year university (Cummings, 2014).

*Academic skills* are known as study habits, learning strategies, time management tools that help students succeed academically (Freeman & Conner, 2020).

*First-generation student* is someone whose parents have not attended college and he or she is the first in the family to attend college (Engle et al., 2006).

*Retention rate* refers to the “percentage of first-time, first-year students who continue the next year” (Hodge, 2017, p. 6).

*Student engagement* refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (The Great Schools Partnership, 2016).

*Student persistence* refers to the student’s registration status to be enrolled in classes until completing their degree program (Cummings, 2014; Hodge, 2017).

*Student satisfaction* is described as a short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of student’s educational experiences and services (Weerasinghe et al., 2017).

*Student support services* programs provide academic support services in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills (Nall, 2017).
Delimitations

This study was delimited to first-generation students attending community colleges and participating in student SSS programs in northern California who met the following criteria:

- First generation student as defined for the study.
- Must have been enrolled for at least one year or two semesters at a community college.
- Must have participated in and received student support services while enrolled at the community college.
- Must volunteer to participate in the study.

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters, each designed to provide systematic segments of information related to the study. Chapter I is a precis of the study including background information related to first-generation CC students and SSS programs that are designed to support them academically. Additionally, Chapter I established the research problem. Chapter II provides a review of the literature related to first-generation CC students. Chapter III provides the methodology used to collect and analyze data related to the perception of first-generation CC students with regard to student support services programs. Chapter IV focuses on findings based on the research study. Finally, Chapter V serves to analyze and evaluate data, determine the effects of the study, and develop recommendations for further research pertaining to the academic impact of student support service programs for first-generation CC students.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to the topic studied and an explanation of major elements, variables, and subsections of research presented in the review of the literature. The research questions must be shown to rest within a conceptual framework fashioned from the research published by other scholars. Sections for this chapter include first generation CC students, factors affecting SS in college, theoretical framework, SSS program, gap in the literature, and summary. The literature matrix demonstrates the literature works used in the review in this chapter (see Appendix A).

First-Generation Community College Students

CC play a crucial role in U.S. higher education (Ma & Baum, 2014). Their open admission policy, coupled with low tuition and geographic proximity to home, makes them an important pathway to postsecondary education for many students, especially FGS and those who are from low-income families, as well as adults returning to school to obtain additional training or certifications. The growing diversity in the CC demographics has been happening over the past few decades which has highlighted the increase in first-generation college student’s enrollment (C. J. Williams, 2017). The definition of FGS traditionally refers to having parents who do not have a college experience (Engle et al., 2006; C. J. Williams, 2017). However, there are various definitions that range from at least one parent without a bachelor’s degree (Nall, 2017) to parents with some college (Cooper, 2010) or an associate degree (Craider, 2014). This study defines FGS as students with neither parent having attended college and, therefore, the first in their family to attend college.
FGS encounter more challenges in the academy journey toward degree completion compared to students who are not first-generation. FGS are usually over the age of 24 and make up the highest percentage of the CC student population (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Nall, 2017; C. J. Williams, 2017). As reported by Engle and Tinto (2008) and Nall (2017) these students are less likely to complete a degree. Adult students often contend with more life circumstances that interfere with the academic journey, such as working full-time to support a family and paying bills (Nall, 2017). For these reasons, FGS historically have high drop-out rates, attend college part-time, and are underprepared for their academic journeys (Nall, 2017).

In 2018, 43% of the full-time student population was identified as FGS across the 114 California CC (California Community Colleges [CCCCO], 2018a). More than half of all college students begin at a 2-year CC; however, CCs tend to be made up of more FGS from low-income backgrounds than 4-year institutions (Bui, 2002; Crosta 2013). A large portion of FGS are represented by minorities and underrepresented students who usually come from families in the low-income quartile, which, generally, is reported as earning less than $25,000 a year (Choy, 2001). FGS socio-economic background status also impacts their college academic success. As described by Bui (2002) and Choy (2001) FGS who come from low-income families, are less likely to complete a degree.

The CC has been an important educational pathway for FGS in higher education over the decades with built-in support system and programs to support FGS academic journey (Karp et al., 2008). SSS programs such as the Extended Opportunity Programs & Services/Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education program, academic counseling, financial aid, career centers and federal TRIO programs including Upward
Bound, tutoring, and career counseling programs are common types of support designed to help FGS (Cooper, 2010; Nall 2017). Additionally, career development programs and vocational certificate programs have been increasing in CCs to increase job skills development (Cooper, 2010). While there have been increases in FGS enrollment at the CC level, this is not associated with degree completion because retention and persistence remains a challenge for 2-year institutions (Craider, 2014; Karp et al., 2008).

**Historical Perspective**

One of the fastest growing college student populations are FGS, who are defined as being the first in a family to attend college (Engle et al., 2006; Leandre, 2020; Petty 2014). To gain a better understanding of this trend, the researcher reviewed the historical background of the postsecondary education system. The researcher found that postsecondary education system is described as a pathway for the middle class, low-income, disadvantage, and disabled population to obtain higher education in the United States. In the 19th century, high school diplomas were held by less than 10% of the student population in the United States (Leandre, 2020). Today, many of the fastest growing professional positions require education beyond a high school diploma (Leandre, 2020). Due to the increase of higher education expectations in the job market, the higher education is becoming a priority for employment opportunities, source of income, economic success, and gain societal mobility (Leandre, 2020). Based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projection, the fastest growing career opportunities and highest paying jobs will require completion of a postsecondary degree (Leandre, 2020; Richards & Terkanian, 2013). For this reason, completing a college degree has become gradually important after high school for the children and grandchildren of previous generations.
Due to this fact, it has created a phenomenon where one-third of all incoming college students each year for the last decade have been identified as FGS (Thurman, 2016).

FGS are defined as students whose parents did not attend or graduate from college with a degree, and they are the first person in the family to attend college and obtain a degree (Manzoni & Streib, 2018; Tate et al., 2015). McCoy (2014) stated that “15.2% of the entire college-enrolled population was classified as first-generation in 2009” (p. 6). There was a predication made that 42% of student population in the U.S. CCs will be first-generation (McKenzie, 2014). Therefore, 43% of student population identified as FGS in the California statewide 114 CC in 2018 (CCCO, 2018a). Having the disadvantage of not receiving years of college preparation and less exposure to the college-attending culture and supportive services from parents or other family members, these learners usually “lack practical knowledge needed to successfully in higher education” (Leandre, 2020, p. 18). However, there are student support service programs offered to provide academic preparation for FGS in the CC, but these individual learners still encounter barriers to academic success (Craider, 2014; Nall, 2017). Historically, many challenges impact the enrollment, persistence, and degree competition of FGS, causing considerable concern for CCs (Gibson & Slate, 2010). Therefore, little information is known about FGS and their growing presence in higher education. The gap in literature for FGS inspired this phenomenological inquiry to learn more about FGS perception regarding student support service programs at the CC.

**Characteristics of First-Generation Students**

Learning characteristics are useful in understanding students’ readiness for college. For example, background characteristics may include but are not limited to race,
ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and family structure. Nall (2017) identified “various
groups who are considered to have background characteristics that are ‘at risk’ of
attrition” (p. 24). A noted by Tate et al. (2015) at risk students may experience lack of a
sense of belonging, rejection, and difficulty adjusting to typical academic challenges
associated with college life. A research lead by Nall (2017) identified FGS as at risk
student population due to their background characteristic.

Hodge (2017) and Nall (2017) proposed FGS should be considered an “at risk”
college student population who are subject to withdraw from tertiary study based on the
sense that these students are FGS meaning that both their parent has not attended college
and he/she is the first in family to attend college. Further, the students whose parents
attend college but never completed a degree program are identified as FGS and, their
socio-economic status played an important role in their academic progress. Saenz,
Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, and Yeung (2007) described that students, especially FGS, who
are impacted by their socio-economic background are likely to see impact on their
academic and social progress at college experiences

According to Cataldi, Bennett, and Chen (2018), FGS are more likely to belong to
low-income families compared to students who are continuing generation students.
These individual students come from low-income families that makes an average less
than $25,000 than those seven percent students from continuing generation (Cataldi,
Bennett, & Chen, 2018). Saenz (2007) also stated that one-half of FGS come from low-
income families, compared to one-third of students whose parents have had some college
experience. Figure 1 displays students’ financial considerations in their college decision
from 1972 and 2005. This data demonstrates that there is high probability that students
who are first-generation, come from low-income backgrounds prioritize financial aspect of college while making decision and continuing college education.

![Figure 1. Importance of financial reason to go to college. Adapted from “First in My Family: A Profile of First-Generation College Students at Four-Year Institutions Since 1971,” by Higher Education Research Institute, p. 17, 2007. Retrieved from https://www.heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/pubs/TFS/Special/Monographs/FirstInMyFamily.pdf](https://www.heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/pubs/TFS/Special/Monographs/FirstInMyFamily.pdf)

Greenwald (2012) found that as the enrollment of FGS is growing in college, the probability is that these individuals will not graduate in the average time frame. Likewise, the existing research repeated that FGS have the highest dropout rate during their first year and are less likely to graduate and complete a degree program (Cooper, 2010, Ishitani, 2003).

Some of the characteristics include struggling with academic deficiencies, maintaining work while attending college to support families other than their counterparts, having access to a limited amount of financial resources, lacking college preparedness, and having attended high schools that have low performing attributes (Cataldi et al., 2005; Greenwald, 2012). These characteristics are indications of struggles for FGS in higher education and describe a superior understanding of their background. This definitive description helps to explain why this student population has higher attrition rates (Tate et al., 2015).
FGS can make a great impact on retention rates. Family support is an important aspect of academic journey for FGS. Ward, Siegel, and Davenport (2012) described “the key construct in the experience of first-generation student is cultural capital” (p. 6). Cultural capital is defined as the way individuals from different socioeconomic statuses experience educational outcomes (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Cultural capital is transmitted from parental cognizance and communicated as family values and beliefs shared with individuals who are generationally connected on how to be successful in an environment (Ward et al., 2012). Cultural capital is developed overtime when students go to college. Hence, students are impacted by cultural capital in a valuable way though parent support and assistance while navigating the college experience and in quest of increased social mobility in higher education (Lozano-Partida, 2018). FGS lack cultural capital support from parents since they are first in family to attend college. Striplin (1999) described:

Families of first-generation college students sometimes discourage them from going to college, and this can lead to alienation from family support. First, generation college students are also susceptible to doubts about their academic and motivational ability; they may think they are not college material. Overcoming these personal challenges is crucial to a successful student going in two-year college to four-year college. (p. 2)

After decades, Lozano-Partida, (2018) also found that FGS do not receive much support from family in the decision to attend college. Recent researchers, Hodge (2017) and Nall (2017), also described lack of parent support impacts FGS experiences in college and degree competition. Additionally, other researchers confirmed that FGS are the population who do not receive the same source of support from their parents.
compared to non-first generation students whose parents have an understanding of the process of adjusting to college (Lozano-Partida, 2018). As Engle et al. (2006) indicated, parents of first-generation college students are less like to assist their children in preparing for college entrance exams, completing college applications, attending campus tours, gathering information about financial aid, attending college new student orientation, and navigating college student support programs.

Cultural capital implies the advantage students gain in education increases the opportunity for students to have access to higher social levels and gain more social mobility (Ridge, 2016). FGS are limited in the amount of cultural capital precise to higher education from their parents, who are considered to have limited to no knowledge skills and experiences in college education (Ridge, 2016). By means, FGS do not possess cultural capital compared to non-FGS. For example, it impacts their college journey because their parents do not have awareness and understanding of the college experiences to provide valuable support (Lozano-Partida, 2018; Ridge, 2016).

According to Drachsler and Kirschner (2012) and Witkin (1949), it is important to understand the FGS’ characteristics for educational professionals in higher education because it allows them to implement and re-design the SSS that target FGS by keeping FGS perspectives in consideration. Drachsler and Kirschner stated, “It is expected that by taking account of the characteristics of learners, more efficient, effective, and/or motivating instructional materials can be designed and developed” (p. 2). Also, Ridge (2016) have concluded that FGS prioritize considering financial resources and it may have more importance to education attainment than their peers. President Obama in his call to action to increase the opportunity for low-income students to go to college, noted
that every year there are thousands of first-generation low-income students who face barriers to obtaining college access and having success in educational attainment (Craider, 2014). He also concluded that this student population often lacks the guidance and support in the preparation for college, applying to schools that are the best fit, completing a financial aid application, and enrolling and maintaining persistence in their program of study (Craider, 2014). President Obama noted research by M. J. Bailey and Dynarski (2011) who concluded one in 10 individuals from first-generation, low-income families achieve their academic goal and graduate with a degree; however, at least “50% of all individuals from families with high socio-economic status have a bachelor’s degree by the time they reach age 25” (p. 10).

Factors Affecting Students Success in College

FGS differ from their non-first-generation peers with significant differences in both pre-college factors and college experiences (Engle et al., 2006; Hui, 2017; Leandre, 2020; Sundquist, 2019; Tinto, 1993). These factors may have a disparate effect on educational outcomes such as academic success. The lack of educational attainment can present barrier for FGS. Factors that affect FGS’ success in college are: income, race, academic preparedness, persistence and attrition, fitting in, lack of support, academic self-efficacy, and academic integration (Hui, 2017; Lee & Mueller, 2014). That is why only one-fourth of FGS attain a bachelor’s degree compared to two-thirds of non-first-generation students (Bettencourt, 2018).

Income

Given that that “income and educational attainment are strongly correlated, FGS are more likely also to be low-income” (Hui, 2017, p. 31). Knowing this fact, these
individual students are both low-income and first-generation are considered at high risk and needs additional support in academic success than their peers who are non-first generation. Therefore, it is obvious that one of the aims for FGS is to succeed to break generational cycles of educational attainment and income. There are numerous studies identifying the correlation of FGS and low income.

Economic impact is one of the main barriers faced by FGS in their college success (Wilbur & Rascigno, 2016). Financial worries affect FGS in many ways. One of the basic and common impacts is the ability to afford college. FGS’ success depends on financial aid, such as grants and student loans, to pay for their education (Lee & Mueller, 2014). These individual students who are identified to be low-income and FGS often work full-or part-time throughout college to support themselves and their family financially (Pratt, Harwood, Cavazos, & Ditzfeld, 2017). This requires additional time devoted outside of their college that may distract them from studying and spending time engaging with their peers. Knowing the barriers FGS and low-income students face, they are at a disadvantage compared to their non-first-generation peers when accounting for socioeconomic standing (Wilbur & Rascigno, 2016).

**Racial Minorities**

As FGS are more likely to be low-income, they are also likely to be racial minorities (Hui, 2017; Lee & Mueller, 2014). The growing enrollments of racial minority and first-generation intensifies students’ increases marginalization on camps which may make them feel overlooked, disregarded, and unimportant (Pyne & Means, 2013). For example, Payne and Means (2013) states that there is numerous amount of research available that represents Latino students are more likely to belong to a minority
group and identified as first-generation and their families are likely to be unfamiliar with education system and process in the United States. Pyne and Means defined FGS who are identified as a minority group, especially Latino, and revealed the complexity and intersection of issues with privilege, class, immigration, citizenship, and culture. FGS feelings of isolation and fitting in place plays an importance role in their involvement and engagement in the SSS and faculty communication to ensure success. This might explain why FGS are more likely to depart from college than their peers (Coleman, 2015).

There is a conflicting research about the impact of being both racial minority and FGS success. Despite research that shows increased barriers for racial minority FGS, some studies have shown that these individual students have lower rates of attrition (Bettencourt, 2018). This may indicate that there are various SSS offered to support the success, college experience, and retention for minority FGS. First-generation minority students who participate and engage in SSS services are more likely to be successful than others who do not participate and take advantage of the services that are targeting retention efforts of this student population (Coleman 2015; Nall 2017).

**Academic Preparedness**

Atherton (2014) described that FGS may not finish college due to lack of academic preparation for college (Atherton, 2014). These challenges are divided into two categories: gaining entry into college and earning a degree (Engle, 2007). FGS do not perform as well before or during college as their non-first-generation peers. FGS begin to struggle with academic preparation in the eighth grade (Engle, 2007). FGS parents are less likely to help them prepare for college entrance exams, accompany them on college tours, and seek information regarding financial aid. Additionally, these students do not
typically live in affluent communities or attend high schools that offer high-level math and advanced placement courses (Elliott, 2014; Engle, 2007). This is evidenced by the work of Engle (2007) who explained that, “A rigorous high school curriculum, particularly advanced math, can greatly improve their chances that first generation students will go to college” (p. 28). Unfortunately, eighth-grade algebra (viewed as a “gateway course” to more advanced math) is not offered to one-fifth of FGS (Engle, 2007).

