

ABSTRACT

Dusk Oliver Stroud, FACE THE FACTS: IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SOCIOECONOMIC BARRIERS THAT IMPACT SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED AT LENOIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE. (Under the direction of Dr. Heidi Puckett). Department of Educational Leadership, May 2022.

This research study examines the relationship between socioeconomic barriers students encounter and the interventions to address those factors at Lenoir Community College.

Specifically, the study seeks to determine the barriers and motivators that influence their education in regards to retention and persistence in academic programs. The study seeks to show that if socioeconomic barriers are indeed a major hindrance to their success, then there is a need for an intervention strategy. Therefore, our work could suggest that progress toward educational equity may be achieved through identifying barriers and implementing an intervention plan that could potentially increase student success. The results from the research study assisted in identifying ways to implement already-existing resources and connect them with student barriers. This study helped utilize the college's resources to the fullest potential. Once student barriers are identified, the institution can then determine ways to offer students suggestions on how to better their circumstances.

FACE THE FACTS: IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SOCIOECONOMIC BARRIERS THAT
IMPACT SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED AT LENOIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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by

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IMPACT SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED AT LENOIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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DEDICATION

To my heavenly Father, it is by your grace and mercy I was able to succeed. I thank you for your continued blessings over my life and my family. Ephesians 1:11 "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will." To my family, may you always know how grateful I am for the love and support shown to me over the years. This was a collective dream of many people for me to reach this goal. To my grandfather; Denny Garner, I would not have been able to achieve this goal if it was not for your never-ending support. Thank you for always listening to my trials and triumphs as I have navigated not only this program but life. To my wife; Katie, I cannot express my appreciation of the sacrifices you have made for me to accomplish this achievement. I have been in school since we first met, but the wait is almost over. This sacrifice was for our family's future. To my parents; John and Dawn, it is only because of you I have made it this far. You always encouraged me to do my best and to reach for seemingly impossible goals. I hope you can look back at all those late nights of homework years ago and say it was worth it. To my siblings; Smith, Landon, and Johnna, it is my wish for you to continue to strive for the goals you want to achieve. I have the upmost faith in each of you that you can accomplish anything you set your minds to do. I am so proud of each of you. To my grandparents, each of you have played a pivotal role in my success. I thank each of you for encouraging me in my educational and career goals. To the countless others; family, friends, co-workers, colleagues, classmates, and loved ones that have passed on, thank you for your kindness and support through this journey. I love you all very much, this is for you.

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To the students that participated in my research study; thank you for taking time out of your own education to help me achieve my educational goals. It is my hope that you are able to accomplish your education and career goals as you move forward in life. I was once in your position and I credit LCC to my success today. Enjoy this time being close to home, you will be better for it years from now.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Rural America is being educated primarily by community colleges, which are not completely prepared to meet the all of the economic needs of students and industries. Part of the role of the community college is to lead enrolled students in academic programs from entry to completion. The college is designed to link and leverage the existing assets of the service area to solve a growing gap between regional job seekers and available positions. Innovative funding and operational structure allow community colleges to deliver results in response to a rapidly growing need for employees with certified skills and verified work readiness. Businesses and industries in North Carolina are looking for employees that have successfully completed advanced training through the community college system. While higher education is not the only way to success, it has the ability to add value to a person's life. However, socioeconomic barriers experienced outside the classroom hinder students from becoming successful.

Every student that seeks higher education at a community college deserves fairness, respect, and equal access to resources that allow them to experience new opportunities. Students seek assistance to further themselves professionally and increase their financial well-being to help them overcome their challenges. As an educational institution, the community college is charged with providing the necessary tools and creating student success. The goal of the community college is to increase the offerings of long and short-term training and soft-skills to meet the needs of employers while also preparing students to potentially transfer to a four-year university and continue their education.

Research has shown that Lenoir County, located in Eastern North Carolina is impacted by the shortage in the labor force and the younger population is moving away (College Navigator, 2019). Lenoir Community College (LCC) is an educational institution located in Lenoir County

that attempts to provide educational opportunities for the people of Lenoir and surrounding counties. Student retention and persistence in LCC programs has continued to decrease and non-traditional students continue to be the main demographic at LCC (College Navigator, 2019). There is a lack of information on the specific barriers impacting students' lives inside and outside of Lenoir Community College. Administrators in educational institutions understand the overall challenges; however, they are unable to address the problem if not properly identified. In this study, I examined student barriers and implemented an intervention strategy based on participant responses on what they believed could assist with overcoming identified barriers to assist with retention in regard to academic programming.

I identified students that were enrolled in the first-year experience course ACA 111 and, through engagement in this course, explored what socioeconomic barriers may be influencing their success within the classroom. ACA 111 College Student Success course is required for graduation, this course introduces the college's physical, academic, and social environment and promotes the personal development essential for success in higher education. Students learn new methods of note-taking and how to enhance study habits. Both the importance of GPA and plagiarism are examined in the course. In addition, students gain an understanding of goal setting and campus resources. Within the course of the semester, students build résumés and cover letters. They also learn about financial literacy and examine potential career pathways.

For use in this study, socioeconomic barriers are defined as relating to both economic and social factors that are influencing student success. Student surveys and interviews were conducted to identify barriers to student success and examine resource equity. Once barriers were identified, implementation of an intervention strategy was initiated to assist students. When students become skilled, certified, and knowledgeable about their programs of study, they are

more likely to increase their level of potential success in obtaining credentials, degrees, and employment (Orr, 2001). This could result in improving the quality of life for Lenoir County's residents through the growth of the tax base by attracting new capital investment and creating new, highly-skilled jobs for residents (Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, 2019).

Background of Focus of Practice

The specific focus of this study was the presence of identified barriers and correlating resources allocated towards addressing those barriers. Lenoir Community College has a wide variety of resources on and off campus along with community and regional partners; however, students are not always aware of the free services available to them. The purpose of this intended mixed-methods, action research study was to identify socioeconomic barriers to student success and create and implement an intervention based on students suggestions to help overcome their socioeconomic barriers.

The Community College Success Measure (CCSM) conducted a study addressing challenges facing underserved students. Data from this report found approximately a third (32.8%) of students surveyed experienced housing insecurity. Twelve point two percent (12.2%) of students experienced food insecurity. Thirty-seven point nine percent (37.9%) of students reporting housing insecurity indicated stress from this challenge (Wood et al., 2017).

Students do not always share the challenges they are experiencing with faculty and staff; therefore, they miss opportunities to access resources. Researchers have not determined a clear intervention to match with students who need assistance. I intend to contribute to this exigence with the research study through a targeted intervention. Socioeconomic barriers play a pivotal role in student success. Community colleges are tasked with educating students to move towards

employment and continuing their education. Socioeconomic barriers go beyond the scope of work of an institution and can make it difficult to assist students. Community colleges have to shift the focus from teaching to assisting students with addressing barriers that hinder their attainment of higher education and gainful employment. The study evaluated curriculum programs that include, but are not limited to, Associate in Arts and Associate in Science at Lenoir Community College. In addition, the study explored the environment of Lenoir County in North Carolina and the set of circumstances in which the institution operates.

Context of Study

In order to understand the focus of practice, as well as the attempt to address the identified issues, it is important to explore the context of the study. For this study, the context includes Lenoir Community College, Lenoir County demographics, and the impact of socioeconomic barriers. Lenoir Community College has continued to experience steady enrollment but a decrease in the completion rate of part-time students. In the fall of 2018, 60% of full-time students returned to their program; however, only 42% of part-time students returned (College Navigator, 2019). Student recruitment is a heavy focus for colleges during spring and fall enrollment and registration. After students begin their programs, however, there is minimal attention towards retention at the institution. Recently LCC has implemented the Aviso Retention system to help track students who are enrolled in academic programs and measure their engagement and progress. With Aviso now in place throughout curriculum programs, there is a focus on real data that can track students' academic engagement and progress. An emphasis is placed on real-time data within courses. Aviso will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3.

Lenoir Community College is funded through state monies based on the number of students who remain in classes past the 10% enrollment date. Enrollment hours and the number

of students registered in each class impact the amount of funding allocated. Students who earn a third-party credential also affect budgeting allotments (North Carolina Community College System, 2019a). Retention is now becoming a larger focus for community college collaborative inquiry partners and institutional funding (Aljohani, 2016). This is due to budget short-falls and low enrollment. The focus of the institution has shifted from not only recruiting new students but retaining the current student body. In 2018, LCC had 34% full-time student enrollment and 66% part-time student enrollment. In regard to age, 68% of students were aged 24 years or younger and 32% aged 25 years and older (College Navigator, 2019).

Students are the centerpiece of this study. The college is dedicated to recruiting students for programs and also informing them that they are an integral part in the college's success. Recruitment is important, but the successful completion of the program is crucial as it pertains to performance measures and institutional outcomes.

The study is specific to LCC and therefore cannot necessarily be generalized to other institutions. Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), the population of Lenoir County was estimated to have decreased to 55,976 in 2018 as compared to 59,511 in 2010 population is down 5.9%. The labor force is made of 23,263 households and 27,857 people over the age of 16 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Given these results, 58% of the total population of Lenoir County is in the labor force. These statistics do not factor in residents commuting to other counties or working from home. Three races make up the total demographic of Lenoir County: White 55.3%, Black 41.5%, and Hispanic 7.5% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). When all 100 counties in North Carolina were considered, 18 counties had average weekly wages below \$699, 52 counties had wages from \$700 to \$799, 20 counties had wages from \$800 to \$899, five counties had wages from \$900 to \$999, and another five counties had wages above \$1,000 in the fourth

quarter of 2018 (United States Department of Labor, 2020). This data is relevant to understanding the demographics and socioeconomic status of Lenoir County and its residents. In addition, it provides an insight to the level of poverty present in Lenoir County and those who may experience socioeconomic barriers.

The Lenoir Community College student population is split between 39% males and 61% females. Only 24% of males graduated in 2018 and 15% of females graduated (College Navigator, 2019). The student race/ethnicity demographic at LCC is broken down as follows: 1% Asian, 27% Black, 11% Hispanic, 57% White, 2% two or more races, and 1% non-resident alien (College Navigator, 2019). In order to better understand LCC, the students, and the impact on the community, it is important to examine the history of the institution as one of the first community colleges in NC.

The Establishment of Lenoir Community College

Chartered in 1958, Lenoir Community College was one of the first community colleges in North Carolina to serve its region. Clotfelter et al. (2013) indicates that community colleges were designed to provide open door and low-cost access at convenient locations. LCC serves residents of Lenoir, Greene, and Jones counties. Lenoir Community College's main campus is located in Kinston within Lenoir County. The college offers degree and non-degree programs and serves 4,000 curriculum students and 10,000 continuing education students annually (Lenoir Community College, 2019). The mission of Lenoir Community College is to meet the personal, cultural, and professional educational needs of students through affordable, accessible, and innovative educational programs (Lenoir Community College, 2019).

Compared to four-year colleges, two-year colleges have smaller student-instructor ratios, and their classes are significantly smaller in size (Mupinga et al., 2009). As a result, students

typically find that their experience at a community college caters to their individual needs and this appears to be true for students at LCC. Additionally, non-degree certificate programs are developed with business and industry in mind, and successes are based on community and economic development strengthened from students who give back to the tax base and local economy.

Lenoir County, North Carolina

Lenoir Community College's main campus is located within 100 miles of the state capital and the coast. The college ensures an open door setting and provides students with the opportunity to participate in programs at an affordable cost. It is important to consider the local surroundings to ensure that the institution is successfully meeting the needs of the community and students. The mission of Lenoir Community College is to meet the personal, cultural, and professional educational needs of students through affordable, accessible, and innovative educational programs (Lenoir Community College, 2019).

According to data collected by the American Community U.S. Census Bureau (2019) the poverty rate in North Carolina is 14.0% as shown in Table 1. Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine those identified as being in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The total population of North Carolina was estimated to be 10,383,620, resulting in 1,453,707 individuals residing in poverty.

For the purposes of the study only Lenoir County data was evaluated, as the main campus, students, and programs of focus are located in Lenoir County. According to the U.S. Census (2019), Lenoir County has a population of 55,976. Lenoir County has a current poverty level of 24.7% or 13,826 people. This is to say that nearly one fourth of the total

Table 1

Poverty and Population for Lenoir County, North Carolina, and the United States

Data	Lenoir County	North Carolina	United States
Poverty Rate	24.7%	14.0%	11.8%
Total Population	55,976	10,383,620	329,877,505
Total Population in Poverty	13,826	1,453,707	38,925,545

population of Lenoir County lives below the poverty line. Compared to the national level of poverty at 11.8%, Lenoir County's persons-in-poverty percentage is 12.9% higher and 10.7% higher than the state average (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2019) reports that Lenoir County also falls below the national and state averages in education attainment as shown in Table 2. In Lenoir County, the percentage of high school graduates or higher over the age of 25 is 80.1%. Comparatively, the state average is 86.9% and the national average is 87.3% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Individuals who fall into the high school graduate or higher category include people who have earned a high school diploma or equivalent, those who attended college but did not receive a degree, and those who received an associate's degree. Lenoir County is 7.2% behind the national percentage of high school graduate or higher. However, in the bachelor's degree or higher category, Lenoir County only has 7,556 people (13.5%) who have received either a bachelor's, master's, or professional or doctorate degree from a college or university. This percentage is 17.4% below the national average in education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Based on the information presented, there may be a relationship between poverty and educational attainment and its impact on local and rural economic development. Lenoir County houses a wide variety of industry employers. They include but are not limited to, Electrolux, Sanderson Farms, MasterBrand Cabinets, Spirit AeroSystems, Smithfield Foods, West Pharmaceuticals, and Dupont (Lenoir County Economic Development, 2020). These industries partner with Lenoir Community College to offer employment opportunities to students that align with their educational goals.

The Impact of Socioeconomic Barriers

Students may face academic and non-academic factors that impact their success in college programming. Non-academic factors could include financial, personal, and work-related

Table 2

Education Attainment for Lenoir County, North Carolina, and the United States

Data	Lenoir County	North Carolina	United States
Percentage of high school graduates or higher over the age of 25	80.1%	86.9%	87.3%
Bachelor's degree or higher	13.5%	30.5%	30.98%

college programming. Non-academic factors could include financial, personal, and work-related barriers. Shortage of available funds can hinder students because of the necessary class-related materials or registration fees. Home life also presents issues for students dealing with childcare, elderly live-in parents, and spouses working multiple shifts. This leaves little time for students to sit in a classroom two or three times a week, or even for a few hours. Students attempt to make arrangements to accommodate their schedules in regard to their education; however, when an issue arises, it throws off their routine and disrupts plans. In addition, some students are currently experiencing housing insecurity, and 12-14% of community college students are homeless (Goldrick-Rab, 2018).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics from the United States Department of Labor (2020), Lenoir County has more than 28,000 jobs as of December 2018, with an average pay rate of \$783.00 per week. Taking time away from work to pursue a certification can be intimidating for students due to their need to provide for the household. Myran and Ivery (2013) state that a major challenge faced by community colleges is to design effective responses to the mismatch between career opportunities offered by regional labor markets and the capacity of residents to take advantage of them.

Workforce Development is an important factor at Lenoir Community College in both continuing education and curriculum programs because the college is focused on placing students in jobs offered by local industries and businesses. In contrast to traditional curriculum courses, there has been a change in structure of community college offerings in short-term training. Compared to two-year degree programs, certificate programs are providing students with job skills training, education, and the ability to go directly into a trade (Orr, 2001). Another

development is the dramatic expansion of certificate programs, usually up to one year in length. These are modularized and stackable programs tailored for the unique workforce needs of a specific community or industry (Myran & Ivery, 2013). Within the last fiscal year, Lenoir Community College's Continuing Education Division held 1,690 classes, 15,732 students registered (duplicated headcount), and 8,574 students completed their respective programs of study (Lenoir Community College, 2019). Of the students registered for the academic year, 7,158 did not return to complete their program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this intended mixed-methods, action research study was to identify socioeconomic barriers to student success and explore a strategy to implement an intervention to help students overcome those factors. As a result of this study, I implemented an intervention based on student's self-identified socioeconomic barriers, potentially increasing retention and the obtainment of degrees. There is a lack of institutional knowledge about socioeconomic barriers that influence students at LCC. The study could benefit not only the programs directly involved in the study but the entire institution by helping inform faculty and staff about student barriers. Students could see the importance of their participation through the implementation of new processes to assist in meeting their individual needs. Administration is interested in successful outcomes, in addition, they are also invested in the well-being of students. The mental and physical health of students is important to the institution rather than focusing solely on performance measures. Students benefit from additional resources offered to them throughout their tenure at LCC. The intention of the intervention was to increase the offerings and services to students and in turn help increase their success in academic programs.

This study was designed to help increase student success in completing programs and possibly obtaining credentials. It could result in an improvement in the quality of life for Lenoir County's residents. Four out of five jobs lost during the recession were those requiring a high-school education or less (Jones, 2016). Those jobs have now been replaced by technology or with employees who require specialized training or skills. Higher education influences economic development through customized training and the growth of the tax base by attracting new capital investment and creating new, highly-skilled jobs for residents (Lenoir County Economic Development, 2020). Evidence from the researcher's previously-conducted pilot study indicated that students are leaving programs at LCC for reasons outside of the classroom, and there is no way for the college to assist students if they are unsure of resources that are needed. The pilot study asked students questions about personal motivators and barriers that influenced their academic progress it also helped inform the direction of the study. This is examined further in Chapter 3. Students may fail to disclose challenges and the institution is unable to gather that information before their departure. Lenoir Community College has several programs on campus to assist students with known barriers, but students are not connecting to those resources as shown in the pilot study. Programs such as Workforce Innovations Opportunity Act (WIOA), Lancer Career Connections, and the Finish Line Grant all address socioeconomic barriers impacting students. However, students, faculty, and staff need to be educated on what these programs are and how they can assist students. It is important for the community college to focus their attention towards not only recruitment but retaining students and ensuring their needs are met in and out of the classroom.

1. Workforce Innovations Opportunity Act, Lenoir Community College - NCWorks Career Center

WIOA was established to assist adults and dislocated workers in retraining and obtaining employment, WIOA offers a mix of employment, training, and job placement services. Participants may access Individual Training Accounts to assist with tuition, fees, books, supplies, and accident insurance. On-the-Job Training contracts may be available for suitable candidates. This system can help with information about employment opportunities, career options, support services, and how to search for jobs, write a résumé, and interview with employers (Lenoir Community College, 2020e).

2. Lancer Career Connections, Lenoir Community College

Lancer Career Connections, Work-Based Learning, is designed to enable students to earn college credit for jobs that are learning experiences. Jobs must be related to the curriculum in which students are enrolled (Lenoir Community College, 2020f).

3. Finish Line Grant, Lenoir Community College – NCWorks Career Center

The Finish Line Grant is an emergency assistance fund to help students complete training. Eligible expenses include housing/rent, medical needs, dependent care, transportation assistance, or other financial emergencies that students face through no fault of their own. Students must be in good academic standing and who have completed at least 50% of their degree or credential program. (Lenoir Community College, 2020e).

The method for collecting data in this study was student surveys and interviews inquiring about external challenges impacting enrollment. Participants' identities were confidential and they were asked to self-identify barriers. Students were to be surveyed within several degree programs at Lenoir Community College. The programs include, but are not limited to, Associate

in Arts and Associate in Science. Participants were current students enrolled in courses. While they may be considered the most successful students enrolled; they may be displaced workers, first-generation students, first-year students, returning students, or those seeking a change in career. Participants in the study must live within the service area of the college that includes Lenoir County, as well as adjacent Greene, and Jones counties.

Focus of Practice Research Questions

The following questions guided the proposed study:

1. What are the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College?
2. What intervention(s) can be implemented to assist students with overcoming socioeconomic barriers?
3. What are the effects of an intervention selected to address the challenge to help students overcome their barriers?

Theoretical Framework

The most relevant theories to the study were Tinto's Student Departure Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The focus of practice was based upon the identification of specific student socioeconomic barriers and increasing student support services through implementation of an intervention to impact the identified students. In an effort to address external factors that hinder student persistence and completion at LCC, it is important to consider the theories that influence these barriers.

The first theory was Tinto's Theory of Student Departure. According to Tinto's theory, the decision to "drop out" arises from a combination of student characteristics and the extent of their academic, environmental and social integration in an institution (Tinto, 1975). Tinto's

model is based upon three major sources of departure: academic difficulties, inability of individuals to resolve their educational and occupational goals, and their failure to become or remain a part of the social life of the institution (Tinto, 1975). This theory also discusses implementation strategies through student motivation. Colleges that can successfully engage and motivate students to remain in programming have the ability to increase persistence throughout the course of the semester. If students' needs are not met by way of accessing college resources they will continue to experience difficulty within their educational journey (Tinto, 1993). Furthermore, the theory explores ways students can become more engaged through peers, faculty, and staff.

Through the Student Departure Theory and this study, I identified and explored the three major sources of departure. I analyzed the socioeconomic barriers that lead to students' academic difficulties, inability to resolve goals, and failure to remain engaged within the institution. This theory directly relates to this study and the intent to identify socioeconomic barriers of students. Student motivation is important to enrollment and retention rates in community college programming.

Next, I reviewed Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Banerjee, 2014). Maslow stated that human beings are constantly in pursuit of needs, of which there are five levels. These five levels in the original model are arranged in a pyramid with the base being physiological needs and continuing to safety needs, social needs, self-esteem and finally at the top self-actualization (Banerjee, 2014).

Through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs two specific tiers were particularly relevant to this study and were considered: physiological needs that include air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing and safety needs that include personal security, employment, resources, health, and

property. Both of these tiers influence the socioeconomic barriers impacting students at Lenoir Community College.

These theories and their explanations of the relevance of student development theory and the study are explored in more detail in Chapter 2. In addition, Chapter 2 includes a review of relevant literature explaining these theories and an analysis of the application of the chosen student development theory that directly relates to the focus of practice. The theories discussed will guide in better understanding the research that has been conducted on the topic.

Definitions of Key Terms

I am providing definitions for the following key terms to ensure clarity and understanding throughout the study. The following terms are used throughout the study.

Full-time equivalent (FTE) (enrollment) – A measurement equal to one student enrolled full-time for one academic year. Total FTE enrollment includes full-time plus the calculated equivalent of the part-time enrollment. The full-time equivalent of the part-time students can be estimated using different factors depending on the type and control of institution and level of student (U.S. Department of Education’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2019).

Non-traditional student – A student who is older than the typical age (18-24) of college students (Merriam-Webster, 2019). A nontraditional student usually does not live in a college residence and therefore must commute to classes (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Workforce Development – North Carolina’s workforce development system—one of the most comprehensive in the nation—brings employer and employees together by managing recruiting, screening and other necessary pre-employment assessments (Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, 2019).

Postsecondary education – A reference to any education or training beyond high school credential attainment (Your Dictionary, 2019).

Socioeconomic - Relating to both economic and social factors (Your Dictionary, 2019).

Socioeconomic status – The social standing or class of an individual or group that can be measured in terms of income level or occupation (American Psychological Association, 2019).

Assumptions

It is assumed that Lenoir Community College is unable to adequately address socioeconomic barriers that students experience. This inadequacy is due to the number of students who drop or stop-out of their program of study for unknown reasons. Resources remain underutilized and funds unspent. The study would be irrelevant if institutions clearly understood the barriers faced by students and how they impact their success. The challenges students encounter, however, may be more specific to individual circumstances or unique to institutional demographics. A college in a rural area will have more difficulty providing transportation compared to a college in a metropolitan area. In contrast, a college in an urban environment may have a higher crime rate than a college located outside of city limits. It is also assumed that students enrolled do not understand that there are resources available to them. In turn, they also do not know how to access those resources. Students at the community college have outside factors that influence them and they may not have the same engagement that other students possess.

Another assumption is that students care about their education or their course work but do not know how to access resources. Students are willing to enroll in courses and earn a degree but do not utilize the resources available to them when their circumstances change or difficulties arise. It can also be assumed that students do not always have an educational background and

some may have gone directly into the workforce, worked from home, or started their own business directly after high school. In some cases, students may not have finished high school and they have enrolled at the community college to finish their diploma. It could also be assumed that students do not want their issues brought forth to the attention of faculty and staff. This is to say that they might be in need of assistance but do not know how to ask for help.

When surveyed, students may not answer honestly for fear they may be ostracized by their peers. As the scholarly practitioner, I assumed students would answer truthfully; however, I assured participants that their responses would remain confidential throughout the study. One of the goals was to visit first-year experience classes and introduce myself, explain the purpose of the study and request their participation. I discussed the importance of the study and what I was trying to accomplish. Participants were assured that participation was voluntary and could be terminated at any time with no obligation to the student. I also met with instructors and discussed the context of the study and how it could benefit them and their students beyond the classroom.

In conducting the survey, it is necessary to assume the participants accurately represent the desired study population. I assumed that participants would respond honestly and with integrity; this can be defined as personable and realistic responses. Factors like social desirability, however, may lead participants to answer questions in a biased fashion. Students may answer in a way that shows a positive portrayal of life outside of the classroom, in reality they are unable to provide for themselves but do not want others to know. Participants were assured no repercussions would be taken against them for not completing the survey or interview. The list of assumptions regarding challenges facing students can be cumbersome and unrealistic. The study will help participants anonymously request assistance in a variety of areas. This will open up opportunities to seek help where needed on campus.

Scope and Delimitations

There is a shortage of specific information and research about Lenoir Community College and student barriers; therefore, this makes it more difficult to gather relevant information for the study. The inquiry will engage currently enrolled students who consent to take part in the study and agree to be surveyed. I wanted to follow students from the beginning of the semester until the end to see if they have been made aware and accessed on-campus resources. I worked with students who were enrolled in a first-year experience course and are learning about the culture of the institution and what resources are available.

While Lenoir Community College serves three counties in eastern North Carolina, (Greene, Jones, and Lenoir counties) the study will focus on data specific to Lenoir County, as the institution, and programs of focus are located in Lenoir County. Recruitment for prospective students is not limited to the one county but takes place throughout the entire service area. Students were selected based on their enrollment in a first-year experience course. This is to help identify students who show early signs of needing assistance. If they are identified early in their enrollment the college might be able to implement an intervention strategy to connect students with resources. Within the confidential survey and interview provided to students, their responses provided information regarding their socioeconomic status.

Since participants' identities were to remain confidential, a pseudonym was assigned to each participant that corresponds to their name in a master spreadsheet that would maintain confidentiality. It was used to protect them and their responses but would still allow me to know which participants identified as being affected by particular socioeconomic barriers.

Race/ethnicity and gender did not play a role in participant selection for the study. The sample reflected that of the institution at large. LCC does not tolerate discrimination of any kind based on gender, sexual orientation, age, race, religion or ideology (Lenoir Community College, 2019). All students at LCC have the ability and right to access resources on campus. The intention of this study was to focus on students' socioeconomic barriers based on their status as students, but their race/ethnicity and gender was noted in the demographic information collected.