Additionally, FGS often struggle when choosing colleges, especially those that fit their academic interests. They tend to limit their choices even when qualifying for high-ranking colleges and universities (M. J. Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). This is due to a combination of issues like limited income for applications fee and lack of information about degree programs (M. J. Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). While non-FGS usually have the academic savvy to judge colleges themselves for reputation, rank, and cost, FGS tend to rely on the advice of counselors and relatives to select colleges (Saenz, 2007). Therefore, early academic preparation and college access are integral to the success of FGS. Thus, public high schools have recently started initiating college prep night to support the transition of FGS (Engle, 2007).

Additionally, FGS are more likely to be affected by how well their college expectations and experiences align with their reality; that is why an aspect of academic preparedness unique to these individual students is needed (Elliott, 2014). These students lack the understanding of the reality of college life compare to non-first-generation students. For that reason, they are more likely to be unprepared and dissatisfied with the reality of the college experience. This lack of understanding leaves FGS less prepared to
overcome the barriers as they encounter them in college. Also, it makes it more difficult to persist and academically succeed in college (Elliott, 2014). That is why a lack of cultural capital causes FGS to understand their role as a student and leads them to not meet faculty expectations (Ridge, 2016).

Per earlier discussion of FGS’ struggle to adapt to college, it describes that they are unaware of the support that can assist them adapt and overcome the common college barriers. Therefore, many 2-year and 4-year colleges provide first year seminars to help all students face the barriers that impact their success along with SSS (Keup & Barefoot, 2005). These courses review many barriers including study skills, life skills, academic preparedness, and college access. These first year seminar courses expand on the concepts and SSS programs that are introduced during freshmen orientation. Keup and Barefoot (2005) and Vaughan, Parra, and Lalonde (2014) has shown that these first year seminars have a positive impact on students’ first to second year retention. Vaughan et al. also stated that first year seminars have made significant impact on FGS GPA, persistence rate, and academic standing. The researchers supported the argument that first year courses focused on personal, professional development, and intellectual rather than engagement on campus, which is what most of the first year courses aim to focus on traditionally. The context and preparation offered in these courses is beneficial to all students but does not necessarily provide the support FGS require.

**Persistence and Attrition**

There are factors that influence FGS’ academic persistence. This student population are more likely to choose an institution based on the amount of financial aid they will receive and the ability they will have to work while going to school (G. D. Kuh,
Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2007). The tuition cost determines most of their actions so they can afford to go to college. Hence, FGS are less likely to complete a degree program and graduate in five years (G. D. Kuh et al., 2007).

Compared to the non-first-generation students, FGS are more likely to withdraw from college in the second year of college (Bettencourt, 2018). In fact, FGS are more likely to drop out of college than their peers whose parent graduated from college (Bettencourt, 2018). When looking at attrition rates, they were even greater when compounded with other factors including gender and race. Data from Bettencourt (2018) revealed more stimulating facts includes:

- Low-income students are more likely to drop out from college in the first year, which is the most influential factor in first year retention.
- Females are more likely to depart in their second year; whereas if they persist to their fourth year, they are more likely to stay and complete their degree program.
- Latino students are 64% more likely to drop out in the second year than their peers.
- Students receiving financial aid are more likely to persist.
- Students receiving work-study funds are also less likely to drop out.
- Students receiving grants are 37% less likely to withdraw in their first year.

There are policies that institutions can make to increase retention and persistence of FGS. These policies may include increasing meetings with academic counselors and educating students early in their first year about engaging and participating in the SSS that are available to them. Research shows that meeting with academic counselors is
positively associated with FGS retention and persistence (Swecker et al., 2013). The academic counselor plays a significant role in the FGS college experience because the increased meetings foster a relationship with staff members, who encourage and help students feel engaged and supported throughout college. Coleman (2015) described that engagement and participation in the SSS were positively associated with FGS retention and persistence (Coleman, 2015). The SSS plays an important role in FGS academic success since it provides FGS the support and resources to continue their education.

**Fitting In**

Fitting in is a factor that plays a role in student success. Most of the FGS feel that they are alone in their educational journey since they are the first person in their family to attend college. These feelings of loneliness prevent FGS from relating to their peers and faculty. Hui (2017) explained that the feeling of separation from their family’s compound when FGS return from college to their communities. FGS become more distant from their families and communities. Hui explained, “They [FGS] struggle to combine their parents’ pride by attending college with their newfound isolation and separation from their hometown communities” (p. 37). The participants in the study felt that their feelings grew which created a gap between FGS as their degree attainment “pushed them upward in terms of social mobility but also away from their families, demonstrating again the conflict between the microsystems of the college and home worlds” (Hui, 2017, p. 37).

The feelings of loneliness might lead FGS to be less engaged. Engagement in diverse student population experiences is known as one of the major differences between FGS and their continuing generation peers (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016). Along with
being less engaged, FGS also perceived college less favorably than their peers. As mentioned previously, the need of financial support prevents FGS to engage in the campus activities (Pratt et al., 2017). The activities may include study abroad, clubs, and other extracurriculars. These activities increase the likelihood of a student graduating, as they feel connected with the peers and college. Therefore, the lack of engagement negatively impacts FGS success in college.

**Lack of Support**

Support is another important factor that contributes to students’ success in college. FGS lack more support than their peers (Ishitani, 2003). Higher education success involves students’ engagement in and out of the classroom. Some of the research showed that FGS are engaged, but they rely on themselves for academic success because they do not see others’ involvement as supportive, unlike their peers (Yee, 2015). FGS believe that it is their responsibility to succeed academically since they are the “first one” in the family to attend college. For example, they do no ask for support or help from their professors because they hold themselves accountable for not understanding course content (Yee, 2015). FGS are more likely to try to accomplish things individually and feel pride. Their individualism explained that they do not have access to the benefits that their peers do, so they must be responsible and independent (Tate et al., 2015). For that reason, they hold this perspective and it restricts their ability to form new relationships with faculty, peers, and other college support services staff members. Also, their individual perspectives prevent them from seeking help and support when struggling academically or in need of resources. This then leads to a bigger problem to fulfill their
academic goals later in their educational journey because they could have connected or asked for support earlier to resolve the academic issue they were going through.

FGS do not articulate their academic needs as accurately as their continuing-generation peers (Yee, 2015; Tate et al., 2015). Though the students and faculty communicate, it is not successful. In addition, FGS are hesitant to ask for additional support and resources to the faculty to overcome the academic challenge they encounter in their courses. Also, FGS don’t find the time to interact with their faculty and peers due to their personal responsibilities and commitments to support their family. Though they are not aware of academic resources and successful in developing relationships with faculty and peers, they tend to avoid the situation completely (Yee, 2015).

On the other hand, FGS develop more social relationships to gain friendships that support them in their academic journey. Research explained social support is more important for FGS than peers’ support, as it offers them an outlet for understanding and reducing stress to succeed in college (Jenkins, Belanger, Connally, Boals, & Durón, 2016). It is significant that FGS are more likely to have friendships with students who come from similar backgrounds, are first-generation, and are going through similar college experiences and challenges (Jenkins et al., 2016).

**Academic Self-Efficacy**

Academic self-efficacy is defined as “a student’s self-confidence in his or her ability to successfully perform academic tasks at a designated level” (R. M. Evans, 2016, p. 41). Self-efficacy is described as a human bias since it is the students’ perception of what is true to them and not necessary what is actually true (R. M. Evans, 2016). FGS arrive at college with a lack of social capital, lack of academic preparedness, feelings of
being alone, and individualism perspectives, and they transition into college with very little or no useful support from their parents (R. M. Evans, 2016). These are some of the reasons that represents why FGS have lower levels of self-efficacy compared to their continuing-generation peers.

McCoy (2014) states that there is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and students’ cumulative GPA by end of an academic year. The relationship of self-efficacy can be described as a predictor of an academic adjustment and performance, improvement in retention, and predictor of cumulative GPA (R. M. Evans, 2016; McCoy, 2014). Additionally, FGS have lower educational aspirations than their peers (R. M. Evans, 2016). It is believed that educational goals relate back to FGS’ lower levels of self-efficacy (Zeldin & Parjares, 2000). If FGS do not believe that they have ability to be successful in college, they have little motivation to continue in college especially with the challenge of being the first in the family to attend colleges (McCoy, 2014).

**Academic Integration**

Tinto (1975) explained that a student’s engagement, support system, and academic integration into the college environment is vital to a student’s decision to persist in higher education. R. M. Evans (2016) defined integration as the “assimilation of the first-generation students” (p. 31) into the academic areas of the college and social integration as the “assimilation of the student into the social life” (p. 31) of the college. Academic experiences may include but are not limited to: (a) classroom environment, (b) social integration with faculty and peers, and (c) involvement in extracurricular activities. Also, SSS assist FGS with academic integration to the college campus in the first year by
providing information sessions and workshops to help these individual students understand how SSS can impact their academic success (Coleman, 2015, Nall 2017).

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework demonstrates an understanding of theories and concepts that are relevant to the research and relate to the broader areas of knowledge being considered.

**Marginality Theory**

Next, Schlossberg’s theory of marginality posited that students who build perception that they do not belonged in college are likely to achieve negative outcomes (as cited in R. M. Evans et al., 2009). Schlossberg’s theory emphasized that importance of postsecondary institutions to reach out to new students, especially the ones who are less likely to be prepared for college, to make them feel included (Dunn, 2002). This theory is relevant with the framework of a qualitative research that aims to learn students’ perception about SSS. Most of the students who participate in SSS are FGS, low-income, and immigrants. These students are also identified as marginalized means individuals who may believe their own personal experiences and/or societal norms are not welcomed in higher education. Also, the marginalization interferes with these individual student’s ability to adapt successfully while in college (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2007).

Cooper (2010) reported that college students who possess feelings that they do not belong in college were more likely to be uncertain about their academic goals and tent to struggle the most while in college. According to Tinto (1993), goal clarification and academic goal setting is a complex part of student’s personal growth. Also, Friedlander
(1980) reported that low-income, minority, and FGS typically express the greatest need for SSS programs but enroll in these services the least. FGS increase of engagement and participation in SSS could increase the academic goal clarification and sense of belongingness in the college. Most of the time, FGS do not understand the necessary steps that are required for them to prepare for college life and academic success such as how to finance a college education, access resources for successful academic achievement, and complete an admission application and are unaware of the relationship between their education and career goals (Vargas, 2004).

C. J. Williams (2017) explained FGS are typically over the age of 24 years old and considered as adults who come from various backgrounds. Thus, Tennant and Pogson’s (1995) adult social construction theory described that adults may enter college with definitive opinions about college roles in their life experiences and adult students approach regarding learning metacognitive knowledge and skills could range significantly, depending of their background or culture.

**Sensory Stimulation Theory**

Similarly, Laird’s (1985) theory of sensory stimulation stated that many of the adult college students learn best with visual aid. He also described 13% of adults preferred hearing instructions, while 12% preferred using hands-on and active approaches. SSS develop various approaches by considering the age of the student population who enroll in their services to increase students’ academic achievement. Education professionals could evaluate SSS and use the results to determine which services facilitated students’ academic achievement and then assess the impact of overall SSS on student population (Charles & Mertler, 2002; Cooper, 2010).
Holistic Theory

Holistic theory indicates that an individual’s character incorporates many factors including emotions, intelligence, desire, and intuition (Laird 1985), all of which can influence behavior. In higher education, these factors must be initiated to provide meaningful experiences and develop meaningful learning. Hence, colleges serving FGS must develop curriculum that address all these elements that fulfill these students’ academic needs and academic success. Along with examining academic programs, it is extremely important that colleges and universities learn students’ perceptions of whether SSS programs are producing intended results and supporting their academic success (Coleman, 2015). This study aimed to learn the perceptions of first-generation, CC students with regards to the academic impact of SSS. The main focus of this study was to learn participant’s perceptions about academic performance indicators including student academic achievement, engagement, persistence and satisfaction, and development of academic skills (Coleman, 2015; Cummings, 2014; Hodge, 2017; Nall, 2017). It is essential that colleges and universities have similar goals and strategies to improve students’ academic success by offering SSS that are viewed as being beneficial to students and educations in higher education.

Tinto Instructional Experiences

Tinto (1993) maintained “instructional experience directly influenced and facilitated students’ social and academic integration in the higher education environment” (p. 31). Cummings (2014) described education professionals frequently indicate that poor learning environments are the reason why students leave low performing schools. There have been other times when students expressed similar frustration to educators in
higher education, especially the at risk student population (Thayer, 2000). Due to these reasons, the environment in which SSS functions was assessed for signs of deficiencies that would potentially disrupt student engagement. G. Kuh et al. (2006) argued that engagement is an aspect of student behavior and instructional performance that institutions can and should seek to improve.

Further, Tinto (1993) explained that students drive and aim to successfully complete a degree program and graduate is another indicator of academic success that directly influences students’ social and academic behavior. For example, if students perceive that a college is not acting in their best interest or the quality of SSS programs are deprived (Thayer, 2000), then they are less motivated to graduate from that institution. Colleges and universities need to consider the best interests of their students while implementing and reevaluating the SSS to improve graduation rates. The National Symposium on Post-Secondary Student Success observed that, “At high performing colleges with better than predicted graduation rates, people constantly remind themselves of their pursuit of excellence by periodically reviewing campus priorities, policies, and practices to ensure that what is enacted is of acceptable quality” (as cited in G. Kuh et al., 2006, p. 99). The need to examine the impact of SSS such as, but not limited to, advising/counseling, financial aid support, mentoring, cultural experiences, and tutoring has on student academic success is essential to pursuit of excellence in the higher education.

Likewise, a supportive environment is needed on campus to support students’ overall academic achievement since SSS have a lasting influence on academic success at the college (Nall 2017; Renchler, 1992). The SSS that were examined for this research
served FGS who are less likely to be academically prepared when entering college and encounter barriers to meet the challenges of the higher education (Cummings, 2014; Thayer, 2000). Therefore, the environment in which these SSS programs students were examined to determine the impact of SSS programs on their ability to achieve academic success.

**Facilitation Theory**

A theory that helped to frame this study was facilitation theory, which suggests that students learn if educators, in this case SSS staff, facilitate the learning in an environment or atmosphere that is nonthreatening and learners feel comfortable to consider new ideas (Cummings, 2014; Laird, 1985). This theory assumes that students have a natural willingness to learn, which may not necessarily be the case at colleges and universities. It also promotes the view that, in many instances, students are reluctant to change ideas or beliefs they thought were true, thereby making it much more difficult for educators to reach them intellectually. As facilitators, SSS staff must be aware of these potential pitfalls if they are to promote a student support program that creates an internal locus of control.

In summary, administrators, staff, and educational policies have to demonstrate that students’ education is the main focus of the institution. As the theory of marginality suggests, students who do not feel a sense of belonging or connection to the institution typically produce negative outcomes that could negatively affect enrollment. In addition, administrators and staff of the institution need to familiarize themselves with the different approaches that stimulate learning amongst its student population, especially at risk students, to increase the graduation rate, persistence, and retention.
The theory of sensory stimulation offers best practices for implementing visual learning tools to increase student involvement in their learning, which would potentially enhance students’ perceptions of the college while decreasing feelings of marginalization. The holistic theory suggests that the whole person is continually being motivated by one need or another (L. Williams, 2019), such as satisfying physiological needs, safety needs, the need to belong to something, or the need to improve self-esteem, an act which ultimately leads to self-actualization (Hodge, 2017). How students feel intellectually can influence their behavior emotionally, physically, and spiritually, which may directly influence their perception of academic priorities of their college. In addition, by offering a supportive learning environment, as explained by the facilitation theory, educators can help improve students’ perception of the college and their prospects of graduating from the institution.

**Student Success Programs**

In this century, many high school graduates attend college, yet many are not graduating from college. One specific population who is at risk among these individuals are FGS (Nall, 2017). To combat this ongoing issue, colleges offer SSS that serve as a liaison in providing services to first-generation students for the transition into college. B. W. Chaney (2010) summarized the purpose of the SSS program:

> As stated in Higher Education Act of 1965, and reauthorized by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, is to (1) increase college retention and graduation rates for eligible students, (2) increase the transfer rates of eligible students from two-year to four-year institutions, and (3) foster an institutional
climate supportive of success for low-income and first-generation college students and individuals with disabilities. (p. 12)

The California CC system is more than just the largest of workforce training and higher education in the country. They are also on the cutting edge of providing SSS to all of their students, including low-income, first-generation, undocumented immigrants, the disabled, and the current of former foster youth (Cooper, 2010). As these students enroll into college, SSS programs are charged with the mission to retain and complete them through various retention efforts by providing “academic, professional, and personal support services, such as, but not limited to, advising/counseling, financial aid support, mentoring, cultural experiences, and tutoring” (Nall, 2017, p. 7).

SSS have great latitude to custom design their services to fit the particular needs of their students (B. W. Chaney, 2010; Karp et al., 2008). Further, each college’s SSS strategies are developed to increase student persistence rates and improve academic success by keeping at risk students in consideration. In addition, these services are a standard feature at most institutions of higher learning. A vast majority of the body of research determines that SSS programs play an important part in supporting successful outcomes for its participants (Coleman, 2015; Hodge, 2017; Karp et al., 2008). SSS programs have been catering to FGS due to their low academic performance, retention and drop-out rates, and lower persistence.