Limitations

Some limitations that presented themselves throughout the process include shortage of available data, difficulty with administrative support and implementation, unresponsive and uninterested collaborative inquiry partner response, low student participation and personal and financial burdens of students hindering their ability to reach education goals. Administration has been supportive thus far in the process; as the study moved forward, there was no resistance during the implementation of the intervention. There are faculty and staff with years of experience within the North Carolina Community College System and Lenoir Community College. Over time they become desensitized to student circumstances due to the vast and varying amount of student interaction. Barriers become normalized and tend to be recognized as excuses versus actual challenges. Faculty and staff should have a vested interest in what is taking place within the student's education. Heavy workloads may shift their focus from students to paperwork, advising, and recruiting new students for their programs.

There were many collaborative inquiry partners who were involved throughout the process as shown in Table 3. Collaborative inquiry partners included the students, faculty, and staff of Lenoir Community College, Lenoir County Transit, The Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board, Lenoir County and Economic Development.

1. Students, faculty, and staff of Lenoir Community College

Table 3

Lenoir Community College Collaborative Inquiry Partners

Collaborative Inquiry Partners	Significance to the Study	Contributions to the Study
LCC Students	The study impacts students' academic progress	Participation in survey, interviews and development of intervention strategy
LCC Faculty/Staff	Collaborative feedback towards the study	Referring students to use the intervention
Lenoir County Transit	Suggestions on better serving students	Participation in alleviating transportation issues for students
The Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board	Connections with off-campus resources	Allocating resources to students
LC Economic Development	Suggestions on how to meet industry demands	Participation in feedback on how to better serve community partners

Students are the centerpiece of the study. I want students to know they are an integral piece to the college's success. Students will benefit from the research and the potential intervention(s) offered to them. Faculty and Staff at Lenoir Community College will be directly impacted from this study. It will take participation and buy-in from my coworkers to make the study impactful. Once an intervention is implemented it would need assistance from faculty and staff.

2. Lenoir County Transit

The Lenoir County Transit and Lenoir Community College have an agreement to offer discounted tickets to students, however, there are several stipulations to qualify. The study seeks to examine alternative solutions to add to the current lack of transportation availability. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

3. The Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board

The Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board, Inc. (ECWDB) is a non-profit organization. It is the designated administrative/fiscal agent for the Federal and State workforce development funds appropriated by the North Carolina Department of Commerce to operate employment and training services in a nine county local area. They form partnerships with local businesses, government, and education in order to develop great jobs and effective education and training programs. This partnership allows individuals to grow, prosper, and improve their quality of life while also helping businesses thrive in local economies. (Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board, 2020).

4. Lenoir County Economic Development

The Lenoir County Economic Development has partnered with Lenoir Community College to connect employers with qualified employees and students with lucrative employment. Local industries looking for qualified potential employees will benefit from the increase in student successes. Community partners will also benefit because of the increase in revenue for the county would lead to more funding. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Collaborative inquiry partners were interested and responsive throughout the process of the study. Active communication with the collaborative inquiry partners was important to the study. A knowledgeable understanding about the subject matter could also be beneficial to the study and how it impacts the collaborative inquiry partners.

Due to the methodology including surveys and interviews of students, there was low participation by students. They were unwilling to share information regardless of the confidential status of the survey and interview. The participant pool consisted of currently enrolled students, as the barriers being identified potentially could be the same barriers that hinder participation in the study. A pivotal part of the study consisted of informing the participants about the importance of identifying resources at Lenoir Community College that could assist them with their needs.

Significance of Inquiry

Over time, Lenoir Community College has been impacted by the fluctuating national and state unemployment rate. A decrease in the unemployment rate is good for the economy; however, for community colleges it can equal low enrollment and funding. Emphasis is placed on recruiting students but minimal effort is focused on retention of students in their programs.

Depending on the length of programs, students tend to lose interest and life gets in the way of their educational goals. Lastly, students who enroll in programs that offer third-party credentials do not always complete the program and receive certification. Once they leave the program, time passes and once again, personal circumstances outweigh educational goals.

This study focused on identifying socioeconomic barriers of students who are enrolled in programs and how those challenges impact their participation in the programs at LCC. The research provided information related to interventions developed as a result of the analysis of the data collected from the student surveys. The study also initiated the intervention through the institution to help students reach their educational goals, while building a deeper understanding of what can potentially impact students in a positive manner. Students can benefit from the additional resources offered to them throughout their programs as a result of utilizing those student services.

Faculty and staff at Lenoir Community College were also directly impacted from this study. It involved an increase in effort by employees in different areas of the college. A continued partnership with the Lenoir County Economic Development is beneficial to the college. The Lenoir County Economic Development is responsible for the development and implementation of the economic development strategy for the towns of Kinston, La Grange and Pink Hill, and all of Lenoir County. Local industries looking for qualified potential employees will benefit from the increase in student successes. Community partners will also benefit because of the increase in revenue for the county, which may lead to more funding for LCC.

Advancing Educational Equity

This study made a difference for all students regardless of their program of study enrolled at Lenoir Community College. I examined issues of educational equity by identifying the

socioeconomic barriers that may be affecting the success of the students at LCC. Implementing an intervention to ensure that all students are aware of available resources allows students to know about and have access to the resources that can make them successful, not just the students who are full-time or traditional students. Identifying ways to implement already-existing resources and connecting them with student barriers will help utilize the college's resources to the fullest potential. The college places a great deal of emphasis on using allocated resources on campus to fully equip students with the necessary tools to be successful in courses. Once the intervention was designed and implemented based on participant responses, it was shared with different divisions within Lenoir Community College and potentially other institutions. Lenoir Community College takes a strong stance towards equity in the institution. Through Title IX Lenoir Community College is a Zero-Tolerance College on Sexual Violence and Discrimination. LCC does not tolerate discrimination of any kind based on gender, sexual orientation, age, race, religion or ideology. Staff and faculty are here to protect students, employees, and guests (Lenoir Community College, 2020d). This study helped identify student barriers and how resource equity is important to the success of the institution and students. All students should have access to readily-available resources.

Positive Social Change

At the conclusion of this study, I sought positive social change at my institution. I hope students benefit from an additional intervention strategy to improve their overall educational experience at LCC. In addition, students' opinions were collected and analyzed to better serve other students at the institution. Interventions created from the study assisted with the attempt to provide equal access to all students enrolled at Lenoir Community College. Regardless of their personal life outside of the classroom, all students should be able to attend class and have the

same experiences as their peers. There are, however, external factors that may be out of an institution's control. Social justice defined within college programming includes all members of a society being treated fairly and equally (Castagno & Hausman, 2017). One person is not above or beneath another and all students are working towards the same or similar goals, ultimately to become successful. Due to the difference in student demographics in community college courses, instructors have to use unique teaching strategies to reach students at their circumstantial levels of learning. Once student barriers are identified, the institution can then determine ways to offer students suggestions on how to better their circumstances. Institutions are unable to assist students if they are unable to recognize or understand what the student is experiencing.

Summary

Lenoir Community College's student enrollment has decreased in degree and non-degree programs. Socioeconomic barriers that may be affecting students and enrollment continue to go unidentified and the college is unable to connect students to on-campus resources. Non-traditional student enrollment is growing along with the demand for specific training for faculty and staff to serve this demographic. Students are unaware of assistance that could help them potentially overcome challenges outside of the classroom. Full-time equivalence is also impacted by student completion rates and therefore, influences the institution's funding for future students and programming.

There are multiple assumptions about students and their reasoning for re-enrolling in post-secondary education. Lack of success, classroom engagement, and tenacity all could be assumed factors for being unsuccessful in community college programs. This study will explore those assumptions and compare them to the actual factors students experience. Limitations could be present throughout the study; however, there are plans to address any potential pushback.

The purpose of this study was to implement strategies to connect students enrolled at Lenoir Community College to campus resources that may improve their chances of being successful academically and completing their programs. The information acquired from the review of the literature and the study will inform institutions on strategies to assist students. These strategies may ultimately lead to higher retention and persistence rates and lower levels of non-completion. In Chapter 2, I will discuss relevant research regarding the focus of practice.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since 1958, the amount of internal and external barriers Lenoir Community College (LCC) students face has steadily increased. There continues, however, to be a growing number of students enrolling in a variety of training and degree programs. Students with a high school diploma or equivalent may still not have the training and education necessary to meet industry demand. Employers seeking additional labor may look towards applicants who have postsecondary education or training. This requirement compels students to take advantage of additional academic opportunities and receive the necessary education to improve their way of life. It is possible that the obstacles students encounter can result in low program completion, lack of motivation, and decreased employment. The identified focus of practice will be based upon the identification of specific student barriers and increasing student support services through implementation of an intervention to impact identified students. Almost half of the students enrolled in postsecondary education at LCC do not complete their intended course of study. The National Center for Education Statistics reports 60% of full-time students who began in the fall of 2018 at Lenoir Community College returned in the fall of 2019 and only 51% of part-time students who began in 2018 returned in the following fall (College Navigator, 2019).

Colleges have the ability to address factors such as housing, food insecurity, and transportation; however, students may not always be aware of the student services available to them. These programs can help them access these resources. Just like the students' lack of knowledge regarding available resources, if the institution is unaware of the barriers students face, they are unable to resolve the situation. It then becomes too late to be proactive in their approach. This chapter will examine the theoretical framework that guides this study and explore the social and economic barriers of currently enrolled students. The importance of technology

competency, student engagement, college programming, and workforce development will also be reviewed. Implementation of an intervention to impact the identified focus of practice was based upon the identification of specific student barriers and increasing student support services. In an effort to address external factors that hinder student persistence and completion at LCC, it is important to review the relevant literature.

Theoretical Framework

The focus of practice is based upon the identification of specific student barriers and increasing student support services through implementation of an intervention to impact identified students. In an effort to address external factors that hinder student persistence and completion at Lenoir Community College, it is necessary to consider the theories that may influence these barriers. I believe there are two prominent student development theories that most closely relate to the focus of practice study. They include Tinto's Student Departure Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Based on the identified focus of practice, the study seeks to examine socioeconomic and academic barriers and motivators influencing students and their education in an effort to impact program completion and retention. The identified theories and resulting framework allow an explanation of the relevance of student development theory in regards to the focus of practice.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The first theory to be explored is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a humanistic theory of motivation. Maslow stated that human beings are constantly in pursuit of specific needs of which there are five levels (Maslow, 1954). These five levels are arranged in a pyramid with the base being physiological needs and continuing to safety needs, social needs, self-esteem and finally at the top self-actualization (see Figure 1; Banerjee, 2014).



Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

The needs near the bottom of the pyramid must be addressed before individuals can address the needs at the top. The lower needs in the hierarchy have greater strengths, because when a lower-level of need is achieved an individual will stop trying to satisfy a higher-level need (Maslow, 1954). The needs at the top of the hierarchy are based on psychological well-being and personal growth. Both physiological and safety needs are considered “basic needs.” Social and self-esteem needs are psychological. Lastly, self-actualization is considered a self-fulfillment need. Individuals do not leave one need level and move to the next, instead the needs are partially fulfilled resulting in each level having been filled to some extent (Maslow, 1954).

According to Maslow’s (1943) foundational work on hierarchy of needs, physiological needs are a requirement for survival. Hierarchy of human needs is based on the growth and survival of human beings. In education, students will seek satisfaction and self-actualization if their basic needs are being met in some way (Maslow, 1954). In regard to the current study, two levels of Maslow’s Hierarchy have been identified as relevant to the intended outcome: physiological needs and safety needs. Physiological needs include air, water, food, shelter, sleep, and clothing. Safety needs include personal security, employment, resources, health, and property. Maslow (1954) believed that a person’s determining factors in their life were their intentions, values and motivation. These needs influence a student’s ability to actively engage in the classroom, hinder their sense of belonging, and impact self-confidence. Insecurities have been shown to have an effect on student learning, development, and success (Wood et al., 2017).

Tinto’s Theory of Student Departure

The second theory is Tinto’s Theory of Student Departure. According to Tinto’s theory, the decision to drop out arises from a combination of student characteristics and the extent of their academic, environmental and social integration in an institution (Tinto, 1975). Tinto

published the first version of his well-recognized Institutional Departure Model in 1975, also known as the Student Integration Model (Tinto, 1975). Tinto's institutional departure model contained five categories with constructs interacting to determine a student's dropout decision (see Figure 2; Tinto, 1975, 1993). Between 1975 and 1993, this model went through many examinations and revisions by the original author, Tinto, and others (Aljohani, 2016). Tinto's 1993 model was expanded from the original theory through the development of a longitudinal, explanatory model of departure. The 1993 model is based upon three major sources of departure: academic difficulties, inability of individuals to resolve their educational and occupational goals, and their failure to become or remain a part of the social life of the institution. This theory also discusses implementation strategies through student motivation. Colleges that can successfully engage and motivate students to remain in programming have the ability to increase persistence throughout the course of the semester. If a student's needs are not met by way of accessing college resources, the student will continue to experience difficulty within their educational journey. Furthermore, it explores ways students can become more engaged through peers, faculty, and staff (Tinto, 1993).

Using the Student Departure Theory and the data collected from this study, the three major sources of departure were explored and identified. Academic difficulties, inability to resolve goals, and failure to remain engaged within the institution were analyzed. This theory directly relates to this study and the intent to identify socioeconomic barriers of currently enrolled students in an effort to prevent future departure and increase retention and completion. Student motivation is also important to enrollment and retention rates in community college programming (Levesque, 2018). Institutions should provide enough support and resources to students and employees to present them with the opportunity to be successful in their program.

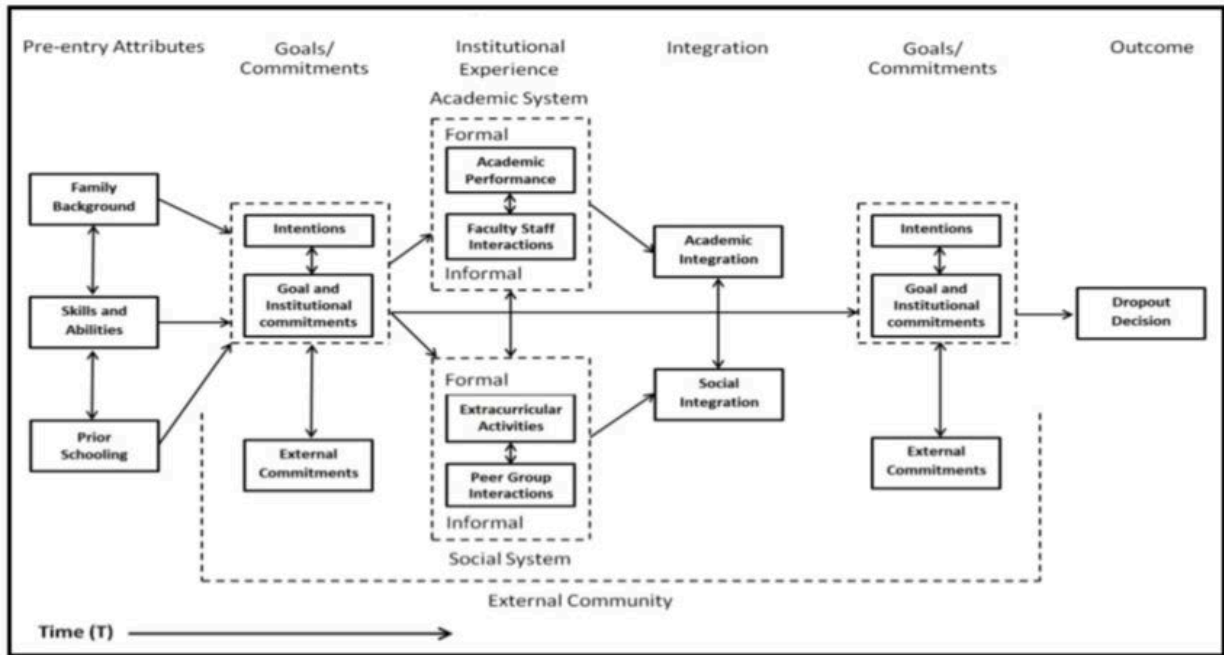


Figure 2. The Institutional Departure Model.

Students enrolled in courses that are related to their long-term goals may still experience difficulty on how a specific course helps them earn a credential or degree if program pathways are unclear (Levesque, 2018). The adjustment to college life can be difficult for students, even in a community college setting. Educators at higher education institutions may be doing a disservice to students by allowing them to rely too heavily on the faculty and staff.

Community colleges disproportionately serve low income, first generation, and academically underprepared students (Bailey et al., 2011). A balance is needed to best serve the student while they can also help themselves. While also giving the students a reason to return next semester. Each student should be assisted to the best of the institution's ability; however, with limited resources and staff, it can be difficult to give adequate attention to every student. Students suffer from a lack of information about how to successfully navigate college and their classes (Bailey et al., 2011).

Tinto (1975) viewed attrition as a series of ever-changing commitments and experiences affecting students' integration and decisions to withdraw or to continue in their programs.

Through commitments, integration ultimately influenced persistence. Tinto (1993) writes:

There appears to be an important link between learning and persistence that arises from the interplay of involvement and the quality of student effort. Involvement with one's peers and with the faculty, both inside and outside the classroom, is itself positively related to the quality of student effort and in turn to both learning and persistence. (p. 71)

Tinto's model is based on the premise that persistence is a longitudinal process of interaction between the individual and the academic and social systems of the institution (Carter, 1986; Garcia, 1987; Joseph, 1995; Stage, 1986). Student involvement is believed to be a critical component related to persistence (Milem & Berger, 1997; Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) believed

the process of becoming an integral part of the academic and social systems at an institution occurs once students successfully navigate the stages of separation, transition, and incorporation. Separation occurs when students can disassociate themselves from past relationships, which may include family members, friends, and high school acquaintances. Transition initiates when students have successfully disassociated themselves from past communities, but have yet to adopt new norms and behaviors. Incorporation occurs once students have adapted to their new norms and behaviors of their educational institution. However, just because a student has arrived at the incorporation stage and has become integrated in their new community does not mean they will persist (Milem & Berger, 1997; Tinto, 1993).

Upon arrival to a new campus environment, students begin to encounter new values, beliefs, ideas, and attitudes. A student may begin to reject past norms of their friends and family. Tinto (1993) described this process as “a period of passage” between old and new norms (p. 97). Faculty and staff play an important role in helping students become more integrated. Students feel more included at an institution when they feel a level of commitment to success from employees they encounter. Tinto (1993) also explored institutions with large residential populations and the impact on student retention. Student communities, including Greek Life, residence halls, campus living, student clubs, sports, and other extracurricular activities contribute to increased student engagement. While two-year schools attempt to offer as many activities as four-year schools, it is difficult to have such a deep level of integration at a community college. Lenoir Community College puts an emphasis on involvement with Student Government Association, a student-led club to which every student regardless of program enrollment, is granted a membership. Events are held on campus focusing on inclusion of all student demographics and attempt to provide activities and student engagement similar to those

at a four-year school. Students are then able to engage and network with each other at these events (Lenoir Community College, 2019). Tinto's model is based upon the full immersion of students into any program at any institution. Thus, it is important to give students a reason to return for the following semester, regardless of the size of the campus and its offerings.

There are many theories that could help define the focus of practice and some will be explored further throughout the writing. Tinto's Student Departure Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can help guide the study and provide appropriate background information that can lead to a better understanding of the barriers that may be experienced by students at Lenoir Community College. Students who drop out or who will not re-enroll the following semester are classified as students who do not persist (Tinto, 1993). Exploring internal and external factors that influence student success will allow for a robust amount of data to be collected over the course of this study.

Nonacademic Barriers to Student Success

In an effort to increase retention within the student population at LCC, it is important to identify the socioeconomic barriers that may be affecting persistence and academic success. Those factors may be socioeconomic in nature and can consist of lack of shelter, employment, food, and transportation that the college could address through current practices if adequately utilized. On the surface, it appears students are underperforming academically and are in need of tutoring or student services. It may not be as apparent that nonacademic factors influence their education heavily. According to Tinto's theory, the decision to drop out arises from a combination of student characteristics and the extent of their academic, environmental and social integration in an institution (Tinto, 1975).

According to Anderson (2019), community colleges are not optimally equipped to provide adequate support to assist students, nor determine practices for meeting the completion agenda, without knowing the decisions students encounter. Little to no attention is geared towards micro-decisions students must make once enrolled at a community college. Micro-decisions are defined as frequent, routine, recurring decisions. In regard to students, micro-decisions may consist of daily choices that impact enrollment and a student's journey to program completion (Anderson, 2019). Researchers agree that during college students lack readily-available information to assist them with decision-making when "dropping" (Anderson, 2019; Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Addressing Socioeconomic Barriers

Students face a variety of socioeconomic barriers that hinder their success in community college programming. Food insecurity, job security, housing, transportation, childcare, and mental health care are just a few of the areas of concerns for administrators. While this is not a comprehensive list of challenges that students face, the aforementioned barriers are the most common among rural community colleges (Forbus et al., 2011; Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Waters-Bailey et al., 2019).

Food Insecurity

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) (2018) reports that there is limited information about food insecurity among college students. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) categorizes food insecurity in two ways. The first category is low food security, where students may miss a couple of meals throughout the week and have little to no access to healthy foods. Very low food security is the second category and involves students missing multiple consecutive meals (United States Government Accountability Office, 2018).

Waters-Bailey et al. (2019) conducted research in rural counties in an effort to determine if there was a connection between student departure and food insecurity. They found that students may be tasked with deciding whether to quit school and look for a job or risk not having enough food for themselves and their family. The Wisconsin HOPE Lab released a study in which food and housing insecurity were examined among college students and found that 23% of students attending a community college in a rural area faced low food security and 30% experienced very low food security (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017). Research also shows that community colleges in the counties with the highest costs of living and the highest rates of food insecurity in the sample exhibited higher rates of undergraduate food insecurity than those in less expensive counties (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017).

The United States Government Accountability Office (2018) reported the Department of Education data shows that almost 2 million at-risk students who were potentially eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) did not report receiving benefits in 2016. Federal student aid generally does not cover all college costs for low-income students, and college students may have limited access to federal food assistance programs, such as SNAP, because of program eligibility restrictions (United States Government Accountability Office, 2018). One of the most common reasons for low access to government programs is due to students not being familiar with or understanding SNAP's eligibility requirements. Kathryn Larin, the GAO's acting director of forensic audits and the investigative service team, participated in an interview with Temple University's *The Temple News*. Larin said that colleges and universities prevent students from accessing federal benefits by giving them incorrect information on how to properly secure available resources (Conte, 2019).

To help address this barrier, two community colleges in North Carolina have trained staff to assist students with inquiring about and receiving SNAP benefits. Nash Community College and Davidson County Community College have partnered with their local Department of Social Services (DSS) to assist students in receiving SNAP benefits and additional services as needed (Nash Community College, 2018; Waters-Bailey et al., 2019). The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (2019) also offers residents services and information through the North Carolina Nutrition Education Program. The primary focus is to provide low-income families and children comprehensive nutrition education, a healthy diet, obesity prevention, physical activity and better access to food through Food and Nutrition Services (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, 2019).

Although it is not the job of the community college to become a social service agency to assist students, it is important for the community college to provide students with information regarding the academic and non-academic services that are available to them in their service area. In an effort to increase completion rates, institutions should consider being more proactive in areas related to available resources, which could include partnering with community agencies, delivering information, and connecting students to the available resources (Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Waters-Bailey et al., 2019).

Housing

Housing is another barrier faced by students. It can be difficult to identify students who may be homeless, as they do not always disclose their living situations to faculty and staff (Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Waters-Bailey et al., 2019). The cost of security deposits, rent, utilities, and moving costs can impact a student's ability to move to a new residence. The Wisconsin HOPE Lab study found 50% of students attending a community college in a rural area were

considered housing insecure (Goldrick-Rab, 2018). Furthermore, the study found half of all community college students experienced housing insecurity during the previous year, and 13% were homeless. That means 10,000 undergraduates faced housing experiences in the prior year that research shows were likely to substantially reduce their odds of degree completion (Goldrick-Rab, 2018).

The United States government offers Affordable Rental Housing (ARH) for residents who are identified as low income and lack affordable housing (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019). There are three options for subsidized housing: privately-owned, housing choice vouchers (Section 8), and public housing. Through the use of privately-owned subsidized housing, the government gives private property owners money to provide lower rent. Under Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8) residents must find their own housing and the government will pay the landlord the amount allotted on the voucher. Residents are responsible for any difference in the amount of the payment. Public housing allows residents to rent from the local public housing agency, and qualifications are determined from gross annual income (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (2019) offers rental assistance to residents looking for housing within the three types of subsidized housing.

Transportation

Lack of available transportation for students attending rural colleges continues to be a cause for alarm with respect to retention and completion. Waters-Bailey et al. (2019) agree that a lack of reliable transportation can lead to lower persistence and lower GPA. Lenoir Community College's service area of Lenoir, Greene, and Jones counties has varying degrees of available public transit. Both Lenoir and Greene counties have a transportation service. Jones County does

not currently have a reliable transportation system. The Lenoir County Transit (LCT) operates Monday through Friday from 4:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (North Carolina Department of Public Safety, 2019). The LCT does not currently operate a route to Lenoir Community College on evenings or weekends. LCT is funded and operated through a partnership between the Lenoir County Government and the North Carolina Department of Transportation. Students are required to schedule and pay for rides on the transit. The costs are as follows: \$5 for a one-way trip or \$10 for a round trip.

LCT receives funding from the NCDOT/Public Transportation Division and the Federal Transportation Administration by applying for grants from these organizations to provide additional funding for this resource (North Carolina Department of Public Safety, 2019). Students enrolled in a curriculum program at Lenoir Community College are eligible to receive a discount of \$1 off a transit ticket. Students enrolled in basic skills classes through continuing education must meet a minimum of 5 hours in seated class to receive two free tickets: one ticket to go home and one ticket to return to class the following day (Lenoir Community College, 2019).

In 1999, Greene County and the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Public Transportation Division saw a need for a “dial-a-ride” service available to all residents of the county (Greene County, North Carolina, 2019). Lenoir Community College has an off-campus center in the town of Snow Hill located within Greene County that may be more convenient for some students; however, the Greene County Center does not have all of the same programs offered through the Kinston Campus (Lenoir County). These transportation services are beneficial to the residents of Lenoir and Greene counties.

Unfortunately, not all students receive the discounts and free tickets, so some are unable to afford the one-way or round-trip tickets. The cost of owning a personal vehicle may be out of fiscal reach and reliable transportation through family and friends may be difficult to obtain. Many researchers have examined these challenges that contribute additional stress to the student and their overall educational experience (Waters-Bailey et al., 2019). Transportation to and from work after completion of students' programs has also been identified as a barrier outside of the classroom (Goldrick-Rab, 2018).