There are various types of programs designed to serve the FGS population to provide smooth transitions from high school to college, develop academic skills, provide knowledge about various programs and requirements, provide assistance with educational finances, and help with further transition into higher education. The goal of SSS
programs is to improve retention and increase graduation rates of its participants by enhancing student’s college experience (USDE, 2017). Some of the common SSS programs that serve FGS in CC are: (a) Extended Opportunity Programs & Services; (b) Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education Program; (c) counseling; (d) financial aid; (e) career center; and the (f) Federal TRIO Programs, including Upper Bound and Educational Talent Search. Further, the services that are required by SSS programs by the USDE include, but are not limited to: (a) academic and transfer advising, (b) degree program course selection, (c) tutoring, and (d) financial counseling. Other additional services offered by SSS programs to support the academic, personal, and professional growth are cultural enrichment activities, and individual counseling, and mentoring (USDE, 2017).

The Academic Impact of Student Support Services on Students Outcomes

Cooper (2010) and Hodge (2017) has shown a correlation between SSS and academic outcomes. One of the strategies “for increasing student persistence and academic outcomes lies in the area of SSS” (Cooper, 2010, p. 22). In addition, if students are aware of the SSS that are designed to support them early in their college journey and stay consistent, engaged, and motivated to participate in SSS until they fulfill their academic goal, then students are more likely to have successful outcomes. A researcher examined the persistence of students with similar characteristics who were participating in SSS programs compared to those who were not (B. Chaney et al., 1997). The results demonstrated that students who participated in SSS had a 7% increase in persistence during the second year over those who did not participate (B. Chaney et al., 1997). Another researcher, Tinto (2004), analyzed the advantages that influence student
persistence impacted by SSS programs. He described that one of the many advantages of SSS programs is that they provide FGS and low-income students a feeling of belonging that contributes to success (Tinto, 2004).

For many years, researchers and practitioners have demonstrated that SSS are critical to students’ academic success in college; however, the vast majority of this work focused on 4-year institutions (Cooper, 2010). Cooper (2010) also stated that the CC sector has been largely overlooked in this area of research. There is not enough research that examines the impact of SSS at CCs on at risk student population including first-generation, disadvantaged immigrant, undocumented, and disable students (Cooper, 2010; Cummings, 2014; Nall, 2017). Cooper as well as Nall (2017) discovered that SSS play a role in promoting successful outcomes for CC students (Cooper 2010; Nall 2017). Hence, research demonstrates effective SSS have an integrated network of academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills’ support for students.

**Academic achievement.** Academic achievement takes an important place in higher education as well as in the learning process. It has become an index of a student’s future in this highly competitive world. Educational leaders aim to develop strategies, goals, interventions, programs, and enhance SSS to increase students’ academic achievement rates (Illahi & Khandai, 2015). The research states that the United States has witnessed and responded to growing and intensified public demand to raise student academic achievement in the past 20 years (Illahi & Khandai, 2015). The academic achievement is the extent to which a student has achieved their short or long-term
educational goals such as 2.0 or higher cumulative GPA, degree competition, certification attainment, and transfer to a 4-year university (Cummings, 2014).

Research recommends a social adaptation method to colleges and universities personnel to improve student academic achievement through student services (Paramika, 2017). Social adaptation method has to do with the college campus environment. The college campus must create an environment that could include the college’s physical features, the atmosphere, and the composition of the student population for the student (Kelley-Hall, 2010; Paramika, 2017). The college setting and supportive services provided play an important role in enhancing student academic achievement. The student may be aware of the campus surroundings and participate in the services that are made available to success. According to Yu (2017), the greatest impact on student learning drives from students’ overall level of engagement that has to do with students’ academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular activities reinforcement that are relevant to particular educational outcomes. For example, these educational outcomes include grade point average, transferring to a 4-year college, time spent with academic counselors, participating in academic services, attendance, involvement in classes, and establishing purpose and career goals (Illahi & Khandai, 2015; Yu, 2017).

In the CC, first-generation, disadvantaged, minority, and low-income students’ involvement has shown a positive effect on the educational gain and academic achievement. A research conducted by MacKay and Kuh (1994) used the Community College Students Experiences questionnaire to determine the effect of college services on student academic achievement. Their study results found that the students use of available services and students’ involvement was related to their academic achievement.
This study recommended that the CC leaders look into developing various methods to specifically target at risk student populations, which include FGS.

There has been long-term research completed at CC across the nation. Those studies reported that students’ participation in SSS programs and in the learning communities have significantly higher persistence, retention, graduation rates, GPA, maintain good academic standing, and fulfill short or long terms goals. Wood and Palmer (2014) found that SSS programs that are aimed to increase academic achievement provide superior structure, qualified, diverse and well trained staff, and an association to the students course content and curriculum, and tutoring services seems more effective. The best practices could improve the efficiency of SSS programs to meet the ultimate goal of academic success of its participant students in order to enhance their retention, academic achievement, and graduation rates (Wood & Palmer, 2014; Yu, 2017).

There are SSS provided to FGS populations at 2-year colleges. The research associated with SSS effectiveness on first-generation students shows that these services play a fundamental role in improving academic achievement for them (Craider, 2014; Nall, 2017; Próspero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007). It also states that retention is still an ongoing issue for CC when it comes to reviewing data for FGS. There is not much research available that shows the success, FGS perceptions, and evaluations of the SSS programs. In order to increase the students’ academic achievement rates, it is very important to capture the institutional leaders, staff, and students’ perceptions (Kimbark, Peters, & Richardson, 2017; Tinto, 2004). Further, research stated that a SSS programs evaluation’s strategy must be implemented in order to measure the impact that the program has on academic achievement, retention, social outcomes, and involvement
(Coleman, 2015). This research provided information to increase awareness and learn the role that SSS programs has played in FGS academic success. However, since there is a lack of existing research regarding SSS programs at CC and its impact on academic achievement, the CC administrators and leaders overseeing student services departments will need to overcome the challenge of implementing effective academic support programs and services to meet the needs of their unique populations.

**Student engagement.** Student engagement plays a critical role in higher education for students’ academic success (Association of American College & Universities, 2015). Higher education provides range of services to students on campus that could remain successful, continue to receive budget, and offer better practices with the level of students’ engagement. As institutions are putting better strategies in action, the scope of students’ engagement is more likely to expand in the future (“Importance of Student,” 2019). Student engagement provides the ability to acquire and practice the necessary skills to build a successful career. Further, research shows that student engagement builds better relationship with other students, staff, and faculty and help the students understand governance within the institution education system (“Importance of Student,” 2019). As a result, it benefits to improves students’ personality and enhance their skills that are necessary for driving change to be more successfully in college.

As the education competition is growing, the CC encounter challenges, and they respond to the increasing expectations for quality, performance, and accountably set by the governing boards, state, and federal governments, accrediting organizations, and the public by emphasizing assessment (Kelley-Hall, 2010; Nall, 2017). Community College Survey of Student Engagement provides information on student engagement. The
Community College Survey of Student Engagement is a well-established tool that helps institutions focus on good educational practices and identifies areas in which they can improve their programs and service for students (Association of American College & Universities, 2015; Community College Survey of Engagement, 2008). Community College Survey of Student Engagement was established in 2001 as a project for Community College Leadership Programs at the University of Texas at Austin. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement utilizes five benchmarks of effective educational practices in CC. The five benchmarks include: (a) active and collaborative learning, (b) student effort, (c) academic challenge, (d) student-faculty interaction, and (e) support for learners. These five benchmarks allow institutions with missions that focus on student academic success, teaching, and learning to measure and monitor their performance in areas that are central to their success (Community College Survey of Engagement, 2020). Table 1 provides the description of five benchmarks used to provide information on student engagement.

The five benchmarks incorporate 38 student engagement items from Community College Survey of Student Engagement survey that mostly reflects on most the important aspect of the student experiences (Community College Survey of Engagement, 2008). Also, there is a question in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement survey where students are asked if they are first-generation or not FGS, and this helps to understand the engagement level of diverse student population in CC. Next, the benchmark scores provide an effective way to view an institution’s data by creating groups of conceptually related items that address key areas of student engagement. Data
might be used to identify colleges relative strengths and areas that may need improvement (Association of American College & Universities, 2015).

Table 1

*Five Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice in Community Colleges*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCSSE Benchmark</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active and Collaborative Learning</td>
<td>Students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. Through collaborating with others to solve problems or master challenging content, students develop valuable skills that prepare them to deal with the kinds of situations and problems they will encounter in the workplace, the community, and their personal lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Effort</td>
<td>Student’s own behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will successfully attain their educational goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Challenge</td>
<td>Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Ten survey items address the nature and amount of assigned academic work, the complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students, and the standards faculty members use to evaluate student performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Faculty Interaction</td>
<td>The more contact students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and persist toward achievement of their educational goals. Through such interactions, faculty members become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Learners</td>
<td>Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relationships among different groups on campus.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


The college setting, services, and environment play a role in enhancing student academic success by gaining their attention, interest, optimism, and passion. However, the student must be aware of the campus surroundings and partake of the services that are made available. The greatest impact of student learning appears to stem from students’ overall campus engagement (Harper & Quaye, 2009). In addition, the interpersonal, academic, and extracurricular involvements are reciprocally reinforcing, and relevant to
particular educational outcomes (Harper & Quaye, 2009; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). Kelley-Hall (2010) found the education outcomes may include:

Making progress to the degree, grade point average, number of units taken, understanding academic requirements, making use of resources by using academic services, understanding academic policies, time with advisors, participation in the learning process, attendance, active involvement in class, time spent studying, establishing purpose, and setting goals for career. (pp. 56-57)

Additionally, students’ self-perception abilities in college is a factor in student engagement, development, and success. There is mutual agreement that the higher the self-perception abilities a student has, the greater impact it will have on academic achievement (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009).

**Student persistence.** As the importance of attaining higher education readiness continues, institutions’ persistence must receive more attention and require additional actions. The combination of internal and external factors can influence students’ ability to enroll and persist in college to obtain a degree. While a college’s interest is to increase the student’s registration status to be enrolled in classes until completing their degree program (Cummings, 2014; Hodge, 2017), the student’s interest is to complete a degree, often without regard where it is earned. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center Reported that the 2013-2014 national average persistence rate from the first to second year of college was 59% returning to the same institution and 69% returning to any U.S. institution (as cited in Hodge, 2017). Colleges and universities offer student support services programs to the students across the county to reiterate the importance of getting students effectively prepared to succeed in college.
SSS programs are known to be one of the effective practices to maintain persistence rates by colleges (Cooper, 2010; Craider 2014; Nall, 2017). The growing diversity in California requires more attention to the persistence rate of specific student populations that struggle more than their peers in college. For example, FGS are known as the at risk student population when it comes to retention and persistence due to their background (Craider, 2014; Nall, 2017). The enrollments of these individual students have increased enormously in the CCC each year. The CC leaders have been taking the enrollments of FGS in consideration and have developed SSS programs that specifically target FGS success, retention, and persistence (Cooper, 2014; Nall, 2017). SSS programs have shown a significant impact on the student’s success especially the ones who consistently practice and engage in these programs (Cooper, 2014). However, FGS retention and persistence is an ongoing challenge that CC are facing and it needs additional attention from educational professionals, leaders, staff, and faculty.

The research describes that colleges have to “adapt the student perspectives and ask not only how they should act to retain their students but also how they should act so that more of their students want to persist to completion” (Tinto, 2017, p. 2). When persistence is viewed from the student perspective, it is considered a form of motivation to completion and academic success in the college. In order for students to persist in their academic goals of a degree competition, they have to be willing and learn to put the effort to do so even when encountered with challenges and barriers (Nall, 2017; Tinto, 2017). The FGS are more likely to encounter barriers in college and they lack academic preparation, parent support, unaware of resources, and lack of finance information. For that reason, CC educational leaders may need to focus on learning students’ perspectives
to understand how FGS experiences shape their motivation to persist (Beer & Lawson, 2016). Additionally, educational leaders must look into practices and strategies of SSS programs to enhance students’ motivation that could increase the persistence rate of FGS (Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015).

Besides, the research explains that there are three experiences that have strong influence on college students regardless of their background and includes: (a) self-efficacy, (b) a sense of belonging, and (c) perceived value of the curriculum (Tinto; 2017; Stewart et al., 2015). Self-efficacy refers to the student’s confidence in their ability to succeed in college (Blackwell & Pinder 2014). Not all students enter college with a higher confidence level, and the students who does have higher confidence level they are also not immune to academic barriers. Therefore, the SSS programs must have a way to measure and identify when students are struggling academically and be able to provide support and resources at that time (Kelley-Hall, 2010; Tinto, 2017). This initiative can increase the student’s confidence level to continue in the college. Next, a sense of belonging directly leads to students’ motivation to persist (Hui, 2017). For example, if a student does not engage with others on campus, they may get demotivated to continue in the college. Therefore, a supportive, welcoming, and inclusive culture must be adopted by the college and student services to enhance students’ academic and social experiences from the beginning. The additional resources and practices must be developed to provide appropriate field of interest or study, and the faculty must be trained to provide a meaningful and relevant connects to students learning. Such as, the introductory courses can be serviced as gateway to given subject matter and grades associated with persistence
Largely, the colleges serving FGS must focus on learning students’ perception of their college experience to share their motivation to persist and succeed.

**Student satisfaction.** Student satisfaction is described as a short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of students’ educational experiences and services (Weerasinghe et al., 2017). There is limited research available on the perspective of student satisfaction and impact on student retention, and it is usually ignored in the first year of college (Murphy 2010). Research reveals that it is important for higher education professionals to understand students’ perceptions about their satisfaction with college experiences, including SSS, and educational experiences to provide much needed, high quality educational programs especially for first-generation, low-income, disadvantaged, and at risk student populations (Cummings, 2014; R. M. Evans 2016). By paying more attention to these students’ satisfaction, such services can increase student success in college and persistence to a degree by providing them with additional resources and opportunities for becoming integrated into college environment (Craider, 2014; Kelley-Hall, 2010). More specifically, in terms of program enhancements, little research has been devoted to enhancing accountability for educational outcomes, program effectiveness, student satisfaction, and self-reported learning gains of SSS as it contributes overall to retaining and graduating academically disadvantaged students.

Tinto’s (1975) student retention model relates to academic and social integration that has to do with program satisfaction. Many theories on college retention recognize the significance of student satisfaction as a positive factor in students’ persistence (Borden, 1995). Kelley-Hall (2010) identified that various aspects of programmatic and educational experience that are associated with FGS overall satisfaction. Some of the
feedback from SSS program participants reported successful programs has a family life
feel, assisted them to assess strengths, provided opportunities for improvement to succeed
in future career, helped students them set goals, helped determine major, and provided
academic preparation (Kelley- Hall, 2010).

Kelley-Hall’s (2010) research also demonstrated how FGS overall positive
responses acknowledged satisfaction with SSS, and it also verified that there is a strong
relationship between satisfaction and persistence. Due to the lack of support and being
the “first-one” to attend college in the family, FGS’ college experiences and high level
satisfaction with supportive services could be an element to persist and graduate with a
degree. Another fact that was identified during the literature review was that there is
much more research available on the effectiveness of SSS that focus 4-year college
student population, whose needs are different compared to students enrolled in CCs (T.
Bailey et al., 2004; Nall, 2017). It was also noted that there is not much data widely
available to evaluate SSS program’s effectiveness (T. Bailey et al., 2004).

Nall (2017) emphasized that social assimilation implicates “the students’ social
and emotional experiences with the institutions’ environment, students who are like
minded and who feel a sense of inclusion to the institution” (p. 36). For example, many
times FGS feel not belonged, struggle to find a sense of belonging, feel ignored, and
identify as unique student population compared to their peers. In this situation, these
experiences are more likely to discourage them to continue their education (Nall, 2017).
This outcome can highlight the importance of learning a student’s satisfaction issue and
how it is imperative to FGS academic success.
Development of academic skills. Academic skills are imperative for ensuring academic success in the college; these skills include time management, financing education, navigating resources, critical thinking, note taking, academic integrity, academic writing, and public speaking. Development of academic skills is one of the important factor that leads to students’ academic success, so it must be one of the educational professional’s focus while working with FGS. Therefore, development of academic skills, known as study habits, learning strategies, and time management tools, help students succeed academically. Academic skills are equality important as other academic success factors for the students’ successful educational experience. In addition, academic skills are one of the most direct ways students can affect their learning which can later lead into college persistence and degree or certification competition (Falcon, 2015).