In an effort to address the barrier of purchasing a personal vehicle, Lenoir Community College Foundation established "Cars for College". The Cars for College mission is to help low-income working students become more self-sufficient by assisting with their vehicle transportation needs. The goal is to assure students have access to a safe, legal, affordable, and dependable vehicle to get to college (Lenoir Community College, 2020b). Donors of the college can donate their vehicles to the institution to be given to an eligible student. The program gives students an opportunity to attend college and work, and improves their economic mobility. In addition, the program increases training through currently enrolled students in automotive courses. Students in the program inspect the cars for safety and ensure the students receive quality vehicles.

Technology Competency

Online instruction has a growing presence in higher education. The benefits of being able to complete assignments remotely and on a student's own time and pace are valuable (Bartley & Golek, 2004). Online courses allow scheduling and classroom size to no longer be an issue compared to face-to-face courses. The flexibility of online courses makes learning more convenient for students and does not compromise the quality of the education (Peich, 2017).

Online training is also valuable to businesses in regard to training employees who may face similar constraints as non-traditional students (Bartley et al., 2004). The benefits of online instruction include the ability to be trained anywhere, at any time, while saving the business money. Businesses and industries can have employees stay in the office and receive training instead of going to a college and sitting in the classroom. The student may be able to multi-task, depending on their job duties. This results in both significant cost and time reduction. It allows the opportunity to keep an employee from having to be away from their responsibilities for extended periods of time (Bartley et al., 2004).

Issues with technology stem from students with inadequate digital literacy skills that prevent them from succeeding (Peich, 2017). Students who did not identify their lack of technical skills as barriers to learning suggested that they would have been better equipped for online learning with more technical training and support (Calvin & Freedburg, 2010). Students need to understand what is expected of them in an online course, they also need direction on how to navigate learning online. One of the most questionable downfalls of online learning, however, is in regard to understanding what is being instructed and comprehension of material. Some researchers suggest that students can only participate in online training after they complete traditional training to ensure they have a grasp of what is expected. Another issue presented is the absence of social interaction between the instructor and the student, as well as with classmates. There is also a question of loss of social interaction and lack of communication (Bartley et al., 2004). In addition, students must be provided with support to develop the necessary skills to effectively participate in online courses (Peich, 2017). Calvin and Freeburg (2010) reported that clearer assignment instructions were the most important improvement that could be made to increase overall success in web-based courses based on participants' responses.

In a survey conducted by the American Community for the United States Census Bureau, 75.8% of households in North Carolina had broadband internet subscriptions. North Carolina has a total of 4,521,697 housing units, which leaves 1,094,251 households without internet at home. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), 79.2% of households in Lenoir County have a computer, while 71.2% have an internet subscription. Lenoir County falls behind the state average by 4.6%. A lack of reliable internet can lead to difficulties for students who work and have family responsibilities. Free internet can be accessed on Lenoir Community College's campus or at the Neuse Regional Public Library in downtown Kinston; however, with limited hours students who work shift work may be unable to be at either site during normal operating hours. If the student had access to a laptop they could use the Wi-Fi in the parking lot, otherwise, they must rely on a desktop computer to complete their course work. A lack of reliable internet is one of many reasons students have issues with technology and course instruction.

Over the last 10 years, enrollment of non-traditional students has continued to increase due to the national unemployment rate, fluctuating economic climate, and employers' requirements of technologically savvy applicants (Jesnek, 2012). The return to education may have resulted in children moving out of the house or layoffs. The learning environments older students left years ago have changed as a result of new technologies, marveling many upon their return to the classroom. The responsibility of students has also increased dramatically. Students now must type papers, participate in online group discussions, turn in online assignments, and create projects and files on computers.

Depending on the students' backgrounds, some non-traditional students may have little to no experience working with a computer. They come from production lines, farms, maintenance work, or the home as stay-at-home parents. Scholars call this phenomenon the "digital divide,"

which describes the difference between computer-literate traditional students and technologically unskilled non-traditional students and how the latter feel when entering the classroom (Jesnek, 2012). Calvin and Freeburg (2010) examined whether adult learners have adequate access to online technologies, what specific computer competencies adult web-based learners believe they have, and which competencies the students believe are most important in online learning. Research found that almost half of the participants reported that counseling or advising would have made participation in a web-based course easier and over a third reported that additional technical training would have helped (Cavin & Freeburg, 2010).

It is important for educational administrators to understand that non-traditional students may require additional student services to help them adapt to changes in technology (Hurtinee, 2015). According to Lee and Choi (2011), the high dropout rate among students enrolled in online courses has become a cause for concern for educators. In regard to a student perception, failure to complete their first online course may lower their self-confidence and deter them from enrolling in another online course. From an institutional perspective, high dropout rates and low completions could potentially reflect poor-quality online programs or instruction (Lee & Choi, 2011).

Because of the “digital divide,” instructors in both degree and non-degree programs are tasked with teaching both the computer-apt and computer-illiterate students the same information while utilizing a different approach for each group. Instructors must also refrain from spending too much time explaining the basics to avoid boring the students who are more knowledgeable about computers. Jesnek (2012) suggests offering a basic computer skills course to all incoming students who are willing to learn. Lenoir Community College offers Human Resources Development courses (HRD) to fill this need. The mission of the HRD program is to educate and

train individuals in transition and the emerging workforce for success in the workplace (Lenoir Community College, 2019). Students learn to operate a computer, fill out job applications, search for employment opportunities online, and file claims. These courses are offered at no cost to students who are unemployed or underemployed. This is an important asset to the community college and to students.

Lenoir Community College 2017-2022 Strategic Plan

Lenoir Community College established 3 goals for the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. The research conducted within the study was used to enhance the goals of the Strategic Plan and add value to the institution. Strategic planning methods can help guide senior management, as well as empower middle managers, while aligning their everyday activities to the institution's broad aims (Goldman & Salem, 2015). The 3 goals in the plan reflect the mission and vision of Lenoir Community College through emphasis on evidence-based decision-making to support student success, teaching and learning, and community relationships (Lenoir Community College, 2020c). The intention of the plan was to provide direction to the college on how to move forward throughout the next few years.

Goal 1: ENGAGE – Engaging Students, Each Other, and Community Partners

Students have the opportunity to learn and grow when they are invested in their training and education. They have the opportunity to consider and apply what they are learning in and out of the classroom. Lenoir Community College acknowledges student commitment is imperative to reach goals. LCC has industry and community partners to instruct and prepare exceptionally qualified employees, while also building a workforce. The college is tasked with creating and developing programs that will benefit students and community partners to enhance economic development (Lenoir Community College, 2020c).

Goal 2: INVEST – Investing in Students, Employees, and Facilities

Student success is achieved from a culture that incorporates advancement, coordinated effort, and greatness. The college strives to welcome differences of opinions and backgrounds that lead to a more diverse population of students and employees. Professional development is offered to full-time and part-time staff to encourage growth and advancement (Lenoir Community College, 2020c). LCC aims to provide safe, accessible, and welcoming facilities on each campus to meet the needs of students and employees.

Goal 3: ACHIEVE - Creating a Quality Student Experience

The college strives to provide a quality student experience from the beginning of a student's educational journey to the time of completion. The college also aims to provide clearly defined strategies and goals to reach those achievements. Through the use of support on campus, student barriers will be identified and addressed to the best of the institution's ability. Quality instruction will be provided in the classroom and through online learning. Students will benefit from the creativity, expertise, and innovation of employees (Lenoir Community College, 2020c).

Community College Efforts

Community-based programming prepares community colleges to be the critical, vital force for developing and sustaining linkages between the community college and community partners they serve (Sheffield, 1996). College programming plays an important role in student success and can be specifically geared to meet the needs of students. A 2004 study conducted by Melendez et al. found that more than 85% of community colleges developed programming specifically for students receiving welfare resources. They also identified four important functions of programs that serve disadvantaged populations: case management and support services, instruction and academic support services, overall program design, and links to industry

and employers. Case management and support services are focused on helping students address external barriers. Lack of childcare, transportation issues, substance abuse, domestic violence, and financial wellness are just a few of the challenges career counselors and student success coaches help students overcome throughout their programs (Melendez et al., 2004). Counselors are able to identify and create individual plans to help address these barriers.

Community colleges must address two issues – how to prepare for transformation that is expected of them and how to prepare for the changes within their service area (Sheffield, 1996). Instruction and student support services are focused on basic skills development and workplace readiness. Students may learn the technical training but fail to understand the importance of social cues and requirements for the workplace. Regardless of the industry, students will need to meet basic rules of the employer, such as dress codes, attitudes, and working with others. Additionally, remedial education may be needed before students complete their industry training. A review of basic math, reading, and writing may also be conducted in order for students to find sufficient employment to match their training (Melendez et al., 2004).

Program design and development must meet the requirements of the state organization and accreditation standards, as well as the requirements of different industries. Programs may include job placement and postplacement support services to help students adapt to their new jobs and stay on after a certain length of time in order for the student to be labeled a success (Melendez et al., 2004). Links to industry and employers are important to serving students and meeting their needs successfully. Programs that engage employers are proactive in keeping their stakeholders involved and the employers remain invested in the curricula offered. Industries can offer their suggestions, feedback, and possible resources to help students be successful.

The ultimate goal is for the industry partner to hire the students enrolled in the training. Programs can also include cooperative agreements with industry and internships that can benefit the students and the employer (Melendez et al., 2004). Industries could potentially hand-pick their employees because of the relationships cultivated throughout the partnership. Community colleges have continued to create relationships with employers, public schools, universities, community agencies, and other entities to improve programming and services based on vocational training to increase strategic planning in workforce development (Orr, 2001).

To meet industry demand for workforce development there have been many innovations in creating new programs to help close the skills gap. College and Career Readiness prepares high school graduates to enter college regardless of the program of interest. Students participate in orientations, advising, academic planning, time and financial management, and college transition (Myran & Ivery, 2013). Work-based learning provides on-the-job-training to students in career education programs. Opportunities for hands-on learning are presented to students through work-study, internships, and apprenticeships. Lastly, structured career pathways give students clear plans and achievable ways to reach their goals. Career objectives are clear, and courses are specifically designed to assist students in receiving college credentials (Myran & Ivery, 2013).

Workforce Development

Workforce development is defined as noncredit job-skills training for students and customized employee training for business or industry offered through continuing education (Myran & Ivery, 2013). Workforce development continues to evolve through strategic initiatives to close the skills gap between employers and potential employees. Increasing a skilled and trained workforce adds to economic and social equity (Myran & Ivery, 2013). Minorities make

up a larger proportion of future workers but historically have less formal training and education to better prepare themselves for the workforce. According to Myran and Ivery (2013). Black unemployment is double the national average; Whites have 20 times the median household wealth compared to Black households and 18 times that of Hispanics. Workforce development is a successful way for individuals to gain the skills necessary to advance in the industry of their choice.

Due to the call to action for community colleges to focus on economic and workforce development, central governance structures are needed to lead an increase in accountability and could determine a need for additional workforce development programs (Githens et al., 2014). The North Carolina Community College System has a board of trustees that governs decisions for the system as a whole in addition, each of the 58 community colleges within the system has a local board of trustees (North Carolina Community College System, 2019b). Centralized governance strives to provide equal distribution of resources and allocations to each of the institutions in order to meet industry and business demands.

In 2016, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) proposed recommendations to the Trump Administration related to community colleges in the US. The AACC represents more than 1,100 community colleges in the US (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019). One of the recommendations for improving quality instruction included investing in community college workforce training. The AACC also proposed two missions to the Trump Administration to increase the presence of workforce development training throughout the community colleges across the nation (North Carolina Community College System, 2016).

The first mission described the necessity to reestablish direct federal support for

community college training programs. The AACC proposed an annual \$500 million in community college and industry partnership programs that would engage stakeholders, specifically business and industry to expand footprints, update technology, and close the employment gap (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019). Secondly, the AACC recommended increasing investment in existing workforce education programs. Critical federally-funded workforce programs have experienced a decrease in funding over the last few years. These programs include Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE), Basic State Grants, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Programs, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), and National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Program.

Community College Students

The newest trend reflected by students entering the community college involves a shift in steady enrollment of “traditional” students aged 18-24 to an increased enrollment of “non-traditional” students aged 25+. These students may be displaced workers, first-generation students, returning students, or those seeking a change in career. As a result of the change in the student population, community college administrators have altered curricula, services, and overall philosophies to ensure that the offerings are relevant for non-traditional students (Jesnek, 2012).

Students who are low-income, minority, and first-generation continue to reflect lower completion rates. Some researchers have recommended implementing stronger and more specific admissions requirements. Requiring a more selective admissions criteria, however, would mean creating more barriers for the students that community colleges are trying to enroll (Calcagno et al., 2008). These same researchers point out the primary goal for community colleges should not

be focused on attracting better students, but instead strategizing ways to retain current students who may face multiple challenges. The number of non-traditional students enrolling in postsecondary education at community colleges continues to increase. In response to this growth, institutions must understand different approaches, strategies, and practices that can best serve this student demographic to expand attainment and program success (Carales et al., 2016).

One way community college personnel can network, share resources and information, and contribute to scholarly research is through involvement in organizations that focus specifically on issues faced by community college students, such as the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Practitioners who are involved in the group are able to share ideas that do and do not work for their respective institutions. According to the The Aspen Institute & Achieving the Dream, Inc. (2013), outstanding community colleges build bridges and develop collaboration across college departments and determine visions that focus on the overall goal of student success. It is also beneficial for colleges to understand the importance of cross-walking students' education between short-term training and degree programs. There has been a shift in the definition of student success throughout community colleges. Institutions must move their focus from not just student access, but to student access and student success (Hunt, 2015). This effort can result in building successful academic and student support structures to engage students and assist them in overcoming their academic and personal barriers.

There are many models which explore student persistence and attainment in postsecondary education, but they may fail to identify institutional factors that impact students positively and negatively (Calcagno et al., 2008). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019) defines social inclusion as the process by which efforts are made to ensure the availability of opportunities – that everyone, regardless of their background, can

achieve their full potential in life. Such efforts include policies and actions that promote equal access to (public) services, as well as enable citizens' participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Student Engagement

Student engagement has become a measure of institutional success. The nature of student characteristics and institutional characteristics of rural-serving community colleges, presents problems for institutions that seek to incorporate and capitalize on student engagement (Ware, 2012). Students have the opportunity to participate and engage with peers on campus but do not always do so due to their off-campus obligations. This could potentially impact retention at the institution. With a lack of student housing, it can present issues with student engagement (Ware, 2012). Students attend Lenoir Community College from outside of the service area and add another level to the barriers of entry and retention.

A study conducted by Calcagno et al. (2008) found that a more professional and personalized atmosphere related to academic support services seemed to benefit the student population. Researchers suggested conducting qualitative research that determined institutional features and policies that would be related to the different resources and abilities in relation to institutional effectiveness (Calcagno et al., 2008). Normally, "lived experiences" relate to phenomenological research, which is generally qualitative (Creswell, 2016). One of the most significant findings from this study was that individual characteristics were more directly related to the completion of programs versus institutional factors. To better understand what needed to be studied, institutional and individual variables were identified. Institutional variables included student characteristics, faculty, enrollment, and finances. They can also be divided into four specific groups: general institutional characteristics, compositional characteristics, financial

variables, and fixed location characteristics. General institutional characteristics consist of factors determined by college or state policy as well as institutional size, faculty count, and the number of certificates and degrees that are awarded (Calcagno et al., 2008).

Student compositional characteristics can be defined as institutional compositional variables that are obtained through indirect or peer effects. If a college has a majority of traditional students in a classroom, then non-traditional students may feel uncomfortable or as if they do not share the same educational experiences as their peers. Financial characteristics consist of federal student aid, in-state tuition, and average expenditures per full-time equivalency (FTE) through instruction. Lastly, fixed location characteristics are defined by the location of the college, and they are defined as urban, suburban, or rural (Calcagno et al., 2008). Individual variables included students who had strong high school records, students who came from upper-class families, and those whose parents also went to college. Well-prepared students with higher economic resources were more likely to succeed and do well in college programming; while students facing significant barriers continued to have trouble even in strong colleges with substantial support services (Calcagno et al., 2008).

Forbus et al. (2011) conducted research on time management, origins of stress, and coping strategies of traditional and non-traditional students. Due to the growing number of non-traditional students, colleges are starting to move their focus towards understanding and adapting to the change in population demographics on campus. Institutions are beginning to implement strategies to improve student satisfaction and involvement within the college experience while increasing persistence toward degree attainment (Forbus et al., 2011). The negative connotations that may occur due to the lack of available resources for non-traditional students could potentially include added stressors, negative attitudes towards the institution, and lower grade

point averages. Stress for non-traditional students stems from their responsibilities related to work, family, and school. In addition, engaging students in college life at a community college can be difficult considering the amount of students who commute to campus (Ware, 2012). Non-traditional students are typically older and have family responsibilities that can add additional stress in their educational journey (Forbus et al., 2011). Researchers, however, found that students who spent more time with their family reported less stress. Students who have a supportive community surrounding them throughout their education are able to better manage unpredictable situations they may encounter.

Time management continues to be one of the largest assets for students. Students who work, commute, or face other barriers find that they may not be as affected by these challenges due to their experience with time management (Forbus et al., 2011). Time management, however, can also be considered one of the biggest hindrances for certain students. A lack of planning and scheduling can lead to higher stress and the inability to cope with issues that may arise. Students who do not know how to cope with insurmountable factors find it difficult to manage their personal and educational circumstances. The institution must help students overcome these barriers by offering strategies to cope with the challenges they face. As community colleges continue to see an increase in enrollment, they will need to be creative in their approach to alleviating barriers (Forbus et al., 2011).

Student Success

Community colleges are known for their open-door admissions policy and students are welcomed regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Legislatures, policymakers, and accreditors have determined retention as the key measure of institutional effectiveness (Kinzie, 2014). According to the American Association of Community Colleges

(2019), two-year colleges are the most affordable way to receive higher education with an average tuition of \$3,435. Over 7 million degree students enroll in courses each year, which equals 45% of United States college undergraduates. Five million students enroll in non-credit workforce development courses to increase job skills, and the average community college student is typically 28 years old (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019). The focus of the AACC under President Donald J. Trump's Administration is to increase student completion and success while meeting the needs of business and industry. To help students access college and succeed, the American Association of Community Colleges has moved their focus towards strengthening the Pell Grant Program, investing in the development of open educational resources and helping the most economically at-risk students stay in school (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019).

Because community colleges are open access, students may enter programs of study with different goals and expectations than their peers. This makes it difficult for the institution to assess and determine successful outcomes (Fong et al., 2016; Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Researchers have studied psychosocial factors that influence student success. These factors should be considered when attempting to understand the individual situation of each community college student and assist them in reaching their goals. Fong et al. (2016) identified five umbrella categories that best describe psychological theories that could have an influence on student success. They include self-perceptions, motivation, attributions, self-regulated learning, and anxiety. Self-perception is developed by an individual based on their attitudes and observing their own behavior. Self-perceptions have shown a corresponding relationship between perceptions and success. Researchers have identified two theories directly related to self-perceptions: self-concept and self-efficacy. Self-concept is a view of oneself. Self-efficacy is a

person's belief in their capabilities to execute a course of action and to achieve the desired results (Bandura, 1997; Fong et al., 2016).

Deci and Ryan (1985) define the composition of motivation as including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, goals, and task value. Intrinsic motivation is considered an interest or enjoyment of a task for its own sake without incentive. Extrinsic motivation is evoked by external pressures or influences. Because intrinsic motivation is self-provoked and can diminish overtime, teaching strategies using motivation are usually extrinsically driven (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Fong et al., 2016). Attribution demonstrates a direct correlation between students and success. A student who credits their internal effort to success will continue to strive to do their best. If that same student fails, they will credit their lack of effort and try harder the next time. Students who use external motivation, however, may blame outside factors for their successes or failures. Internal attributions have been determined to have more positive and lasting impact on students (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Self-regulated learning strategies relate to the active, constructive process of setting goals and monitoring behavioral aspects of learning (Fong et al., 2016). Anxiety is the most studied and commonly-identified issue affecting college students. Some level of academic stress can indicate a certain level of motivation and interest in the curriculum and completing a task; however, many students have overwhelming anxiety that can lead to low performance and retention (Fong et al., 2016). Researchers have explored ways to reduce academic anxiety, which may include the process of self-awareness, reflection and control for hindering performance.

A study conducted by Martin et al. (2014) found that graduates, specifically non-traditional students, made many sacrifices to reenroll in school to achieve their academic goals. Motivation stemmed from being laid off from a job or the attempt to begin a new career in a

professional field. Socioeconomic barriers existed before, during, and after enrollment in the program. In a 2014 survey by Martin et al. graduates referenced innate motivation and the desire to succeed against many challenges over short or long periods of time. Participants also referred to the external pressures that positively and negatively impacted their educational journey. These outside factors include employment, course work, and family responsibilities (Anderson, 2019; Fong et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2014).

Family values and culture play a pivotal role in student success. Some students taking part in the Martin et al. (2014) study indicated that their families did not want them attending college at any level. From the family's perspective, students who become educated may question familiar beliefs and values. Family members feel that this type of questioning could result in the student being separated from the family due to differences in opinions. Other students have parents who fully supported them and even co-signed for student loans. Some families may not have a history of attending postsecondary education, but still encouraged their children to attend. Participants who had no parent involvement used more intrinsic motivation to enroll and persist in their programs (Martin et al., 2014).

The true challenge to engage students in their pursuit of academic success comes from the instructors. The potential integrated social, emotional, and academic development approach to student success requires work (Balfanz, 2019). Institutions do not have to choose between academic gains or students' social-emotional improvements; however, faculty and staff do need to cultivate a culture of open communication and express the importance of a deep sense of pride and confidence within a student's abilities.

Summary

Among researchers, the continuing theme in adult education is that socioeconomic

barriers can impact students' retention, persistence, and success in their programs. There is a steady increase in non-traditional student enrollment in community college programs. With the current poverty rate in North Carolina, community colleges are trying to identify barriers that hinder student success. Through community and economic development, programs are being created to serve the needs of the unemployed and underemployed, and adult education has seen a shift in program offerings that are unique to individual students' needs.

There remains a significant gap in the existing knowledge of barriers facing Lenoir Community College students. While a broad scope of challenges has been examined, it is still undetermined as to why these barriers occur and how the community college can address these issues. Strategies are needed to ensure adequate training of faculty and staff to link students to available services within the college and in the community.

An emphasis has been placed on workforce development and the role it plays in helping students overcome socioeconomic barriers. Community colleges are trying to partner with industry and businesses to meet the employment and training demand. Technology competency and the "digital divide" is a major issue within non-traditional students and programming. It is the role of the institution to provide students with the necessary technical skills to be successful in the current labor market. An emphasis has also been placed on developing curricula around the needs of the students to assist them with learning and understanding of the material.

While student engagement can impact the success of a student, institutions need to inform students of the opportunities that are available to them to socialize and break out of the existing silos. Additionally, socioeconomic barriers that students face need to be identified as they can influence student outcomes. It is important to study the background context and examine the

relevant literature as it plays a role in moving forward with the study. Reviewing relevant literature assists in determining what contextual information would be beneficial to the study.

Chapter 3 includes a review of the methodology of the study. In this chapter, collaborative inquiry partners, who were vital to the success of the study, are introduced. The questions guiding the study are discussed, along with the research design and instruments used during the three phases of the study. The chapter concludes with details related to my role as the scholarly practitioner and a discussion of the data analysis techniques used to evaluate the results of the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS OF INQUIRY

Lenoir Community College offers a wide variety of allocated student resources on and off campus along with agreements with community and regional partners; however, students are not always aware of the services available to them. Identifying potential barriers for students enrolled at LCC and making the connection between them and resources may assist in overcoming some of their socioeconomic barriers. Students do not always reveal the challenges that they are experiencing to faculty and staff; therefore, they may miss opportunities to access available resources. Institutions can benefit from the identification of specific socioeconomic barriers of students and the best way to reach those who are currently enrolled.

The purpose of the study was to examine the socioeconomic barriers that influence student success and their education to create and implement a targeted intervention to address those same factors. Lenoir Community College allocates a large amount of time and resources towards addressing non-academic issues; however, students may not be adequately connected to those opportunities. Socioeconomic barriers could include food insecurity, unstable home environment, unreliable transportation, family abuse, restrictive work schedule, and family responsibilities. The results of this study show that students are experiencing other barriers as expected, the intended intervention assisted students in finding potential resources that could help address identified barriers. Student support resources at LCC are abundant, they include Academic Advising, Cars for College, the Finish Line Grant, LCC Guarantee Foundation Scholarship, Lancer Career Connections, Male Minority Success Initiative, student success coaches, and the Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act. There are also resources outside of the institution that could help students, including, Eastpointe, Mary's Soup Kitchen, S.A.F.E., Veterans Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation. This chapter will explore inquiry design

and rationale, program evaluation, inquiry design rigor, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions, and the role of the scholarly practitioner.

Focus of Practice Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College?
2. What intervention(s) can be implemented to assist students with overcoming socioeconomic barriers?
3. What are the effects of an intervention selected to address the challenge to help students overcome their barriers?

An Inquiry Design and Rationale table was developed from the focus of practice research questions and then categorized by phases. Table 4 describes the data to be collected, the expected timeline, and the preferred participants. Table 4 summarizes what would be determined in each corresponding phase. In addition, Table 4 provides an overview of the research study and the anticipated data collection.

Actionable Space

As the Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management, I have a vested interest in enrollment management and successful student outcomes. For this study, I focused on connecting students with college resources and hopefully impacting their academic progress. I was able to collect and disseminate data as the Director of Admissions. I had access to faculty and staff on campus who suggested guidance and direction on data collection and communication with students. I was able to communicate via email with students enrolled in the ACA 111 courses about my research and what their participation would be able to do for them as

Table 4

Inquiry Design and Rationale

Phase	FoP Research Question	Data Collected
Phase I	What are the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College?	Data will be collected through the initial Pilot Study Survey. Responses distinct from students and the data collected in the pilot study will be used to aid in the actual study.
Phase II	What intervention(s) can be implemented to assist students with overcoming socioeconomic barriers?	A pre-survey will be distributed before the 10% point of the semester. The survey will be created using data collected in the Phase I survey. The survey will collect information about barriers faced by students. Semi structured interviews will also be conducted to collect student stories. The potential intervention will be identified by participants themselves as part of the survey. During Phase II intervention strategies will be evaluated and a new intervention will be presented.
Phase III	What are the effects of an intervention selected to address the challenge to help students overcome their barriers?	During Phase III a post-survey will be distributed to participants who completed the pre-survey in Phase II. The survey will be sent out before the end of semester exams. The data collected through the survey will be examined and reviewed. The intervention will be evaluated for efficiency after the study is conducted.

students at Lenoir Community College. In addition, I was able to share with them how it would positively impact present and future students. Through student responses an intervention was developed to better serve the student body. Using my connections at the college, I was able to influence collaborative inquiry partners participation.