The research shows that academic skills are known as one of the barriers for FGS and a reason why they may not succeed academically in CC (Coleman, 2015; Cummings 2014; Falcon, 2015; Nall, 2017). To support these students, CC started to offer programs that support FGS. The research describes that 50 years ago, the Federal Higher Education Act was passed and the USDE instituted the first federal supported education program designed to provide development of academics, increase college enrollments, and completion rates of economically disadvantaged, first-generation, underrepresented ethnic background students (Nall, 2017). The federally funded TRIO program, Extended Opportunity Programs & Services and Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education Program are examples of programs that provide FGS academic skills preparation, college application assistance, academic workshops, tutoring, early college preparation courses,
and academic guidance at the CC level. Ongoing involvement and participation in SSS programs increase opportunities for FGS to learn about financial aid and college admission requirements and to develop academic and social skills necessary for college (Petty, 2014).

SSS have been a resource that guide FGS in their academic journey regardless of their background because it has services that offers support to enhance FGS college experience for successful outcomes (Coleman, 2015; Nall, 2017). As the FGS enrollments have been increasing in the CC for a few years, the CC has been focusing on offering SSS targeting FGS that assist them to adapt to the college environment, culture, and learning outcomes. Still, the academic success rate of FGS is questionable because their retention and persistence rates have not shown a significant improvement (Craider, 2014). The academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and developments are known as the areas of academic impact of SSS. Yet, learning FGS perceptions how SSS is impacting these academic areas could support educational leaders to develop better methodology, enhance services, and develop new strategies (Charles & Mertler, 2002; Cooper, 2010; Cummings, 2014; Nall, 2017).

**Gaps in the Literature**

There is a growing body of literature on FGS’ lived experiences in CC. Still, there is an evident gap in literature with regards to FGS perceptions and experiences with SSS and how it impacts their academic success in CC. The research demonstrates that learning FGS’ perceptions, who participate in the SSS, can be used to improve the academic success, retention, and graduation rates that many institutions struggle with today (Coleman, 2015; Cummings 2014; Nall, 2017). Also, retention continues to be a
challenge for many institutions, especially for at risk populations which include FGS. To fill research gaps, future researchers need to focus on finding what strategies have and have not worked for these students when it comes to academic success (Nall, 2017).

The gap in research continues regarding perceptions FGS have of the effectiveness of SSS programs in CC and how they improve their overall academic success, including student achievement (GPA), student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills. Available research emphasizes that the FGS population has been growing fast in the last few decades in CC. For that reason, journal and research studies recommend further research about the services and programs offered to FGS in the CC to determine the high quality and student-centered programing for FGS success and retention CC (Hodge, 2017).

The available empirical research on SSS programs does not provide enough exploration with regards to retention which has been one of the biggest ongoing challenge (Coleman, 2015; Nall, 2017). The gap identifies that future research must not only focus on best practices but also inform resource allocations in this era of culpability and declining resources for many postsecondary colleges (Coleman, 2015). In addition, the successful implementation of SSS programs in CC will depend on the ability of school administrators to develop and institutionalize effective programs that help FGS achieve academic success (Kelley-Hall, 2010; Richards & Terkanian, 2013). Moreover, research related to SSS programs illustrate the need for successful implementation with the support of faculty and staffs who needs to be fully committed to the vision and goals articulated by CC leaders for student learning, development, and holistic development (Cummings, 2014).
CCs are known as open-access institutions and students of all ability levels enroll to obtain higher education. The educational professionals at CC implement SSS to improve the academic success and retention rates for at risk (Cataldi et al., 2018). Hence, the identification of the best SSS practices and changes in education should be grounded in knowledge derived from research (Kelley-Hall, 2010). Therefore, this research could benefit CC leaders working with FGS and higher educational professionals to better understand, assess, evaluate, and enhance the SSS programs that assist students in the areas of communication, interpersonal skills, engagement, academic success, academic guidance, critical thinking, and provide all encompassing access to the larger institutional community and its resources for further development. Also, the initiative to learn FGS perceptions about SSS may provide examples of innovations, data on multiple dimensions of first-generation SSS and programs, and comprehensive recommendations for improving institutional and programmatic approaches (Whitley, Benson, & Wesaw, 2018).

Summary

A body of literature supports the importance of learning FGS’ perceptions of the SSS offered to them at the CC for their academic success. Though, the research does not offer best practices of SSS that have been implemented or could be implemented to measure the impact the SSS on FGS population. Additionally, studies indicate SSS have significant impact on FGS academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills. However, implications suggest a need to develop a concise evaluation and assessment to measure the effectiveness and learn perception of SSS participants. This study recommended that the educational professionals must look
into enhancing the SSS that are designed to offer to FGS with best practices at the CC to increase the FGS academic success rates.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Chapter III describes the methodology of the qualitative study. This chapter also delineates the research design, the population, a sample, and procedures utilized for data collection and analysis. Through this study, the researcher aspired to expand the body of knowledge regarding perceptions of FGS in CC with regard to SSS and how they impact their academic success. By collecting and analyzing data from one-on-one interviews with CC FGS, the study examined FGS perceptions of the impact their participation in SSS has on their academic success. This chapter culminates with the limitations of the study and a summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the perceptions first-generation students have of the academic impact of student support services received while attending community college in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills.

Guiding Research Question

This phenomenological study is guided by the following research question: What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of student support services they have received in community colleges in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills?
**Research Sub-Questions**

The following research sub-questions were developed to help answer the guiding research question:

1. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student academic achievement?

2. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student engagement?

3. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student persistence?

4. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student satisfaction?

5. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their development of academic skills?

**Research Design**

Formatting an appropriate research methodology is one of the most critical tasks in preparing for a research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There are three main research methods: (a) quantitative, (b) qualitative, and (c) mixed methods. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) proffered that each methodology addresses specific variables and has
a different research purpose. Therefore, selecting an appropriate research method depends on a variety of factors, such as the type of data used, the analysis method, and the purpose of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study utilized a qualitative study with a phenomenological research design to describe how FGS in CC perceive the impact of SSS on their academic success. The researcher gathered data by interviewing students to gain a deeper and richer appreciation of their stories within their social and organizational experience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Data collected for this study included one-on-one interviews with FGS who participated in SSS. The choice to conduct qualitative research was informed by the researcher studying and working to gain meaning from the lived experiences of the participants (Patton, 2015).

Phenomenology is a methodology that guides the researcher in an exploration of the lived experiences of participants with a common phenomenon, understanding its essence (Patton, 2015). It also allows the researcher to deeply examine and understand an issue, centers the participants’ stories in the study, and can lead to new theories that effectively guide policies and practices. Additionally, it gives the researcher an opportunity to understand the human experience though one’s perception on the specific phenomenon that is being researched. Utilizing phenomenological research design for this qualitative study will help ensure that the analysis and interpretation of the data are reflective of the experience of the participants. The phenomena being studied in this research is the impact of student support service programs upon the experiences of first generation CC students with respect to student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic
skills. Employing the framework of phenomenology for this study is appropriate and valuable, as it creates the potential to facilitate program and policy development.

**Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described a population as a group of components or people who share similar criteria and can represent a broad, overall populace. CC is the largest system of higher education in the United States. According to CCCCO (2018a) Student Success Scoreboard, there were 1,126,709 full-time equivalent students attending 114 CC in the State of California. For the purpose of this study, a FGS was considered to be a student for whom both parents have not attended college and he or she is the first in the family to attend college (Engle et al., 2006). In 2018, 43% of the student population was comprised of FGS (CCCO, 2018a). Forty-three percent of the overall population of 1,126,709 is 484,485 FGS (CCCO, 2018a). Therefore, the population for this study was the 484,485 full-time FGS of the overall student population of 1,126,709 full-time FGS attending 114 CC in the State of California.

**Target Population**

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the target population is the “actual list of sampling units from which the sample is selected” (p. 393). A target population for a study is the entire set of individuals chosen from the overall population to create a data set from which to make inferences. The target population defines the population to which the findings are meant to be generalized. It is important that target populations are clearly identified for the purposes of the research study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).
It is typically not feasible, due to time or cost constraints, to study large groups; therefore, the researcher chose population samples from the larger group.

In 2019, 43% of the student population was identified as FGS by the American Association of Community Colleges (2018). The target population is described as the actual listing of sampling units from which the sample is selected (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The larger population will be represented by the data received from this group. Moreover, from this group, the findings of the research study are generalized (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In order to narrow the target population, the researcher chose to use representative California CC in the northern California region, as identified in Table 2.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community College</th>
<th>2018 FTES</th>
<th>Estimated 2018 FGS (43% of FTES)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butte College</td>
<td>9,986.6</td>
<td>3,285.59 (32.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra College</td>
<td>15,228.7</td>
<td>3,533.06 (23.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland Community College</td>
<td>2,532.6</td>
<td>1,139.67 (45.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuba Community College</td>
<td>5,014.9</td>
<td>1,549.60 (30.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Sample

The sample is a group of participants in a study selected from the population from which the researcher intends to generalize. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), sampling is selecting a “group of individuals from whom data are collected” (p.
Similarly, Patton (2015) and Creswell and Poth (2018) defined a sample as a subset of the target population representing the whole population.

**Sample Size**

Qualitative analyses typically require a smaller sample size than quantitative analyses. Qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions. For phenomenological studies, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended 5 to 25 for a sample size, and Patton (2015) suggested at least six participants. There are no specific rules when determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Qualitative sample size may best be determined by the time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 2015).

The sample for this study was 10 FGS participants, two from Butte College, three from Sierra College, two from Woodland Community College, and three from Yuba Community College each of the listed California CCs, chosen using purposeful sampling procedures. With the purposeful sampling method, the researcher selects participants who understand the factors or share common characteristics pertaining to the study topic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). This sampling method was employed to ensure participants met the following criteria: (a) attended a CC in California, (b) participated in SSS consistently, and (c) met characteristics of FGS as defined in this study.

**Sample Selection Process**

In phenomenological research, the purpose of collecting data is to understand the relevance, process, and day-to-day lived experiences of the people studied (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, qualitative inquiry relies on in-depth knowledge garnered from participants
that results in the researcher understanding research purpose and usefulness while also maintaining the credibility of the study with a structured timeframe instead of concentrating on the amount of data retrieved (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015).

**Purposeful and Random Sampling**

The researcher used a combination of purposeful and random sampling to select participants for this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that purposeful sampling provides researchers a selection of “particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest” (p.138). The strategy employed to identify the participants was criterion sampling based on the research problem, purpose, and questions. The criterion sampling method allowed the researcher to select participants based on specific criteria (Patton, 2015). The following criteria were established to select eligible participants for this study:

- First generation student as defined for the study.
- Must have been enrolled for at least one year or two semesters at a CC.
- Must have participated in and received student support services while enrolled at the CC.
- Must volunteer to participate in the study.

From those qualified students who volunteered, two to three qualified students were selected randomly from each of the four participating colleges for a total of 10 participants.
The essential purpose of the research study was to determine the perceptions of FGS with regard to the academic impact of SSS they received in CC. Participants were selected for the study using the following procedure:

1. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from Brandman University Instructional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix B).
2. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from each participating CC IRB (see Appendix C – F).
3. First-generation students participating in SSS were identified through the SSS coordinator (see Appendix G) at each college.
4. The SSS coordinator at each college sent an email to FGS (see Appendix H) explaining the study and asking volunteers to contact the researcher to participate.
5. From those FGS who volunteered to participate, three students from each college were selected randomly to participate.
6. The 10 participants received materials including a formal invitation to participate with a study description (see Appendix I), informed consent document (see Appendix J), Participant Bill of Rights (see Appendix K), audio/video release form (see Appendix L), and interview protocol (see Appendix M).
7. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Zoom interviews were scheduled with the 10 participants.
8. Prior to conducting each interview, the researcher recorded the participant agreeing that they had read and understood the informed consent documents and verbally agreed to participate in the study.

9. Interviews were conducted.

**Instrumentation**

The gathering of qualitative data is a personal endeavor that requires the researcher to develop a close relationship with participants to understand their perspectives, feelings, and experiences (Patton, 2015). Gathering data by interviewing participants is a common instrumentation for qualitative research. Interviews provide insight into how individuals experience their lives. As the instrument for this phenomenological study, the researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured open ended interviews with participants to understand the perception of FGS lived experiences with SSS programs and how it impacted their academic success. This data collection method supported the researcher’s comprehension of participant lived experiences and perspectives related to their academic success.

**Reliability**

In qualitative research, reliability of a study refers to the consistency of practices and procedures employed by the researcher (Noble & Smith, 2015; Patton, 2015). For this study, the researcher was actively engaged in the one-on-one interviews. The reliability of a study is reflected by the standardized methods utilized by the researcher (Noble & Smith, 2015). For this study, the researcher developed strategies to safeguard the trustworthiness of the data. These measures included structured and purposeful efforts by the researcher to address personal and professional bias, established clear and
precise processes that conveyed the researcher’s decision-making process to support replication of the study, maintained neutrality, and determinations of how the data could be applied.

The researcher conducted all one-on-one interviews to maintain consistency in practice and protocols. One-to-one interviews with standardized questions appeared to have highest reliability (Noble & Smith, 2015; Patton, 2015). This approach aimed to ensure that each interview was presented with same questions in similar order. Moreover, the researcher applied Noble and Smith’s (2015) criteria to support the reliability of this qualitative study, specifically: truth value, consistency, neutrality, and applicability. Additionally, the researcher was mindful of using strategies to meet the study’s intended purpose. Table 3 shows the strategies used by the researcher to support and uphold the reliability of the study during the data collection process.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability Criteria</th>
<th>Intended Purpose</th>
<th>Strategy Employed</th>
<th>Strategy Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truth Value</td>
<td>Help researcher avoid personal and professional bias</td>
<td>Documentation of processes and decisions</td>
<td>Audio-recorded interviews transcribed verbatim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Create a detailed account of methods used and findings to support the dependability of the study</td>
<td>Discuss data methods and findings with colleagues</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutrality</td>
<td>Honestly document and record data findings</td>
<td>Maintain documentation for each step of the study’s progression</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicability</td>
<td>Ascertain how study and results can be applied to relevant programs, organizations, situations</td>
<td>Pilot testing</td>
<td>Reflexivity journal; NVivo software analysis tool</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One-on-One Interviews

To establish and maintain the reliability of the study, the researcher conducted all one-on-one interviews. To fortify the reliability of the study, three methods were employed during the organization and administration of the interviews. A pilot test of the interview questions and qualitative analysis software (NVivo) were used to increase the reliability of the study.

**Pilot test.** The process for developing and assessing the interview questions began with the researcher creating semi-structured open ended interview questions. The open-ended questions allowed for interviewees to provide individual, original responses. Pilot tests are used to check for “bias in the procedures, the interviewer, and the questions” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 206). The pilot test for this study included two FGS students who qualified for the study but were not participants. These participants provided input and feedback after the interviewer conducted the pilot interviews (see Appendix N). Each simulated interview mirrored the location and protocols to be used in the actual data collection which were done via Zoom with a colleague/observer who had been trained in interview procedures. Changes were made to the questions based on the input and feedback of the participants and observer in the pilot test.

**Qualitative analysis software.** The researcher chose to utilize NVivo 12th edition as the analysis software to support the accuracy of calculations, data coding, and organization of data. NVivo software expedited the organizing, sorting, and analyzing processes. NVivo software aided the researcher in discovering data patterns, interpreting findings, and applying data within the analytical framework model.
Validity

The validity of qualitative research necessitates the findings of a study truthfully represent the results of data collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Noble & Smith, 2015). Qualitative research evolves, and findings may be affected by researcher perspectives regarding reality (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). To maintain the study’s legitimacy, strategies were employed to address the validity of the study including peer examinations, recorded and transcribed interviews, an interview question development matrix, and participant checks.

Prior to conducting interviews with study participants, a peer examination was performed. Two experts in the field of education, each having served as an educator for more than five years, reviewed the interview questions and provided feedback to ensure the interview questions reflected the purpose of the study (see Appendix O). Through the peer examination process, the researcher received valuable feedback for revisions that increased understanding and avoided unintended bias. This strategy strengthened the study’s internal validity.

As a secondary precaution to foster validity of the study, each interview was digitally recorded using two devices: Zoom built-in recording device and the researcher’s cellular telephone. Every interview was transcribed, and participants were asked to conduct checks by reading the transcription to verify its accuracy. Additionally, after each participant’s confirmation of the exactness of the interview’s transcription, the data were examined through the colleague examination process to verify their alignment with the purpose of the study. This process was implemented to further substantiate the study’s internal validity.
**Literature Review Matrix**

The authors cited in the literature matrix are considered foundational researchers in the field and whose work is supported by others. The authors included Coleman, Cooper, Craider, Cummings, Engle, Hodge, Nall, Tinto, and Williams. Using these foundational researchers, a comprehensive literature review is presented about data related to the importance of SSS academic impact on students with regards to academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills. Craider, Cummings, Nall, and Tinto validated that incorporating FGS perception to make program services relevant and encourage FGS engagement in SSS programs. Whereas, Craider, Hodge and Nall expressed that limited researchers have examined the effectiveness of SSS programs in 2-year college from the perspective of FGS. Along with these foundational authors, other studies conducted on the effectiveness of SSS programs consistently emphasize learning FGS perceptions to improve the efficiency of SSS programs that are designed to serve FGS academic needs. Overall, the literature review matrix allowed the researcher to compiled details about the sources, such as first-generation CC students, factors affecting student success in college, theoretical framework, SSS programs, and highlight the gap in the literature.

**Interview Question Development Matrix**

As an initial validity measure, the researcher used an interview question development matrix (IQDM) developed from the literature matrix and designed to directly align the interview questions with the research questions and variables of the study (see Appendix P). The use of the IQDM assures validity in that the data gathered directly address the research questions and variables of the study.
Variable Identification and Alignment

The variables for the study were identified from the literature and are cited here and in the IQDM as a measure to assure the validity of the data collected through alignment to the variables. Identified variables and sources were:

- Student Engagement (Association of American College & Universities, 2015; Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2008; Kelley-Hall, 2010).
- Student Persistence (Cooper, 2010; Craider 2014; Nall, 2017).
- Student Satisfaction (Kelly-Hall, 2010; Nall, 2017).
- Development of Academic Skills (Coleman, 2015; Cummings 2014; Nall, 2017; Petty, 2014).

Data Collection

Qualitative research relies on three “kinds of data: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observations; and (3) written communications” (Patton, 2015, p. 14). The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to understand and provide detailed descriptions of FGS perceptions of the impact of SSS on their academic success. With this purpose in mind, data collected were from one-on-one interviews.

Prior to data collection, approval from the Brandman University IRB was obtained and the necessary coursework from the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program was completed (see Appendix Q). Additionally, approval from the participating CC IRB were sought and received, to ensure it complied with ethical
considerations. To begin the data collection process, the researcher reached out to the participating CC SSS coordinator at each college to identify the targeted FGS population participating in SSS. Then the SSS coordinator at each college sent an email, made a phone call, and in-person communicated to FGS explaining the study and asking volunteers to contact the researcher to participate.

The data collection process was initiated when the researcher e-mailed a formal invitation to the randomly selected participants from each CC which included the purpose of the study, data collection protocols, and the dedicated time needed for potential participants of the study. Once each participant agreed to be a part of the study, the researcher emailed a copy of Brandman University’s consent to be part of the study, Research Participant’s Bill of Rights, an audio/video release form, an assurance of confidentiality, the offer to review their interview transcriptions, a copy of the interview protocol, and the researcher’s contact information.

For this study, the researcher used a semi-structured open ended interview format to conduct one-on-one interviews with each participant, beginning with broad, open-ended questions, followed with more specific questions depending on the participant’s responses. Zoom was used as the technology to conduct the interviews as the interviews could be recorded and transcribed using this medium. Then, the interviews were conducted via Zoom within a period of two months, February through March 2021.

The researcher met with each interview participant on Zoom and began the interview by confirming that each participant had received the consent form, Research Participant’s Bill of Rights, an audio/video release form, an assurance of confidentiality, the offer to review their interview transcriptions, a copy of the interview protocol, and the
researcher’s contact information related to the interview. Participants were also reminded that the interview would be recorded using the recording function of Zoom to allow for transcription (also a function of Zoom) and clarification on the part of the researcher. Participants were notified that a copy of the interview transcript would be made available to them to verify accuracy, if so desired. The researcher began the interview following the script as indicated in the interview guide. The interview began with a brief introduction of the researcher and the purpose of the research study and asking for verbal confirmation that participants had received the documents and consent to participate.

All interviews were recorded on two electronic devices and were transcribed verbatim by Rev Transcription Services. The interview transcriptions were then e-mailed to each participant for their review to confirm accuracy and offer corrections as needed; no changes were requested. Following the approved transcriptions of each interview participant, the researcher entered the information into NVivo 12 qualitative analysis software to facilitate the coding process and calculate frequencies of predominant themes related to the overarching research questions. As part of the process, the researcher read each transcript to familiarize herself with the content and begin identifying potential codes.

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative data refers to non-numeric information such as interview transcripts, notes, video and audio recording, images, and text documents. Qualitative data analysis relies on the identification, examination, and interpretation of patterns and themes in textual data and determines how these patterns and themes help answer the research questions (Patton, 2015). In qualitative data analysis, there is a methodical process of
coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to develop an understanding of the
phenomenon under investigation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The purpose of this
qualitative study is to describe the perceptions FGS have of the academic impacts of SSS
received while attending CC. In this study, data accumulated were analyzed to develop a
meaningful understanding of the participants’ perceptions related to the research
questions.

**Data Coding**

Once data were collected and transcribed, the researcher coded the information
based on the study’s research questions and assigned meaningful titles. The codes
emerged from the data via a process of reading and thinking about the text material
(McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher reviewed the data and began the
process of identifying and subdividing data commonalities. Each identified data
subdivision was then assigned a code. To maintain reliability of the study, the researcher
used NVivo 12 to code interview transcription and observation data. Moreover, a
colleague reviewed the data coding to ensure accuracy and check for unintended
researcher bias.

**Categorizing and Identifying Themes**

Next, the coding process identified common codes that were then categorized as
themes. The aim of the qualitative data analysis is to identify patterns in data and
connect them to establish relationships (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015).
Once patterns were distinguished, data were triangulated through the comparison of
codes and themes across transcriptions to confirm data relationships and findings. Also,
the researcher implemented the reflexivity method of self-reflection and evaluation to mitigate inadvertent bias that could influence data analysis.

**Categorizing and Identifying Artifacts**

Likewise, qualitative research is a rigorous, organized, and methodical process of data collection and analysis derived from interviews and the collection of artifacts (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Collected artifacts were correlated with the participant’s interview responses. With the inclusion of data from interviews and related artifacts, the data were triangulated to delineate emergent themes and patterns within the information. For this study the triangulation of data provided the research with a comprehensive understanding related to the perception of FGS at the CC regarding the impact of SSS on their academics.

**Depiction of Findings**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described qualitative research as a rigorous, organized, and methodical process of data collection and analysis derived from interviews to get deeper insights of individuals’ lived experiences of a phenomenon. For this phenomenological study, to develop a valid understanding of natural occurrences related to the research questions, the researcher included both a narrative summary and frequency tables reflecting the data collected. Also, participants were asked to provide artifacts, if available, that supported their responses.

**Limitations**

The limitations of the study are known as those characteristics of methodology that impact or influence the interpretation of the results of a research study (Patton 2015). Qualitative research limitations are described as, but not limited to includes: (a) time-
The research design for this study reflects a sample selection method that is considered as a limitation of this research. This research utilized purposeful sampling procedures in which participants are selected based on research criteria to obtain a sample of 10. The sample was not randomly selected; therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalized to larger population, and may limit the applicability to other educational institutions. Also, due to the small sample size and unique characteristics of the sample for this study, the results might not be able to be generalized to all first-generation CC students. Moreover, the Zoom virtual interviews process leads to its own challenge when it comes to building a relationship with your participants compared to in-person face-to-face interviews. Nonetheless, this study provides relevant insights and considerations that can be used to develop programming and practices to support first-generation students’ academic success and transition to postsecondary level to obtain a degree.

Other study limitations included the use of semi-structured open ended interviews. Although questions were pre-determined and asked sequentially for each participant, there were limiting factors such as developing a rapport between the interviewer and interviewee, conducting the study with participants from various CCs, the potential variance of participants’ working definition of FGS, philosophical bias, and human factors with the potential to influence the interview outcomes.
Summary

Chapter III provided a synopsis of the research study methodology. The research purpose and research questions were presented as the foundation of the study. Additionally, the research design, population, sample, and data collection were described in detail in this chapter. Further, this chapter presented the study’s limitations. Chapter IV presents the findings derived from the data analysis. Chapter V provides a conclusion, implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks from the research.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the execution of the planned study procedures and present the results of the data analysis. This chapter begins with brief reviews of the study purpose, research question and sub-questions, and research methods and data collection procedures. Next, this chapter includes brief descriptions of the study population and sample. The main section of this chapter, presentation and analysis of data, includes a description of the execution of the planned interpretative phenomenological data analysis procedure, followed by a presentation of the themes that emerged during data analysis to address the research sub-questions. This chapter concludes with a summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the perceptions first-generation students have of the academic impact of student support services received while attending community college in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills.

Guiding Research Question

This phenomenological study was guided by the following research question:

*What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of student support services they have received in community colleges in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills?*
Research Sub-Questions

The following research sub-questions were developed to help answer the guiding research question:

1. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student academic achievement?

2. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student engagement?

3. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student persistence?

4. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student satisfaction?

5. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their development of academic skills?

Methodology

A phenomenological approach was employed for this study to develop a first-hand understanding regarding how SSS at the CC have an impact on FGS in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills. The researcher engaged an in-depth,
semi-structured open-ended, one-on-one interview and collected artifacts with 10 FGS from the four representative CC in the northern region of California. The interviews and artifacts served to support the researcher in exploring the lived experiences of study participants to garner a comprehensive understanding of their perceptions. Moreover, data were triangulated by using related artifacts collected during the interviews.

Interviews were conducted in February and March 2021. All interview dates and times were determined by the participants then the interviews were conducted virtually Zoom. Prior to the interviews, each participant was provided with the research questions, Brandman Participant’s Bill of Rights form, informed consent form, and audio/video release form. Additionally, every interview was recorded to ensure verbatim accounts and transcribed by the GMR Transcription Services. Once interviews were transcribed, transcriptions were provided to each participant to review and edit as deemed necessary for accuracy of the content.

To further strengthen the reliability and validity of the study, artifacts were gathered from the participants. Collected artifacts were used to support the shared experiences statements participants had provided. With the inclusion of data from interviews and related artifacts, the data was triangulated to delineate emergent themes and patterns within the information. For this study, the triangulation of data provided the researcher with a comprehensive understanding related to the perceptions of FGS at the community college with regards to the impact SSS in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills.
Population and Sample

The study population comprised of the approximately 484,485 FTES FGS of the overall student population of 1,126,709 FTES attending 114 CC in the State of California. This was narrowed to a target population of 32,762.8 FTES FGS attended the four selected CC in the northern California in 2018. The convince sample consisted of 10 FGS from the four representative CC in the northern region of California. Study participants met the following criteria: (a) attended California Community College, (b) participated in SSS consistently, and (c) met characteristics of FGS as defined in this study.

The researcher utilized both purposeful and random sampling to conduct the study. The purposeful and random sampling allowed the researcher to select participants who were identified as representative students for the study by each college then each student had the equal probability of being chosen since they all fit the sampling criteria. These sampling methods helped provide a level of depth in understanding participant perceptions about the impact SSS in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

In this section, the researcher provides a description of the data analysis procedure. The data analysis discussion is followed by a detailed explanation of the results, which are then organized by research sub-questions. Then within each sub-question discussion, the findings are organized by theme.
The researcher used NVivo software to import the verbatim transcripts of the interview’s interpretive phenomenological analysis. The researcher also made notes about the potential themes while reading the data, followed by doing the data. While re-reading the full data set, participants’ responses to the interview questions were broken into the smallest segments that could meaningfully convey an aspect of the participants lived experiences if presented as a standalone quotation. Then each identified transcript quotation was assigned to an NVivo code “known as themes” under each individual sub-question segment.

While identifying themes, themes were compared to the original data to ensure the accuracy and patterns of meaning in participants’ response. Then, the themes were also compared to one another to ensure that each theme was distinct and completed enough to justify its separation from the other themes. It also ensured that each theme was appropriately presented as a single theme, not overlapping or showing any relation to other themes. In the final process where themes were finalized, it was ensured that themes were named and defined to clarity their significance as answers to the research question and collected artifacts were pared with each theme.

The research questions used to guide this study was focused on describing the perceptions FGS have of the academic impact of SSS received while attending CC in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills. The research question was answered by addressing the five sub-questions. In the discussion of each of the eight themes used to address the sub-questions, a table indicating which participants contributed to each of the codes in that theme is provided.
Research Sub-Question 1

Research Sub-Question 1 asked: *What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student academic achievement?*

Two themes emerged during data analysis to address this research sub-question. The first theme (Theme 1) for Research Sub-Question 1 was: Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOP&S) supported with academic journey. The second theme (Theme 2) for Research Sub-Question 2 was: Student support services assisted with meeting academic goals. The following narrative subsections are presentations of the themes for Research Sub-Question:

**Theme 1. Extended opportunity programs and services supported with academic journey.** All 10 participants contributed to this theme. Participants referenced EOP&S provided them the support and comprehensive services to support the academic achievement. The programs provided included:

- Academic counseling
- University transfer assistance information
- Campus visits (field trips)
- Assistance with application for admissions fee waivers
- Educational plan
- Tutoring
- Book voucher services
- Priority registration
- Assistance completing financial aid application
Since all 10 participants contributed to this theme, there were statements made by each participant that overlapped each other’s responses with regards to their perceptions about EOP&S. The responses that overlapped listed as the following:

Participant 1 stated:

I joined the EOP&S during my first semester at college and I was nervous in the beginning because I didn’t know anything what I am supposed to do, what classes to take, how to pay classes fee, and what to major in. Since I been with EOP&S, I have been able to receive the services and support I needed with my college journey. I’ve been on track, since my counselor made an educational plan, received money for books, tutoring for my classes in which I was not doing well, and been attend workshops that offers information about college education and next steps.

Participant 2 stated:

EOP&S helped me a lot. This program is a reason I am an academically successful in college. I was working part-time to support my family and myself. So the EOP&S provided me a lot of financial help. They were providing me books and some money for class phase. My counselors helped me to take classes and do well in my grades while I was working.

Participant 4 stated:

I come from a family with no background in college education. I was thankful to be part of EOP&S because this program provided the support that I needed while attending college like counseling, books assistance, counselors always answered my question and helped me to pick my classes, received email communication
about priority registration, went on fieldtrips to visit university campuses, and helped me complete my university application. Not only this….I was able to turn around to the staff anytime when I was lost in college and when I couldn’t figure out what I was doing.

Participant 6 stated:

I joined the EOP&S and it’s really helpful to me, my counselor helped me a lot with education. I was lost in college and she said, ‘This is a plan you have to follow throughout your college career. And you have to do these classes.’ And I did that. Starting, it was hard. It’s not easy. So I also took tutoring and it’s really helped me to keep my grades and keep up with GPA. So, I did that, too. And how, financially, they helped I really got opportunity to get support for my college.

Participant 7 stated:

I think EOP&S was where I meet with a peer mentor and a meeting with a specialist and meeting with a counselor – they kept me set with my academic goals. And so, it will help me to focus on my goals and keep and pick up my classes and doing all that stuff and able to keep up with good academic standing and GPA.

Theme 2. Student support services assisted with meeting academic goals. All 10 participants contributed to this theme. All of the participants described that student support services that are offered at their college included but not limited to EOP&S, counseling, tutoring, mentoring, financial aid, library, and various programs provided them necessary information and guidance to them to navigate through the college to full-
fill their academic goals. Students reported that their academic abilities and changes of academic success were heightened because of the consistent participation in the student support services programs.

Five out of 10 participants reported that services that are available to them is the main reason for students’ academic success. The counselor and tutors keep track of student’s progress in class so they can stay on track to meet their academic goal and continue to their higher education goals. Eight out of 10 participants reported that they were not sure of their academic goals when they entered the college. They went to college to take a few college courses to improve their knowledge. After receiving the support from student services, participants stated that they were encourage and quickly developed an interest and desire to fulfill the academic goals set for them because they no longer felt alone in their academic journey. All the participants reported the contribution of student support services in achieving their academic goals.

Participant 2 stated:

I would basically like to say that the services that I received at campus helped me so much being organized and getting my associate degree on time.

Participant 3 stated:

College was tough for me being first-in the family. I was supporting my family and studying at same time. However, when I became aware that I can participate in the counseling, EOP&S, CARE, tutoring, financial aid money, money for books, peer mentor, and other services, I can’t remember all program names…..these all services helped me focus on my goals and keep up with classes and doing everything I can to graduate and transfer to university.
Participant 8 stated:

Student support services programs staff made me aware of ways to overcome the struggles that I had in college. And they provided…what I am thinking…academic counseling. I almost didn’t graduate because I was missing one class and they were like, ‘you’re missing this.’ And without them I wouldn’t even know, and then I would’ve gone to fill out my graduation application and I wouldn’t have been able to graduate.

These narrative subsections represent participant’s perception with regards to the academic impact of the SSS they have received on their academic achievement including EOP&S support for academic journey and SSS support to meet academic goals.

Table 4 displays the themes for Research Sub-Question 1.

Table 4

Research Sub-Question 1 Themes: Academic Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Achievement Themes</th>
<th>N Respondents</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOP&amp;S) supported with academic journey</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student support services assisted with meeting academic goals</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* EOP&S = Extended Opportunity Programs and Services.