Inquiry Design and Rationale

This study intended to be a mixed-methods, action research design to help create and implement an intervention to create change for students enrolled in a first-year transfer class. Sagor (2000) defines action research as a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action. Action research is always relevant to the participants because the focus of the research is determined by the researchers who are also the consumers of the findings (Sagor, 2000). Action design research (ADR) offers great, but yet-to-be-explored potential for designing educational innovations (Marjanovic, 2016). The goal of the study was to examine the socioeconomic barriers that influence student success and their education to create and implement a targeted intervention to address those same factors.

Sagor (2000) lists seven steps in the action research process. The first step is to select a focus. The researcher must determine what they want to investigate. The second step is to clarify theories, for example examining barriers and motivators influencing students' success. Next, identify research questions, creating meaningful research questions to guide the inquiry. Following step three, data are collected. Researchers can accomplish this by ensuring data justifies their actions and that the data is valid and reliable. The next step is to analyze data, after which researchers then sort, sift, rank, and examine the data to determine what story the data tells and how it reflects the process. The next to last step is to report the results to the institution or

organization and share it with peers and administration. Lastly, researchers take informed action and use the research to move forward and not repeat past mistakes (Sagor, 2000).

Sagor also identified three purposes for action research. They include building the reflective practitioner, making progress on schoolwide priorities, and building professional cultures (Sagor, 2000). Through the use of the intended mixed-methods action research design, I conducted a study that clearly defined the socioeconomic barriers that impact success for students enrolled at Lenoir Community College. The purpose for this action research is that the study makes progress on schoolwide priorities, specifically socioeconomic barriers.

Context of Study

This study focused on identifying socioeconomic barriers that may be preventing student success among those who are enrolled in programs at LCC and how those challenges impact their participation in associate degree programs. This study was an iterative design including three phases of research data collection and analysis. In addition to the information on socioeconomic barriers faced by students at LCC, the study provided information related to interventions and participants indicated what they believe could assist with overcoming the identified barriers. It also initiated an offering of additional services to assist students in reaching their educational goals. The aim of the study was to examine socioeconomic barriers affecting students at the college, collected data on the use of current student support services offered at the college, and provided suggestions to improve available student support services. The study also developed an intervention based on students' suggestions and evaluated the effectiveness of the intervention.

The fundamental goal of the approach outlined is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). The participants had the shared

experience of being new students in higher education. In addition, they brought their own set of circumstances into the classroom. These circumstances presented socioeconomic barriers that impacted their education. Some were not aware of the resources that are available to them on campus that could potentially address their barriers. This study assisted in identifying socioeconomic barriers influencing students' education and connected them to student resources. In addition, it shed light on possible interventions to assist in these efforts, ultimately leading to an increase in retention and persistence in programs at LCC.

In a mixed-methods study, both qualitative and quantitative data are collected to provide deeper insight into the focus of the study. In this particular study, qualitative data was collected using open-ended questions in a pre- and post-survey and quantitative data were collected using close-ended questions in a pre-and post-survey. In addition, semi structured interviews were conducted to gather student perspectives in a natural setting. In order to focus on the goal of the study, a survey and interview were conducted with students at the beginning of the semester to collect initial data regarding barriers that may exist. Once barriers to success have been identified by participants, an intervention strategy was determined and implemented. Survey responses guided the development of the intervention. Students were surveyed again at the end of the semester to gauge the level of effectiveness of the intervention. Participants were selected based on convenience sampling and will include LCC students enrolled in first-year experience courses. ACA 111 College Student Success course is mandatory for students, and this course introduces the college's physical, academic, and social environment and promotes the personal development essential for success in higher education. This course helps students identify resources, job outlook, short-term and long-term goals. Students will represent a wide variety of

ages, including what are considered traditional (18-24) and non-traditional (25+) students. Data analysis was taken into account with these age groups.

Collaborative Inquiry Partners

Collaborative inquiry partners provide practical support and can assist in growing the capacity of leaders and organizations. In addition, they are able to navigate complex situations based on their experience and knowledge. The following professionals were the collaborative inquiry partners with whom I collaborated and sought suggestions about the design of the possible intervention. They each had a vested interest in this research study as it pertains to their institution and success of students. They understood the benefits from the research that was being conducted to help create an intervention strategy to best fit the needs of the institution and the students.

Participation of collaborative inquiry partners was an important part of the process and they were included throughout the research study. Collaborative inquiry partners were asked to sign a Letter of Support Form (see Appendix H). This required working around their schedules and hosting scheduled meetings with them as a group to discuss aspects of the research project. Discussions also revolved around implementing an intervention to help cultivate student retention and persistence based on data collected in the study. All of the collaborative inquiry partners combined hold a multitude of institutional and state community college system experience. Their input on the direction of the intervention strategy helped strengthen the impact of the study.

1. President, Lenoir Community College

As the highest administrator at the college, the president has the ability to make institutional change and executive decisions. A president's insight is needed to add to

the inquiry approach. As the president of the college, I feel it is important to have their buy-in during the process. They may also be able to provide suggestions on how the college could better serve the students.

2. Senior Vice President of Instruction and Student Services and SACSCOC College Liaison, Lenoir Community College

The Vice President is expected to hold a wide variety of experience in student services, program reviews, and accreditation standards. They can provide a deep level of knowledge and understanding of the North Carolina Community College System and correct processes and procedures. In addition, the Vice President works with SACSCOC on maintaining the institution's accreditation. The VP will be able to provide a helpful insight into the inquiry approach. In addition, the Vice President can assist in analyzing data.

3. Vice President of Workforce Development and Continuing Education, Lenoir Community College

The Vice President should have extensive experience in higher education and workforce development in regards to short-term training and credentialing. As the VP they need the ability to look beyond the present barriers students are facing and help determine what would need to occur in order to launch the inquiry approach to assist students. The Vice President serves in both curriculum and continuing education within program reviews and curriculum. The VP will assist in providing information about college resources and how those resources help students.

4. Dean of Student Services/ Title IX Coordinator, Lenoir Community College

The Dean handles student complaints, issues, and personal affairs that influence their education. The Dean understands the admissions process from start to finish and a vast amount of knowledge related to enrollment management. The Dean will be able to provide a deep understanding of what it means to increase enrollment and retain students.

5. Dean of Arts and Sciences, Lenoir Community College

The Dean oversees faculty and staff within curriculum programs. As well as student issues and complaints. They ensure curriculum is relevant, timely, and meets the needs of students. The Dean works closely with faculty and students on community college programming, accreditation, and campus events. They also collaborate with other universities and colleges on how students can successfully transfer to a four-year institution.

6. Teaching Assistant Professor, Director of Outreach & Leadership Development, East Carolina University

The Dissertation Chair provides voice of reason and understanding throughout the dissertation process. The Chair holds higher education experience and can add a level of professionalism to the inquiry approach. The Chair also brings university experience to the research study to ensure the study is meeting certain standards. In addition, the Chair will guide and direct the study in an efficient way.

7. Student Success Coaches

Lenoir Community College hired five new part-time student success coaches (SSC) in October 2019. The purpose of the role would be to build relationships with students, identify students' needs in a timely manner, engage personnel, connect

resources, and support to help students persist, identify barriers, gaps, and inefficiencies that hinder student success, and work within the divisions to make referrals, provide input, and support positive student experiences. The following divisions received a success coach: Arts/Sciences, Business Technologies, Workforce Development/Continuing Education, Health Sciences and Industrial Technologies. The goal is to help students toward completion in their program of study (Lenoir Community College, 2020c). The SSC works with students who are identified through instructor or self-referral.

8. Director of Student Success and Equity

The Director of Student Success & Equity is responsible for leading student success initiatives and determining means to ensure equitable outcomes for the student population. This position will work in collaboration with faculty, deans, and other administrators to meet the holistic needs of our students ensuring diversity, equity, and inclusion are in alignment with the College's mission and values.

9. Student Success/Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Advisor

In addition to educational and vocational/career counseling, counselors are available to assist students in working through academic, personal, and social issues. Students who need on-going counseling services will be provided a list of community resources. Disability Services provides equal opportunity and access for students who have special health conditions, disabilities, or limitations. Students are encouraged to utilize counseling services at any point throughout their enrollment at the College.

Ethical Considerations

As a scholarly practitioner, I successfully completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program). The course was based on curriculum of human research specifically in Group 2 Social / Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel. The training reviewed ethical principles, research with human subjects, federal regulations, risk assessment, informed consent, confidentiality, research with vulnerable subjects, and other important topics concerning conducting research with different demographics.

The research study was approved by East Carolina University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approval can be found in Appendix A. The IRB protects the rights of research subjects who are asked to participate in a study. As the scholarly practitioner, I provided subjects with an Informed Consent Form that they had to complete to be a part of the study (see Appendix B).

Responses remained confidential for the purposes of this study and pseudonyms were used to protect participants and their responses. Students' real names and information were not saved or stored in any files. The data collected from student surveys and interviews is stored on a flash drive along with other data collected throughout the research study. Only I have access to this information. The drive is locked in a file cabinet in my office and requires a password to access the files.

I received participation and buy-in from all collaborative inquiry partners to gain access to participants and purposeful data. In addition, I needed their participation throughout the study. Their engagement was crucial to the development of an intervention. Following procedure, I followed the chain of hierarchy by first asking the Dean of Student Services for permission to move forward. The Dean of Student Services is also Lenoir Community College's Title IX

Coordinator and their approval was important due to research being conducted during normal operating hours. I asked the Dean for assistance on navigating the study while adhering to Title IX rules and regulations. Next, I sought assistance from the Vice President of Workforce Development and Continuing Education; they had an extensive background in reading and disseminating data. The Vice President was able to compare existing resources with a potential intervention. They had the ability and knowledge to assist me in navigating and communicating successfully with students. Their experience was helpful in conducting research.

Following the Vice President of Workforce Development, I discussed the study with the Senior Vice President of Instruction and Student Services and SACSCOC College Liaison, who works directly with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The Vice President provided a deeper understanding of the history of the college and what intervention strategies may have been attempted in the past. The VP approved collecting data from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. In addition, the Dean of Arts and Sciences also needed to be brought in to approve communicating with students that were enrolled in courses and determine my ability to initially communicate with students. The Dean provided information on common student challenges and how faculty typically assist students. The Director of Student Success and Equity had the ability to ensure students are treated with fairness and respect as well as providing an insight to student challenges. The Student Success/ADA Advisor provided information about Americans with Disabilities Act and how the study could be easily accessed by every student. Emphasis was put towards ensuring the information requested by students is accessible and understandable.

Lastly, I received input from the President of LCC, the President understood the importance of conducting research and collecting data for institutional purposes. Each of the collaborative inquiry partners were asked to sign a form supporting the study and their

participation. In addition, scheduled round-table discussions were held with all of the collaborative inquiry partners, as well as individual meetings with each of the collaborative inquiry partners. The consent and participation of collaborative inquiry partners was necessary and beneficial to conduct meaningful research within the institution.

Understandably, student consent was also important to the study. Students were assured that their responses were confidential and their participation was voluntary. It was important that they understood that their responses would not be used against them. Their responses helped other students that were facing similar circumstances. Students had the ability to terminate their participation at any time with no consequences towards them or their education. Student participation was necessary to conduct a robust study with relevant feedback.

Community colleges are tasked with many problems across higher education that include ethical dilemmas. Administration calls for action on recruitment, distance learning, and student services. With all of the factors facing community colleges and their students, there is not enough manpower or time to fix every problem. Institutions must balance priorities and determine what is worth their time and resources. This research needs staffing and resources to give it the time it deserves within the actionable space. Due to the homogenous structure of community colleges, if one college was to take action on identifying a solution to this particular phenomenon to be studied, then it could be shared across the North Carolina Community College System. The ripple effect may have an impact on influencing other institutions to adopt the same practice concerning issues that more than likely affect students in community colleges universally.

A Statement of Researcher Positionality

As an administrator at Lenoir Community College, I oversee the Office of Admissions. I

have a vested interest in enrollment management and successful student outcomes. I am also heavily involved with the recruitment of students through the application process. For this study I focused specifically on connecting current students with college resources. As the scholarly practitioner, I collected data, assimilated the information, and worked alongside the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to use that data to better the college. Due to the close relationship with the institution and employment, my role may impact the research study; however the findings from this research study were free from the influences of my own biases and presuppositions. Student responses from the pre and post-survey and semi-structured individual interviews guided the study and therefore, I defaulted to their responses as direction on how to move forward.

While I do believe issues exist within the student body, I wanted to collect the real perspectives and experiences from students. Semi-structured individual interviews provided the opportunity to learn about the students as they share their personal story. Research should be conducted to learn more about what hinders student success and as a result, this study seeks to identify socioeconomic barriers that may impact success for students enrolled at Lenoir Community College. Upon initial review the institutional data showed the decrease in student retention and program completion. Consistent with determining why student retention was down, the goal of the study is to make the connection between students and current resources to help them be successful in their program of study. This research study focused on how students are impacted in the classroom due to outside factors, as well as the available resources offered by the college that could assist with alleviating the identified issues. These factors may include child care, employment, family matters, financial problems, housing, and transportation.

Inquiry Procedures

The focus of practice was based upon the identification of specific student socioeconomic

barriers and increasing student support services through implementation of an intervention to impact the identified students. In an effort to address factors that hinder student retention and completion at Lenoir Community College, it was important to consider the socioeconomic barriers that may influence student success. The concern for students enrolled at LCC is that the data show they are not successfully completing their programs of study. Challenges may include lack of specified student support and lack of like-minded support groups. Positive support includes trained faculty and staff, as well as support from the administration. There were three phases to this action research study (see Table 5) that provided guidance in examining ways to identify and hopefully address those factors that hinder student success. The study was expected to start in January 2021 and end May 2022. This research study aimed to survey students enrolled at Lenoir Community College and gather data to help identify socioeconomic barriers. Once the barriers were identified, an intervention strategy was created and implemented at the institution (see Figure 3).