Research Sub-Question 2

Research Sub-Question 2 asked: *What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student engagement?*
Two themes emerged during data analysis to address this research sub-question. The first theme (Theme 3) for Research Sub-Question 2 was: Developed motivation to continue education. The second theme (Theme 4) for Research Sub-Question 2 was: Increased engagement at academic level.

The following narrative subsections are presentations of the themes for Research Sub-Question 2.

**Theme 3. Developed motivation to continue education.** Eight out of 10 participants contributed to this theme. Participants reported that SSS have played a substantial role to develop their motivation over time to continue education and meet their academic goals. Five participants reported that they received an opportunity to save money, prepare for transfer to a four-year college, received academic, career, and social emotional counseling, learned about resources to finance education, opportunity to visit various four-year college, support to complete admission application, and understanding of academic testing’s, etc. Having access to all these resources and being engaged in SSS and consistent communication with staff has given them the ability to determine their academic path and academically motivated them to succeed.

Four participants reported that they always felt that they had the disadvantage of not having both parents attend college, and they had no confidence and desire to complete a degree or certification. Over time, they learned about the SSS such as EOP&S, career services, tutoring, fanatical aid, library services, computer labs, faculty support, and any other services that was available to them. They were made aware about these services by their counselors and peers. As they started to engage and consistently...
participate in these services, their motivation and aspiration to continue their education to have a bright future for their families and themselves increased.

These are some of the narrative subsections from participants that represents this theme:

Participant 4 stated:

My counselor helped me a lot. He’s always checking on me. He’s – I feel like does it with all of his students, he’s like, ‘Hey how’re you doing with your classes? Just don’t forget to do these assignments and attend these events or workshops. I hope you’re doing well and if you have any question or concern, you can discuss with me because I want you to meet your goals.’ His small check-in’s on small things means a lot to me. I have seen my motivation go up to continue in education and I’ve seen my interest in college has grown a lot more since I was in high school.

Participant 8 stated:

The SSS I am receiving like…made me feel like a more confident student, like, a more active student, that I can do this.

Participant 9 stated:

My mentor, tutors, and counselor motivated me a lot. The reason was, I remember I was having a family issue and was about to drop the college because I had to take care of my family and then they stayed on top of me to provide support so I can continue in college. My counselor said, ‘Let’s see if you want to keep a part-time college classes, just keep going rather than dropping out,’ which showed me ‘another pathway to continue in college.
Participant 10 stated:

I was not a great student for first few semesters at college. Once my counselor told me about the different student support services at campus, then I utilized the tutoring services. My grades started to improve which motivated me to become a full time student and continue to work toward my educational plan. I couldn’t believe I had GPA of 4.1 was on honor list.

**Theme 4. Increased engagement at academic level.** All 10 participants contributed to this theme. All participants reported most of SSS structure of engagement activities was believed to increases engagement at academic level which is critically influential on the college experience and academic success. Five participants reported participating in some type of meaningful activities, events, and workshops and socializing with peers outside of the classroom. These activities contributed to their active engagement in their academics.

Eight out of 10 participants reported they have to undergo various stages and phases of development as a first-generation student. The services and workshops offered by SSS programs are often facilitated by experts from a wide range of professionals. The experiences with SSS often serve more than an academic purpose in which they learn about their academic interest, short and long term goals, project collaboration, diversity exposure, tutoring, support for job field and much more. These experiences established to expand the participants in the areas of independence, self-regulation, motivation and engagement to achieve academic goals.

Some of the narrative subsections from participants that represents this theme include:
Participant 1 stated:

When I started college, I was told by my EOP&S counselor about various services available at campus to support me in my college journey, I didn’t pay much attention to it. I though it is bunch of meetings and activities I have to attend. After communicating with my peers, I started to participate in all the activities like… workshops, tutoring, college preparation events, meeting my counselor on regular basis, and reaching out to faculty for support after class…I was surprised to see a tremendous change in my academic interest and increase in educational knowledge and resources. I started to encourage my friends and peers to join available SSS programs.

Participant 3 stated:

I think interacting in class or outside the classroom, asking more questions to professors, counselors, and peers and being more open others. Being told to do these kinds of things encourage me to be more active and because of that, I feel like I have an easier time understanding the education importance, course content and then doing better in college.

Participant 5 stated:

I was involved in a program called Inspiring Scholars, and Inspiring Scholars is a department that is supporting former foster youth. I was able to join this program and receive services from them. They would have a computer lab, and they would allow me to do my homework there, provide a quiet place to work, and also printing services. I was receiving academic coaching service there, get feedback on my papers, reading over assignments with me to help me with my
comprehension. My experience with them increased my self-motivation to learn about other services available for students and keep a consistent communication with my counselor about my educational plan and goals.

These narrative subsections represent participant’s perception with regards to the academic impact of the SSS they received during their engagement including development of motivation to continue education and increase in engagement at academic level.

Table 5 displays the themes for Research Sub-Question 2

Table 5

Research Sub-Question 2 Themes: Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Themes</th>
<th>N Respondents</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developed motivation to continue education</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased engagement at academic level</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Sub-Question 3

Research Sub-Question 3 asked: What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student persistence?

Two themes emerged during data analysis to address this research sub-question. The first theme (Theme 5) for Research Sub-Question 3 was: Support available for educational planning and registration. The second theme (Theme 6) for Research Sub-Question 3 was: Determination to complete a degree.
The following narrative subsections are presentations of the themes for Research Sub-Question 3.

**Theme 5. Support available for educational planning and registration.** All 10 participants contributed to this theme. All participants reported that their counselor provided support for educational planning and registration to meet their academic goals. Participants stated that counselors helped them to set attainable goals and provide assistance in developing an education plan. Their educational plans were altered to make them successful in their academic goals.

Eight out of 10 participants reported that they were working while studying to support their families. Participants reported that counselors took their work and any other things in consideration to make a flexible and attainable educational plan that will fit their time schedule. All participants reported that they were able to meet their counselor from time-to-time as needed and whenever they needed to alter or make changes in their educational plan due to course availability, academic challenge, and life events.

The educational planning supports the participants received proved to be a catalyst in creating a long-term desire and persistence to succeed in college. Seven out of 10 participants reported that they were receiving support in a form of reminders to register every semester and priority registration available for EOP&S program participants. Support available for registration reminded them every semester to enroll in courses as planned on their educational plan and schedule appointments with a counselor if they cannot enroll in the number of units planned due to not doing well academically, personal challenges, or time availability.
These are some of the narrative subsections from participants that represents this theme:

Participant 2 stated:

If I didn’t have my counselor, like literally, I wouldn’t have been able to come this far. Personally as a student, there were times when I was like, ‘I don’t want to take that many classes in a semester; I can’t do this.’ I was like, ‘okay, I’ll just take one class. If I were to do that, I would be – I would get my degree a lot later maybe it would take one more year.’ So counselor kept me persistent because I already had an educational plan. So, I was just following along with it.

Participant 3 stated:

I had a counselor in EOP&S Program, who was helpful so that I knew that I was taking the classes I was supposed to be taking and that worked with my job schedule so I was able to continue in both.

Participant 5 stated:

I would review my education plan; I would go in the beginning of a new semester or ending a semester. They would just wanna follow up and make sure that these were the classes I wanted to take, and how I was doing, they would just go over my GPA with me, and just what a four-year college is really looking for. That kept to persist and strive to keep my GPA up.

Participant 6 stated:

There was a time when I had family problems and I wasn’t able to follow up my educational plan. I set up a meeting with my counselor and she helped me to not stop out, but take one class for that semester so I can overcome my personal
challenges and then continue with my regular schedule starting next semester that way it didn’t impacted my degree competition date.

Participant 7 stated:

My meeting with my counselor and basically them just telling that if, say, for example, if you don’t end up taking these classes this semester, what that mean is that you’ll probably have to stay another semester or another semester will end up being overloaded.

Participant 8 stated:

The Inspiring Scholars program and EOPS would send out email reminders. So, the emails would always be encouraging and letting us know, ‘Hey, this deadline is coming up soon, you have priority registration; it’s this day, this day.’ So, just those check-ins and those emails helped me stay focused and stay on top of continuing to enroll and do those things, and also meeting with the academic coaches. The counselors, who were able to go over my student ed. plan with me, and just reassure me that I was on track and everything and I was selecting the right classes and stuff. So, that was helpful.

Participant 9 stated:

Yeah, for sure. EOPS help me so much. I get a chance to get to choose my classes earlier than others, to compare to all students in college. It helps me a lot to get chances, too, get more opportunity.

Participant 10 stated:

So, as I told you, in monthly meeting in EOPS, they tell you when to register for your classes and what time before it’s too late. So, they keep you motivated –
they send you notification. And they send a Zoom link to join in if you need any help. Especially tell you if you need any help, ‘you can make appointment with me on Zoom, and I can help you go through it – your classes or register your classes.’ I think that is a really good idea to tell students.

These narrative subsections represent participant’s perception with regards to the academic impact of the SSS they have received on their persistence since there was support available for educational planning and registration.

**Theme 6. Determination to complete a degree.** Seven out of 10 participants contributed to this theme. Participants reported that available support to persist in college guided them to firmly set their decisions or course of action, especially with the aim of achieving their academic goals. Participants reported when they had entered college, they were not certain that they may be able to complete a degree or certification, because they had no support and guidance from their family when they started college and they felt lost. However, participants reported the support provided from the student support services especially counselors, tutoring, and peer mentor was a growth mindset that reinforced them to build a determination to complete a degree and built their self-confidence.

Participants described that they develop an understanding to be persistent in their pursuit of their degree and be willing to expend the effort to do so even when faced with challenges they sometime encounter. Participants also reported that SSS staff practices to encourage students to be determined, so that more of their SSS participants persist to completing a degree. Participants also expressed that the SSS provided them a sense of
belonging, which determined their ability to be consistent in their academic goals and persist in college.

These are some of the narrative subsections from participants that represents this theme:

Participant 2 stated:

I am glad I listened to my counselor because it’s a lot more easier for me this semester and my course load is manageable and I will be completing my degree and transferring on time.

Participant 3 stated:

I continued on with the services I was getting and now I’m getting my associate degree.

Participant 4 stated:

Well, I can say that I was very lost…I can say without the doubt. If I didn’t have my counselor and other student services, I would have not felt a sense of belonging in college because I didn’t know what to expect from college experience. I became more determined in my academic goals by participating in the student services and working with my counselor and got on track to complete an associate degree then transfer to a four-year university.

Participant 9 stated:

It was obvious that I had no background in college and my parents didn’t know anything about education system. I will have to say that faculty, EOP&S counselor, and peers that I have meet in college assisted me to understand my own academic goals and the importance of education for better future. I then
realize how important it was to persist in college to fulfill my education goals and it was not only for me, it was for my family as well.

These narrative subsections represent participant’s perception with regards to the academic impact of the SSS they have received on their persistence including determination to complete a degree.

Table 6 displays the themes for Sub-Question 3.

Table 6

Research Sub-Question 3 Themes: Persistence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persistence Themes</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support available for educational planning and registration</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination to complete a degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Research Sub-Question 4

Research Sub-Question 4 asked: What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student satisfaction?

One theme emerged during data analysis to address this research sub-question. The theme (Theme 7) for Research Sub-Question 4 was: Appreciation and satisfaction with the practiced students’ services.

Theme 7. Appreciations and satisfaction with the practiced student services.

All participants contributed to this theme. Participants reported SSS and its staff provided necessary information to them that will assist in navigating through every semester. They felt that their academic abilities and chances of success were heightened
because of this. Participants collectively stated that the counselors impacted them on an individual level by talking with them about the orientation process, providing them with information about various available SSS at campus, supplying them with book costs, campus workshops, and other needed academic information. Additionally, all 10 participants described how counselors and other SSS staff provided information on additional resources, funding for class needs, strategies for success, and on-campus training related to career development, including professional development activities.

Participants explained how their satisfaction with the utilized services was a positive factor in their persistence. Participants identified various aspect of their SSS and educational experience that are associated with their overall satisfaction. The most common services across all participants were: EOP&S Program, counseling, tutoring, career services, and financial aid. Participants described how the EOP&S Program staff and counselors encouraged them to do their best and not to give up. They provided them with the information about tutoring, career services, financial aid, and any other services or resources available on campus to help them succeed academically. Participants mentioned how the SSS staff at campus understood the challenges of the first-generation students and the impact that this status has on their lives as students.

These are some of the narrative subsections from participants that represents this theme:

Participant 5 stated:

Since I had started attending college, I have been taking the opportunity to meet my counselor every semester to discuss the progress in my educational plan. There have been times when I didn’t do well academically with my grades. My
counselor helped to plan courses that would balance each other so I don’t have hard time to pass my classes. As well as, there are other programs available that I have used such as tutoring, peer mentor, and others as needed every semester that have increase my academic success abilities.

Participant 7 stated:

I came from another country where education was not important and I came to United States and my parents had no knowledge about college here. When I started college, I was lost. I meet my counselor and she was an amazing person because she knew what information, resources, workshop, financial assistance, and support for books and that support made me realized that I have a guidance. I can say I am satisfied with the SSS I have used so far.

Participant 8 stated:

There are many programs at my college, but I only used them once I felt I needed support like counseling, career services, tutoring, financial aid, and library. I can say I am able to persist and continue in college because of these services otherwise I have no support outside of college. My satisfaction with these services is associated with my success.

Participant 10 stated:

Being first person in family to attend college, I didn’t know what to expect from…I am thankful to have the many SSS for students like me. That is one of the reason I am satisfied with my educational experience and I have the motivation to go to four-year university. I feel I am ready to transition to university because I have gained experience and learned a lot from my counselor.
These narrative subsections represent participant’s perception with regards to the academic impact of the SSS they have received on their satisfaction including appreciations and satisfaction with the practiced student services.

Table 7 displays the themes for Sub-Question 4.

Table 7

Research Sub-Question 4 Themes: Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Theme</th>
<th>N Respondents</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation and satisfaction with the practiced student services</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Sub-Question 5

Research Sub-Question 5 asked: *What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their development of academic skills?*

One theme emerged during data analysis to address this research sub-question. The theme (Theme 8) for Research Sub-Question 5 was: Development in academic learning abilities.

**Theme 8. Development in the academic learning abilities.** All 10 participants contributed to this theme. Participants collectively stated that they have seen a development in their academic learning abilities by participating in the SSS. Participants described that their study habits, appreciation for diversity, and GPA had improved. Participants also reported improvement in the communication skills, ability to handle problems, and productivity in course assignments and group assignments. In addition,
students reported being in a better academic position for completing an associate degree and transferring into a four-year institution.

All of the participants reported how important it is to learn time management. They stated that there were struggling to balance their time between work and study. Their counselors assisted them to create educational plans that helped them balance their time and learn how they can do the same in future semesters. They also attended EOP&S workshops and activates where they learned skills to balance their time not only with work and school, but even in their personal life. Overall, the academic skills learned by practicing the SSS have made an academic impact on their success.

These are some of the narrative subsections from participants that represents this theme:

Participant 1 stated:

When I started attending college right after high school, I was kind of lost because I was on my own. I never took things seriously in high school. I was encouraged by my counselor to attend the study skills workshops. I was surprised how learning small study habits can make you a successful in college. I learned so much...how to take notes, how to organize my notes, how to ask question in class, writing papers, etc....I make friends while studying in groups that also has been a success because my I have seen an improvement in my grades. I also stated to do a better time balance with work and study.

Participant 2 stated:

My counselor and peer mentor suggested me to study with my peers outside of classroom. I stared to do that and I made more friends and learned a lot about
their culture, background. It helped me understand other rather than making
judgment about them.

Participant 3 stated:

A huge improvement I have seen in my self after learning how to do time
management. I always struggled to take classes because I have two part-time
jobs. There was a time when my counselor asked me to meet her and I discussed
with her my struggle because I need to support my family. She sat down with me
and took the time to teach me how I can balance my time with work, family, and
study and still continue to pursue my academic goals.

Participant 4 stated:

I was a great student in high school, but I didn’t know much about academic
writing. I started college and struggle to write papers and not do well in my group
assignments. I started to use tutoring services after my instructor and EOP&S
specialist recommendation. You will not believe; my tutor was so nice and taught
me small writing tips and how to research on various topics with key words.
Also, MLA and APA writing formats and how to write reference and find
resources online about these writing formats. This experience was a game
changer for me and over the time I became a great writer and even I took writing
courses as my electives.

Participant 5 stated:

The term “academic skills” was unfamiliar for me until my counselor and
instructs told me that I need to improve my learning habits and skills and made
me realize how learning skills can make an impact in my grades, college progress toward my goals, and GPA.

These narrative subsections represent participant’s perception with regards to the academic impact of the SSS they have received on their academic skills including development in the academic learning abilities.

Table 8 displays the themes for Research Sub-Question 5.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Sub-Question 5 Theme: Academic Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Skills Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development in the academic learning abilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Findings**

Ten participants were interviewed for this phenomenological study to describe the perceptions FGS have of the academic impact of SSS received while attending CC in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills. There were eight key findings that resulted from the major themes, a review of the data, and frequency of the study participants’ responses. The following key findings identify the themes that have the highest frequency related to the academic impact of SSS on the FGS while attending CC:

- Impact on academic achievement
- Impact on engagement
- Impact on persistence
• Impact on satisfaction
• Impact on academic skills

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to describe the perceptions FGS had of the academic impact of SSS received while attending CC in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills. The research asked five open ended, semi-structured interviews questions. The study participants were invited to share their perceptions regarding the phenomenon of participating in SSS at CC in California and how it impacts their academic in the areas of academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills.

The data and artifacts were analyzed using NVivo Software and intercoder triangulation by employing the support of qualified peers to reduce researcher bias when examining the data to identify emerging themes.

This phenomenological study was guided by the following research question:

What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of student support services they have received in community colleges in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills?

The themes receiving 100% participant participation with 100% frequency in response rate that emerged from the questions referencing academic impacts of SSS were:
• Academic impact of SSS on academic achievement was mentioned by all the respondents, and they described EOP&S and other utilized SSS including tutoring, counselor, peer mentor, and financial aid assisted them to meet their academic goals and supported in their academic journey.

• Academic impact of SSS on engagement was mentioned by all 10 respondents, and they described their engagement as having increased overtime at the academic level such as: meeting with a counselor on regular basis, attending workshops and other activities, participating in class, socializing with peers outside the classroom, career awareness, solidifying short and long term academic goals and awareness of their academic interest.

• Academic impact of SSS on persistence was mentioned by all 10 respondents, and they described their persistence was the result of support available for educational planning and registration.

• Academic impact of SSS on satisfaction was mentioned by all 10 respondents, and they described their satisfaction was the result of appreciation and satisfaction with the practiced student services that included: EOP&S, tutoring, counselor, peer mentor, and financial aid.

• Academic impact of SSS on academic skills was mentioned by all 10 respondents, and they described their development in the academic learning abilities were from the SSS.

Chapter V of this study will present conclusions based on these findings. Furthermore, Chapter V will provide recommendations for further research on this topic.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the perceptions FGS have of the academic impact of SSS received while attending CC in California within the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills. The population for this study was the FGS, whose both parents never attended college, attending 114 CC in the State of California. The study sample consisted of 10 FGS from the four representative CC including Butte College, Sierra College, Woodland College, and Yuba College in the northern region of California who were participating in the SSS consistently and met the characteristics of the FGS as defined in this study.

The purpose of Chapter V is to summarize and discuss the findings, provide conclusions, and recommendations. This chapter begins with a brief overview of the study and other main sections of the chapter that include major findings, conclusions, recommendations, unexpected findings, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks and reflections.

**Major Findings**

A research question was answered through a comprehensive analysis of the five sub-questions. Chapter IV presented the key research findings and results of the coding of themes, including the frequencies from the study participants’ responses. In this chapter, a summary of the major findings is presented regarding each of the five sub-questions.
Research Question

The guiding research question asked: What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of student support services they have received in community colleges in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills?

To answer this question, qualitative data were collected through virtual interviews with 10 FGS attending CC in the northern region of California. The questions were peer-reviewed and tested through a pilot study. The research protocol involved open ended semi-structured interview questions to explore the phenomenon of how the California SSS impact academic success of FGS. The major findings for this study were generated from the participants’ responses to the research questions.

Research sub-question 1. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student academic achievement?

Major findings. The major findings for Research Sub-Question 1 revealed that the EOP&S Program made an academic impact on first-generation community college students’ academic achievement. One hundred percent of the participants mentioned this theme. These participants’ perception constitutes a finding because they are supported by literature stating that FGS are likely to participate in EOP&S Program services (Cooper, 2010). These services include: (a) academic counseling, (b) university transfer assistance information, (c) campus visits (field trips), (d) assistance with application for admissions fee waivers, (e) educational plan, (f) tutoring, (g) book voucher services, (h) priority
registration, and (i) assistance completing financial aid application to achieve their short- and long-term educational goals (Cooper, 2010; Illahi & Khandai, 2015). Most of the participants’ short and long term goals consist of but not limited to: (a) 2.0 or higher GPA, (b) degree competition, (c) certification attainment, and (d) transfer to four-year university or college. Most of the participants’ described that their EOP&S Program provided them resources and information to guide them through their academic journey since they were the first in family to attend college.

A second major finding, all 10 participants of the study indicated that they received academic achievement support from SSS to achieve their academic goals. This theme aligns with literature citing that FGS received support from the SSS included but not limited to: (a) EOP&S, (b) counseling, (c) tutoring, (d) mentoring, (e) financial aid, (f) library, and (g) other programs that are implemented by campus demographic and student’s needs (Illahi & Khandai, 2015). Additionally, all the participants reported that their academic abilities and changes of academic success were heightened at times, when they had consistent participation in the student support services, to full-fill their academic goals.

**Conclusion.** Based upon these findings, it is concluded that FGS consistent participation in the EOP&S Program services and other SSS does make an impact on FGS to full-fill academic achievement.

**Recommendation for action.** If the CCC are committed to support FGS to increase the academic achievement rates, it is recommended that SSS, such as EOP&S and other most frequent SSS targeting FGS, must utilize the best practices to maintain a continuity and consistency in the FGS participation.
**Research sub-question 2.** What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regards to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student engagement?

**Major findings.** All 10 participants expressed having received support from SSS, especially the ones that are designed to assist FGS, made an academic impact in their engagement. The major finding revealed that SSS played a substantial role in developing their motivation over time to continue their education. Moreover, research reveals that consistent communication with a counselor can increase FGS participation and engagement in their academic goals (“Importance of Student,” 2019). Participants reported their EOP&S counselors’ guidance encouraged them to increase their involvement in their academics made them aware of the other SSS such as career services, tutoring, financial aid, library services, computer labs, faculty support, and any other services that was available to them. Findings proposed that being aware of the SSS and consistent communication with counselors had given participants the ability to determine their academic path and academically motivated them to succeed.

**Conclusion.** Based upon these findings, it is concluded that FGS awareness about the SSS and acknowledgement about the importance of consistent communication with their counselor will likely increase engagement at an academic level. As a result, it has an impact by developing FGS motivation to continue their education and increase engagement at a high academic level, in order to succeed academically.

**Recommendation for action.** The CC must implement a system or practices where FGS are either mandated or notified to meet with their counselor to have consistent communication until degree or certification competition. Specific emphasis must be
placed on assisting students in navigating the college system while keeping their educational background in consideration in an effort to increase the awareness about the SSS and other resources for this student population.

**Research sub-question 3.** What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student persistence?

**Major findings.** All 10 participants of the study shared that the SSS they were participating in made an academic impact by supporting them with their educational planning and registration to persist in college. Furthermore, 70% of the participants stated that their consistent participation in the SSS influenced their determination to complete a degree or certification or transfer two four-year university. Based on the major finding, it is critical that FGS participation in the SSS make an academic impact to persist with their educational goals. The SSS academic impact on FGS persistence results in strengthening the education planning, active involvement to resolve challenges to continue education, and build determination to pursue a degree or certification (Nall, 2017).

The research also identified that FGS described a barrier impact on their academic achievements to full-fill their educational goals. These barriers included full time employment and two par-time jobs to support families while studying. This barrier causes them not to fully embrace their authentic selves in their educational goals. However, participants stated that counselors took their work and any other things in consideration to make a flexible and attainable educational plan that will fit their time schedule. As a result, participants described that they were able to meet their counselor
as needed and whenever they needed to alter or make changes in their educational plan due to course availability, academic challenge, and life events. Hence, findings also described that FGS do get support from their counselors not only for educational planning, but assistance to continue their education while trying to overcome barriers in life.

**Conclusion.** Based on the findings, most of the study participants’ received support from the SSS they have received in CC in the area of persistence to continue their education. The two major areas of persistence support included educational planning and registration and growth of determination to complete a degree or certification that made an academic impact. Therefore, the FGS SSS participation is crucial to their persistence in the educational goals.

**Recommendation for action.** The CC SSS must continue to utilize the best practices to support FGS and adopt other best practices to monitor their registration status every semester to increase the persistence rates. Moreover, the California CC should increase the combination of online and in-person classes to make education flexible for working students.

**Research sub-question 4.** What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student satisfaction?

**Major findings.** One theme was referenced 10 times which represented 100% of the participants’ response because all patricians’ perception with regards to the academic impact of the SSS they have received on their student satisfaction. Student satisfaction described by the students with SSS included EOP&S Program, counseling, financial aid,
tutoring, and career services. All 10 participants showed appreciations and gratification with the practiced SSS and how their academic abilities and chances of success were heightened because of their consistent participation in these services.

Based on the literature reviewed, the researcher concluded that the data gathered from the study’s participants confirmed the academic impact these SSS have on FGS ability to be academically successful and continue their educational journey. Moreover, until CC in California can find approaches and strategies to improve retention rates of FGS compared to non-first-generation students, there is a chance the perspectives of FGS satisfaction experiences with SSS will not be acknowledged. Furthermore, diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings are necessary to SSS staff to eliminate barriers that prevent the full and consistent participation of these individual students.

**Conclusion.** Based on these findings, it is concluded that FGS experienced the appreciation and satisfaction with the following practiced SSS: EOP&S Program, counseling, tutoring, financial aid, and career services. Their experiences do represent a significant impact of the SSS on their academic achievement. However, the question still remains: Why are the retention rates still high for FGS compared to the non-FGS even though they are satisfied with the SSS they are receiving and it is making an academic impact as described in results of this study.

**Recommendation for action.** The research recommends that the data from this study be used to support or look into the other aspects of SSS including evaluation if SSS Programs and implement new strategies within the SSS to target the retention rates of FGS and aim for a significant outcome.
Research sub-question 5. What are the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their development of academic skills?

Major findings. All 10 participants discussed the impact that the SSS has had on their development of academic learning abilities. Falcon (2015) states that academic skills are one of the most direct ways students can improve their learning which can later lead into college persistence and degree or certification competition. Based on the finding, it is essential to note that 100% of the participants have seen a growth in their academic skills overtime because of their consistent participation in the SSS and other available services to successfully complete a degree and/or transfer to a four-year university. The development of academic skills reported by participants included:

- Study habits
- Appreciation for diversity
- Problem solving
- Productivity in classroom and group assignments
- Time management
- Effective communication
- Balance between college and work
- Academic level writing
- Critical thinking

Therefore, CC in California must continue to provide SSS that target these individual students’ academic success rates.
**Conclusion.** Based on the findings, it is concluded that participants experienced a development in their academic skills with their consistent participation in the SSS. While completing the literature review, the researcher found that the lack of academic skills are known as one of the barriers for FGS and a reason why these students may not succeed academically in a CC. This further illustrates the continuous need of SSS to target the academic skills enhancement for FGS.

**Recommendation for action.** FGS is one of the target student population in the CC in California when it comes to focusing on retention, persistence, and degree or certification competition rates. Since the growth in their academic learning abilities is correlated to the practiced SSS, this further illustrates the constant need of SSS to target FGS academic skills development with the growing enrollment FGS in the California CC. This may result in a significance change in the retention, persistence, and degree or certification competition rates.

**Unexpected Findings**

All 10 participants perceptions in this study had similarities and overlap in their responses to the research sub-questions that were focusing to collect the data about the academic impacts of received SSS while attending the CC in the areas of student academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills. An unexpected finding was that participants’ consistent participation was the reason for their academic impact which led into similarity in their responses and most of participants showed 100% contribution to all of the themes.

The researcher interviewed 10 FGS who were consistently practicing the SSS. Five of the participants were into their sixth semester, three of the participants were into
their fourth semester, and two of the participants were into their third semester at the CC in northern region of California. The researcher found that no matter what semester these FGS were in at the CC, their received SSS indicated a correlation within each academic areas this research investigated.

Similar participant responses were given throughout the study however, one final unexpected finding was that 70% of the study participants indicated that SSS built their determination to complete a degree in the academic impact area of persistence.

**Recommendations for Future Study**

**Recommendation 1**

In this research study, the target population was FGS from CC in the northern region of California who had been consistently participating in SSS and enrolled at CC for at least one year or two semesters. The recommendation for a future study is to broaden the criteria to all California CC and potentially consider FGS who do not consistently participate in the SSS to learn the academic impact of SSS on FGS.

**Recommendation 2**

Another recommendation for future research is to use a mixed method for the research combining a quantitative and qualitative research approach to enrich credibility and validity of the study results through integration of survey and open-ended semi-structured interviews data. This approach may also provide an opportunity to gain operative insight about participant’s participation in the SSS by survey then follow up with interview questions to validate the impact of lived experiences.
Recommendation 3

Another recommendation is to revise the SSS programs goals, objectives, and strategies to ensure developmental services are offered to align these individual group of students’ academic needs to overcome their educational barriers.

Recommendation 4

Based on the current COVID 19 Pandemic situation, FGS may have been impacted especially when it comes to maintaining consistency to participate in the SSS. A study of how the COVID 19 impacted FGS participation in SSS since the entire California CC system had to pivot to a virtual educational environment. This study might also look into what were the initiatives and objectives the CC established to maintain FGS consistent participation in the SSS.

Recommendation 5

Another future study can focus on learning the reason why FGS do not participate in the SSS.

Concluding Remarks and Reflection

After reviewing the literature and interviewing 10 FGS enrolled in CC from the northern region of California, it is concluded that the academic impact that CC could have on a FGS is greater by offering a SSS that targets FGS and provides the necessary strategies to overcome educational barriers. It is evident, based on the research findings, that the FGS who received support through the SSS program, maintained their participation in those services which will ultimately lead to a fulfillment of their academic goals.
Based on the literature review there has been an increase in enrollments of FGS in CC and there is a lot of research available about this individual student population in various topics. However, the researcher was not able to locate current scholarly research to examine the question about perception that FGS have regarding the academic impact of SSS received while attending a CC in California in the areas of student academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills. To date there were no research studies that examined this specific phenomenon for a CC in the northern region in California. There were studies that looked into very specific SSS programs and their academic impact on FGS but none that evaluated the overall impact. Moreover, much of the literature found explained how SSS may impact a FGS academically, but student perception of the SSS programs was a limited pool of research for FGS. Additionally, a search of the literature also found that there are many SSS offered to these individual students in higher education, but it is equally important to learn FGS perceptions how those services are having an academic impact on the educational goals to continue the best practices and evaluate the SSS as needed to meet students’ academic expectations to improve retention, persistence, and graduation rates.

Conducting this research has helped me better understand the academic challenges I faced personally being a FGS in a CC when trying to pursue higher education. It has been 12 years since I began pursing higher education to meet my educational goals. I hold a bachelor’s in psychology, a master’s in counselor education, and upon completion of my dissertation, a doctorate in education with an emphasis on transformational leadership and change. I have had the pleasure to serve in higher education professionally for 13 years in a variety of capacities including academic, career
development, counseling, coaching, advising, program development, outreach engagement, and an educator to provide effective student wraparound student success services. I currently hold the position of Academic Advisor I in a higher education institution.

During my personal journey to achieve higher education goals a CC, some of the SSS I have had an opportunity to practice have left me dissatisfied by some of the themes identified in this study that have an academic impact. However, I can attest to few SSS that supported me in my educational journey by providing academic developmental support to be a successful FGS. I am thankful for my education experience with the CC system that led me to obtain higher education and become an advocate and future transformation change leader to enhance FGS higher education experiences.

The aim of this study was to bring awareness to CC while providing SSS to FGS and other minority groups of students, it is equally important to learn these individual students perception. It is my opinion that it is important to understand if the practiced services are making an academic impact on these student populations and how else SSS can be enhanced to meet students’ academic needs and support their desire to continue an education.
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APPENDIX A

Synthesis Matrix

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<th>Factors Impacting Students’ Success in College</th>
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| Wilbur, T. G., & Roscigno, V. J. (2016). | X |
| Williams, C. J. (2017). | X | X | X |
| Williams, L. (2019). |
APPENDIX B

Brandman IRB Approval

BUIRB Application Approved: Rubinder Garcha

Institutional Review Board <my@brandman.edu>
Reply-To: webmaster@brandman.edu
To: rgill@mail.brandman.edu
c: ddevore@brandman.edu, pendley@brandman.edu, buirb@brandman.edu, amock@brandman.edu

Dear Professor Garcha,

I'm writing to confirm that the Brandman Institutional Review Board (IRB) application has been approved. The IRB has reviewed and approved the proposed research project.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need further assistance.

Best regards,

ByIRB

Sr. Director of IRB
Brandman University
16355 Avenida Ventana
Irvine, CA 92618
directors_rel@brandman.edu

A message from the Quarterly Data Collection.

Please review the data collection. If you have any questions, please contact me at buirb@brandman.edu.
APPENDIX C

Butte College IRB Approval

Hello Ms. Garcha,

Thank you for submitting information on your study: The perception of First-Generation Community College students with regards to the academic impact of Student Support Services (SSS) Programs: A Phenomenological Study. As your study has been approved by your institution’s IRB we are happy to help you with your study. As we discussed, we will send an e-mail message with the flyer you previously attached to first generation students who are currently enrolled and have attended for a minimum of two semesters. Should you wish to seek assistance with generating participants by communicating with student services departments, please feel free to do so. However, the student services professionals in those areas have the right to help or refuse as their schedules dictate. Best of luck in your endeavor.

Best regards,

Director of Institutional Research
Butte College
APPENDIX D

Sierra College IRB Approval

February 19, 2021

To Whom It May Concern at Brandman University.

This letter serves as written notification that Rubinder Garcha, doctoral candidate at Brandman University, has approval to conduct research activities related to her project, “The Perception of First-Generation Community College Students with Regards to the Academic Impact of Student Support Services (SSS) Programs: A Phenomenological Study,” during the 2020-21 academic year. Continued permission to conduct research at Sierra College is contingent on the continued adherence to appropriate research protocols and human subjects’ protection during the duration of the study.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or require more information.

[Redacted]

Dean of Planning, Research, and Resource Development
APPENDIX E

Woodland Community College IRB Approval

January 20th 2021

Project Title: The Perception of First-Generation Community College Students with Regards to the Academic Impact of Student Support Services: A Phenomenological Study

Project number: 01102021-A

PI: Rubinder Garcha

Primary Institution: Brandman University

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitles, “The Perception of First-Generation Community College Students with Regards to the Academic Impact of Student Support Services: A Phenomenological Study” has been approved. The conditions and duration of this approval are to commence effective today and end January 20, 2020.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You will need to obtain a new approval shall the scope or methodology of this study change. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted above.

The office wishes you the best in this research study. As part of this approval, the college would like to learn from your work.

Best,

[Name]

Interim Dean of Student Success and Institutional Effectiveness
APPENDIX F

Yuba Community College IRB Approval

IRB Approval for Research

To: Rubinder Gill <rgill@brandman.edu>

Hi Rubi,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me and for sending in your application. This email will serve as your official approval to recruit students from Yuba College for your dissertation research.

Best,

Jeremy

Dean of Student Success and Institutional Effectiveness
Accreditation Liaison Officer
Yuba College
Prefix: he, him, his
Equity-driven, Servant Leadership,
Integrity, Community, FCProud
APPENDIX G

**Student Support Services Coordinator**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community College</th>
<th>SSS Programs Coordinator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butte College</td>
<td>Brian Murphy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sierra College</td>
<td>Erik Cooper</td>
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<td>Lisceth Brazil-Cruz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yuba Community College</td>
<td>Jeremy Brown</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX H

Email Invitation to First-Generation Students by Student Support Services Coordinator

STUDY: The Perception of First-Generation Community College Students with Regards to the Academic Impact of Student Support Services

Month Day, Year

Dear Students

You are invited to participate in a phenomenological study to describe the perceptions first-generation students have of the academic impact of student support services received while attending community college in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills. This study's principal investigator is Rubinder Garcha, a Doctoral Candidate at Brandman University's Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. You were selected to participate in this study because you meet the criteria: you attended community college in California Northern Region, participated in the student support services consistently, and meet the characteristics of first-generation student’s definition for this study.

There is one aspect to this study, which includes a virtual on-line Zoom interview. The interview should take approximately 45-60-minutes to complete. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the perceptions first-generation students have of the academic impact of student support services received while attending community college in the areas of student academic achievement, student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills.

PROCEDURES: If you should decide to participate in the study, you need to contact Rubinder Garcha by email at [redacted] or via phone [redacted]. The researcher will then contact those interested participants to schedule an interview.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are minimal risks to your participation in this research study. It may be inconvenient to spend up to one hour in the interview. However, the interview session will be held at an agreed-upon time to minimize this inconvenience.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: There are no major benefits to you for participation; however, your input and feedback could help add to the body of research a greater understanding of the first-generation students’ experiences with student support services.
and weather it impacts their academic success in the community college. This study intends to inform researchers, policymakers, educators, and community college leaders about the best practices that could lead to an increase in the academic success rates of first-generation students. Additionally, the findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.

**ANONYMITY:** Records of information and or artifacts that you provide for the research study, and any personal information you provide, will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time that will help you understand how this study will be performed and or how it will affect you. You may contact Rubinder Garcha at [redacted] or by email at [redacted]. You can also contact Dr. Phil Pendley by email at pendley@brandman.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Respectfully,

SSS Coordinator Name
Community College Name
APPENDIX I

Invitation To Participate

STUDY: A phenomenology study of the lived experiences of First-Generation Students (FGS) to learn perceptions at the Community College (CC) with regards to the academic impact of Student Support Services (SSS) they have received in the community college in the areas of student academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills.

September 2020

Dear Prospective Study Participant:

You are invited to participate in a phenomenological, qualitative study to describe your perception as a First-Generation Student (FGS) about the Student Support Service (SSS) you have received and how it impacts you in the areas of academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills at the community college. The main investigator of this study is Rubinder Garcha, Doctoral Candidate in Brandman University’s Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership Program. You were chosen to participate in this study because you fit into the definition and characteristics listed of first-generation students for this study and you have been participating in the student support services at the community college.

Approximately four community colleges from northern California were targeted including: Butte College, Sierra College, Woodland Community College, and Yuba Community College. Participation should require about one hour of your time and is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of student support services they have received in the community college system.

PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate in the study, the researcher will schedule a zoom interview. During the interview, I will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to share my experiences about the student support services I receive at the community college and how it impacts my academic in the areas of academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills as a first-generation student.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are minimal risks to your participation in this research study. It may be inconvenient to spend up to one hour in the interview. However, the interview session will be held virtually on zoom as agreed upon to minimize this inconvenience.
POTENTIAL BENEFITS: There are no major benefits to you for participation, however, your input and feedback could help determine first-generation student’s perceptions about the academic impact student support services in the area of academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills at the community college level. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators. Additionally, the findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.

ANONYMITY: Records of information that you provide for the research study, and any personal information you provide, will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

You are encouraged to ask questions, at any time, that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may contact me at [redacted] or by email at [redacted]. You can also contact Dr. Phil Pendley by email at pendley@brandman.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Respectfully,

Rubinder Garcha
Doctoral Candidate, Brandman University
APPENDIX J

Informed Consent

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA  92618

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: A phenomenology study of the lived experiences of First-Generation Students (FGS) to learn perceptions at the Community College (CC) with regards to the academic impact of Student Support Services (SSS) they have received in the community college.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Rubinder Garcha, Doctoral Candidate

TITLE OF CONSENT FORM: Consent to Participate in Research

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the perceptions of first-generation community college students with regard to the academic impact of student support services they have received in the community college in the areas of student academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills.

PROCEDURES: In participating in this research study, I agree to partake in an audio/video-recorded, semi-structured open ended interview. The interview will take place, virtually on zoom and it will last about an hour. During the interview, I will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to share my experiences about the student support services I receive at the community college and how it impacts my academic in the areas of academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills as a first-generation student.

I understand that:

a) The possible risks or discomforts associated with this research are minimal. It may be inconvenient to spend up to one hour in the interview. However, the interview session will be held virtually on zoom, to minimize this inconvenience.

b) I will not be compensated for my participation in this study. The possible benefit of this study is to determine first-generation student’s perceptions about the academic impact student support services in the area of academic achievement, engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and development of academic skills at the community college level. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators. Additionally, the findings and recommendations from this study will be made

c) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Rubinder Garcha, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Mrs. Garcha may be contacted by phone at [redacted] or email at [redacted]. The
d) I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.

e) The study will be audio/video-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project. Audio/video recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio and interview transcripts will be kept for a minimum of five years by the investigator in a secure location.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be informed and my consent re-obtained. If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.

I have read the above and understand it and hereby voluntarily consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_________________________________________  ________________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party  Date

_________________________________________  ________________________
Signature of Witness (if appropriate)   Date

_________________________________________  ________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator    Date

Brandman University IRB 2018
APPENDIX K

Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Brandman University IRB Adopted November 2013
APPENDIX L

Audio/Video Release Form

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: A phenomenology study of the lived experiences of First-Generation Students (FGS) to learn perceptions at the Community College (CC) with regards to the academic impact of Student Support Services (SSS) they have received in the community college.

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA  92618

I authorize Rubinder Garcha, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, to record my voice and/or video. I give Brandman University and all persons or entities associated with this research study permission or authority to use this recording for activities associated with this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription purposes and the information obtained during the interview may be published in a journal/dissertation or presented at meetings/presentations.

I will be consulted about the use of the audio and/or video recordings for any purpose other than those listed above. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising correlated to the use of information obtained from the recording.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material.

_____________________________________________  __________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party   Date
APPENDIX M

Interview Protocol

Interviewer: Rubinder Garcha

Interview time planned: Approximately one hour

Interview place: Zoom Virtual as convenient agreed upon location considering COVID-19 social distancing in consideration

Recording: Zoom Recording

Guiding Research Question: What are the perceptions of first generation Community College students with regard to the academic impact of student support services they have received in community colleges in the areas of student achievement (GPA), student engagement, student persistence, student satisfaction, and development of academic skills.

Introductions: Introduce ourselves to one another.

Opening Statement: Thank you for agreeing to spend time with me today. My name is Rubinder Garcha and I am a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the School of Education. I am also a first-generation college graduate and both of my parents never attended college. I have always been interested to learn about first-generation college student’s experiences in higher education.

Observing the growing enrollment of first-generation students (FGS) in the higher education, and the new research on FGS it is important to understand and learn these individual student’s perceptions about the provided Student Support Services (SSS) that may increase the likelihood of academic success in higher education. As a FGS who encountered academic challenges while participating in SSS, I was curious about exploring the impacts of SSS received during community college experience and how it may have contributed to academic success so that Community College can enhance and provide best practices in the SSS that lead to increase the academic success rates for FGS.

Student Support Services: Student support services may include: Extended Opportunity Programs & Services (EOPS)/Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) Program, counseling, financial-aid, career center, and Federal TRIO Programs including upper bound, Educational Talent Search (ETS), and Student Support Services (SSS). I am interested in finding out which services you have received and how they have impacted you as a First Generation Student.

Interview Agenda: [Interviewer states:] I anticipate this interview will take about an hour today. As a review of the process leading up to this interview, you were invited to participate via email or phone call, and were given an Informed Consent, Informed
Consent Form, the Participant’s Bill of Rights, and the Audio/Video Release form that outlined the interview process and the condition of complete anonymity for this study. Then we will begin the recording and you will be asked to affirm that you have received and reviewed the documents pertinent for this study, which include the Informed Consent and Audio/Video Release Form, and agree to participate in the study. Next, I will ask a list of questions related to the purpose of the study. I may take notes as the interview is being recorded. If you are uncomfortable with me taking notes, please let me know and I will only continue with the audio/video recording of the interview. Finally, I will stop the recorder and conclude our interview session. After your interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy of the complete transcripts to check for accuracy prior to the data being analyzed. Please remember that anytime during this process you have the right to stop the interview. If at any time you do not understand the questions being asked, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. Are there any questions or concerns before we begin with the questions?

Interview Questions:

IQ1 – Please describe the impact of the student support services you have received on your academic achievement.
   - Prompt: Is there any one service or services that impacted your academic achievement more than others?
   - Prompt: Can you share an example?
   - Prompt: Can you provide an artifact that supports your story?

IQ2 – Please describe the impact of the student support services you have received on your engagement as a student.
   - Prompt: Is there any one service or services that impacted your engagement as a student more than others?
   - Prompt: Can you share an example?
   - Prompt: Can you provide an artifact that supports your story?

IQ3 – Please describe the impact of the student support services you have received on your persistence as a student.
   - Prompt: Is there any one service or services that impacted your academic achievement more than others?
   - Prompt: Can you share an example?
   - Prompt: Can you provide an artifact that supports your story?

IQ4 – Please describe the impact of the student support services you have received on your satisfaction as a student.
   - Prompt: Is there any one service or services that impacted your satisfaction as a student more than others?
   - Prompt: Can you share an example?
   - Prompt: Can you provide an artifact that supports your story?

IQ5 – Please describe the impact of the student support services you have received on the development of your academic skills.
Prompt: Is there any one service or services that impacted the development of your academic skills more than others?

Prompt: Can you share an example?

Prompt: Can you provide an artifact that supports your story?

**Closing Statement:** Thank you for your time. It has been very nice to talk with you. I will be sending you an email within the next two weeks of this interview for you to look over. I am looking forward to working with you.
APPENDIX N

Interview Feedback Reflection Questions

Conducting interviews is a learned skill set/experience. Gaining valuable insight about your interview skills and affect with the interview will support your data gathering when interviewing the actual participants. As the researcher you should reflect on the questions below after completing the interview. You should also discuss the following reflection questions with your ‘observer’ after completing the interview field test. The questions are written from your prospective as the interviewer. However, you can verbalize your thoughts with the observer and they can add valuable insight from their observation.

1. How long did the interview take? _____ Did the time seem to be appropriate?
2. How did you feel during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous?
3. Going into it, did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared?
4. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?
5. What parts of the interview seemed to struggle and why do you think that was the case?
6. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would that part be and how would you change it?
7. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?
APPENDIX O

Field Test – Observer Feedback

Conducting interviews is a learned skill set based on experience and feedback. Gaining valuable insight about interview skills and affect with the interview will support the collection of data gathering when interviewing actual participant. As the interview observer you should reflect on the questions below after the interview is finished. You should provide independent feedback at the conclusion of the interview field test. As observer you should take notes that will assist the interviewer to be successful in improving their interview skills.

1. How long did the interview take? _______Did the time seem appropriate?

2. Did the interviewer communicate in a receptive, cordial, and encouraging manner?

3. Was the introduction of the interview friendly with the use of commonly understood language?

4. How did the interviewee feel during the interview?

5. Was the interviewer prepared and relaxed during the interview?

6. Did the interviewee understand the interview questions or did they require clarification?

7. What parts of the interview went smoothly and why?

8. What parts of the interview seem to struggle and why do you think that was the case?

9. Did the interviewer maintain objectivity and not interject value judgements or lead the interviewee?

10. Did the interviewer take opportunity to discuss or request artifacts that support the data gathered from the interview?
11. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would that part be and how would you suggest changing it?

12. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?
## Appendix P

### Interview Question Development Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Question(s)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 - What are the perceptions of first-generation Community College students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student achievement?</td>
<td>IQ1 – Please describe the impact of the student support services you have received on your academic achievement. Prompt: Is there any one service or services that impacted your academic achievement more than others? Prompt: Can you share an example? Prompt: Can you provide an artifact that supports your story?</td>
<td>Source: MacKay and Kuh 1994; Wood &amp; Palmer, 2014; Nall, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2 - What are the perceptions of first-generation Community College students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student engagement?</td>
<td>IQ2 – Please describe the impact of the student support services you have received on your engagement as a student. Prompt: Is there any one service or services that impacted your engagement as a student more than others? Prompt: Can you share an example? Prompt: Can you provide an artifact that supports your story?</td>
<td>Source: Association of American College &amp; Universities, 2015; Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2020; Kelley-Hall, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3 - What are the perceptions of first-generation Community College students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student persistence?</td>
<td>IQ3 – Please describe the impact of the student support services you have received on your persistence as a student. Prompt: Is there any one service or services that impacted your academic achievement more than others? Prompt: Can you share an example? Prompt: Can you provide an artifact that supports your story?</td>
<td>Source: Cooper, 2010; Craider 2014; Nall, 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ4 - What are the perceptions of first-generation Community College students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their student satisfaction?

IQ4 – Please describe the impact of the student support services you have received on your satisfaction as a student.
   Prompt: Is there any one service or services that impacted your satisfaction as a student more than others?
   Prompt: Can you share an example?
   Prompt: Can you provide an artifact that supports your story?


RQ5 - What are the perceptions of first-generation Community College students with regard to the academic impact of the student support services they have received on their development of academic skills?

IQ5 – Please describe the impact of the student support services you have received on the development of your academic skills.
   Prompt: Is there any one service or services that impacted the development of your academic skills more than others?
   Prompt: Can you share an example?
   Prompt: Can you provide an artifact that supports your story?


Notes:
1. Each Research Question must be addressed.
2. Interview Questions should tie directly to a Research Question.
3. Each Interview Question should have a source/rationale for asking it that ties directly to the purpose and RQ’s of the study so the information acquired addresses the Purpose and RQ’s.
APPENDIX Q

CITI Certificate

Under requirements set by:

Brandman University

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wfd772953-a433-4326-96dd-66b8475a2c3d-31680467