Phase I

In reference to the first research question “What are the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College?”, it is important to identify barriers that may exist outside of the classroom by surveying students on campus. These barriers may encompass employment, food, housing, lack of shelter or transportation. A significant absence of these basic needs may influence student success negatively. In a 2014 survey by Martin et al., graduates referenced innate motivation and the desire to succeed against many challenges over short or long periods of time. Participants also referred to the external pressures that positively and negatively impacted their educational journey. These outside factors include course work, employment, and family responsibilities (Anderson, 2019; Fong et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2014).

Table 5

Research Study Timeline

Timeline	Task
Phase I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct pilot study • Collect survey responses
Phase II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Participant Information Pre-Survey and collect demographic and socioeconomic data • Conduct semi-structured individual interviews • Code student responses to find centralized themes of challenges and motivators • Include collaborative inquiry partners in constructive discussions • Develop intervention strategy based on participant responses • Begin implementation of the intervention strategy
Phase III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct participant information post-survey evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention • Consult collaborative inquiry partners on findings and how to move forward • Evaluate effectiveness of intervention strategy

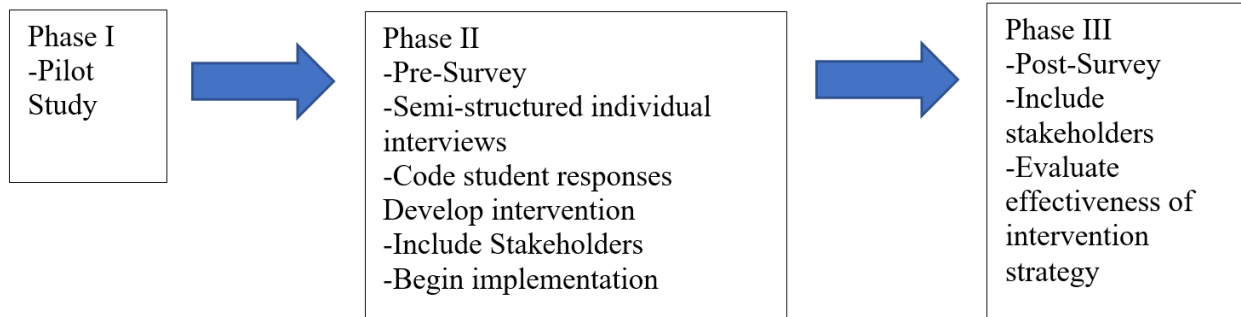


Figure 3. Phase timeline.

This evidence points towards a need to understand personal experiences of students to help them succeed. In addition, it serves as a guide when inquiring about socioeconomic barriers in the student survey.

Description of Participants and Recruitment Strategies

In an effort to gather initial data and confirm the need for further study related to socioeconomic barriers experienced by students at LCC, a pilot study was conducted. Participants in this phase were selected via convenience sampling, which included student workers at Lenoir Community College who were also enrolled in an ACA 111 course. While this course may not always be the first course students take within their first semester, it is typically taken early on in their time at LCC. The previously-mentioned collaborative inquiry partners provided approval to reach out to division directors asking for permission to contact their student workers. Emails were sent to request participation and response from identified students. The goal was to email every student worker in each curriculum division, and I hoped to receive responses from at least half of the identified group. Race, ethnicity, gender, and student type were collected for demographic data.

Instrumentation

The pilot study utilized a participant information survey and the research survey. The participant information survey was conducted at the beginning of the research to collect necessary demographics about the student. It gathered information about student status, gender, race, program information, transfer intents and employment. It also included a survey protocol that provided participants an overview of the research questions, introductory protocol and information about the scholarly practitioner. The survey also included open-ended questions to allow for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data (see Appendix C). The survey

was emailed to students and they were given a specific time frame of four days to complete the survey. Participants were asked to write in answers to the open-ended questions. The identified survey instrument utilized for the pilot survey will be altered slightly and then used for data collection in Phase II.

Pilot Study/ Baseline Data Collection

Collaborative inquiry partners provided guidance and feedback during the pilot study on how to increase student participation. Collaborative inquiry partners offered suggestions on specific questions to ask participants, thoughts on how to reach out to students, and suggestions on who to contact about participating. The pilot study involved surveying four student workers at Lenoir Community College. They represented different genders, race, social background, and academic progress. The pilot study focused on two main research questions that guided the survey questions: “What are the non-academic barriers that have influenced you in your education?” and “What are the non-academic motivators that have influenced you in your education?” The pilot study collected initial baseline data to help identify the socioeconomic barriers experienced by students enrolled in a first-year transfer class and how those factors impacted their academics. The goal of this survey was to find out how Lenoir Community College is supporting student success in degree programming. Participation was voluntary but an explanation was provided in regards to how the responses would be useful in assisting the college in improving the way it supports students in and out of the classroom.

I conducted the pilot study to collect contextual background information on the problem. I was also attempting to confirm what I believed to be taking place in the campus community. The survey questions focused on known socioeconomic barriers. The information gathered through the pilot study confirmed that this was an actual problem. Two of the four students self-

disclosed that their grades were not at a sufficient level. Their grades were falling, and they were having difficulty bringing them back up. The students stated that they sought out academic assistance through tutoring, student success coaches, and online assistance. Nevertheless, both students continued to struggle academically due to outside socioeconomic barriers.

Results from the pilot project study revealed the following problems that were particularly challenging in their current environment: falling behind in course work, low grades, limited free time due to working part-time jobs, meeting with on campus resources due to having to come in person, and a lack of motivation due to work/life balance. The following motivators revealed what the students considered particularly supportive in their current environment: educational goals, family members, and helping others around them. Other responses included: “finding the best fit” and [finding] “the right career choice”. The theme of their motivation is purposeful in trying to set and meet personal goals.

The participants confirmed that in regard to challenges they were facing, the student success coaches offered suggestions on what the students could do better but failed to probe for a deeper understanding of the student’s true barriers. These factors exist outside of the classroom and beyond the institution’s reach if they continue to be unaware of what is happening. It could be argued that the students themselves do not recognize their own barriers that hinder their success inside of the classroom. There are a set of factors that go unnoticed or unresolved within a student’s life outside of the classroom. These factors may include food insecurity, job security, housing, transportation, childcare, and mental health care. If the students surveyed have experienced these factors throughout their life, they may be unaware that the situation exists and has an impact on their academic success.

Data Analysis

Several themes were identified following the review of the data collected through the pilot study. The themes were sorted through coding techniques. The respondents answered questions related to their plans after LCC, personal motivators and barriers, use of campus services, suggestions to the college, and personal experiences during their time in their program of study. Student responses were coded to better understand student feedback. I read through participant responses initially to look for commonality of experiences, as well as unique experiences, and I then went through the data line-by-line to start a data-driven coding scheme. This was established based on searching for ideas and concepts within the responses. Codes were categorized and based on how they fit into the coding theme based on survey questions. The themes of transportation, homelessness, meals, mental health, and safe-spaces show a pattern of socioeconomic barriers influencing success. Several themes emerged from one code and some students experienced the same challenges that their fellow student did as well (see Table 6).

Summary of Phase I

In conclusion, research collected through the pilot study shows students are experiencing socioeconomic barriers that influence their success. The survey that was conducted confirmed this, and based on the data collected, it was determined that additional research was necessary on how to better connect students to the vast amount of on-and off-campus resources. The context of the study shows the importance that Lenoir Community College can have on a student and their academic progress. The focus of practice research questions will lead to a better explanation of this problem of practice. The collaborative inquiry partners at the institution have a vested interest in the success of this study and they add specific qualities to enhance the research conducted. The research design is based on exploring how LCC is supporting student success in

Table 6

Themes Based on Student Worker Responses in the Pilot Study

Code	Theme
Plans after graduating	Transfer to a University Adding to the Workforce
Motivations	Family Support Friendships Employment Goals
Barriers	Transportation to Campus Homelessness Food Insecurity
Campus Services	Tutoring Lab Student Success Coaches
Suggestions for improvement	None
Personal Experiences – Positive or negative	Grades Falling Lack of Sleep Eating Enough Safe-space Mental health struggling

degree programming. In Phase II an analysis of the approach and what changes as a result of the focus of practice study will be explored.

Phase II

Phase II helped determine the intervention strategy that would best fit the needs of Lenoir Community College and its students through surveying participants. The intervention was developed based on participant responses. Regarding research question two, “What intervention(s) can be implemented to assist students with overcoming socioeconomic barriers?”, currently existing resources need to be evaluated to better assist students. Lenoir Community College hired five new part-time student success coaches and implemented the Aviso Retention System. These two currently existing programs that are in place within the institution but are not the determined intervention. These two programs have already been implemented and were useful in the aid of the developed intervention.

The purpose of the role of student success coaches (SSC) is to build relationships with students, identify students’ needs in a timely manner, engage personnel, connect resources and support to help students persist, identify barriers, gaps, and inefficiencies that hinder student success, and work within the divisions to make referrals, provide input, and support positive student experiences. The student success coaches provides support for students in an effort to improve success and retention. The goal is to assist students toward completion in their program of study. The SSC works with students identified through instructor or self-referral. The purpose of the SSC is to support success, retention, and completion rates for students taking continuing education and curriculum courses by assessing issues, barriers, and challenges through coaching and enrichment.

The Aviso Retention system is able to track all students who are enrolled in academic

programs, as well as measure their engagement and progress. Through the use of Aviso, the college is able to note the students who are struggling academically. College faculty and staff have access to the database to help share notes on students who may have academic issues. Student success is solely evaluated by measurable outcomes such as grade point average, graduation, and transfer rates. Data is not collected on the nonacademic barriers that students face outside of the classroom. Advisors and instructors are tasked to help students who are struggling in classes but are not addressing areas of support beyond academic remediation.

AVISO Grade Alerts

Lenoir Community College implemented grade alerts through Aviso for curriculum courses: Grade Alert 1 (4-weeks), Grade Alert 2 (6-weeks), Grade Alert 3 (10-weeks), and Grade Alert 4 (12-weeks) (Lenoir Community College, 2020a). Aviso Grade Alerts operate when the grade alert is activated within the first 4 weeks. Aviso continues this process until the grade alert is deactivated. For students listed in a faculty member's caseload, or for students followed by additional faculty and staff, all parties connected with that student via Aviso will be able to see the alert. During this time, faculty can continue to enter grades. Aviso will only alert students once, per course, during each of these time periods if their grade is below 75%.

The students are alerted via Aviso and their LCC email account. This process is important to keep students and faculty informed on their academic progress. The student is to receive a message in their Aviso account and LCC email from their division success coach (see Appendix F). However, where Aviso is automatically programmed to track academic barriers to student success, it fails to track nonacademic factors. Advisors are not adequately tracking those barriers as much as the student's academic progress.

Inquiry Approach / Intervention

In Phase II, I used the data collected and analyzed in Phase I, as well as data collected from an additional pre-survey and semi-structured individual interviews during this phase, to create and implement an intervention to address socioeconomic barriers for students. The first survey was conducted at the beginning of the semester and the second at the end of the semester after the intervention has been implemented. The pre-survey helped identify the socioeconomic barriers and assist in developing an intervention strategy. The survey was given to incoming new students enrolled in ACA-111. The post-survey determined if the intervention assisted students in overcoming those same barriers. The survey was supposed to be given to the same students who participated in the pre-survey. The survey is developed from the pilot study originally conducted in Phase I. Questions formed around barriers, demographic information, and personal motivators will be asked. Some of the questions are also based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the basic essentials a human needs to survive.

The Participant Information Pre-Survey consisted of 24 questions to collect data on demographics, personal motivators and socioeconomic barriers that students may potentially face. The student surveys were intended to address the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College. Secondly the surveys aimed to gather information on interventions that can be implemented to identify individual students' needs. Lastly, the data collected from the survey provided information concerning potential motivators for students to remain enrolled in their academic programs. These surveys also provided the data necessary for the data analysis.

Through Aviso the success coaches should be in constant communication with students and determining what barriers they may be facing that hinder their success. In contrast, SSC have

the opportunity to determine what motivates students who are struggling academically. As success coaches are in communication with students, they build rapport based on what motivates them to persist. These programs assist in answering question two of the three Focus of Practice Research Questions, “What intervention(s) can be implemented to assist students’ with overcoming their socioeconomic barriers?” Although the addition of the student success coaches and Aviso should add value in answering that question, these programs are already in place at LCC and do not provide the data necessary to determine the socioeconomic barriers that are affecting students. The programs need to be adequately utilized to enhance the student experience and continue providing information related to student’s academic experience and success.

Program Activities

Success Coaches receive alerts from Aviso on a student’s progress by the referral of their advisor. If a student needs assistance they can be referred to a Student Success Coach to receive information on other student resources. An Aviso alert is sent to the success coach when a student’s grades fall below a 75% average or when an advisor sends a referral (see Appendix G).

Description of Participants and Recruitment Strategies

Participants were selected based on their enrollment in a first-year experience ACA 111 course. All students enrolled in this course qualify to participate. If barriers are identified earlier in students’ academic journey, the college can implement interventions that could potentially assist students before it is too late. Students who access available resources may be better equipped to navigate college beyond their time at Lenoir Community College.

Before reaching out to potential participants, I asked for permission from collaborative inquiry partners and deans. In addition, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness was able to

provide a comprehensive list of enrolled students. I did not want colleagues to feel disrespected by contacting students without first asking. Once approval was received from collaborative inquiry partners, an email was sent to students asking for their participation. Participation in the survey was voluntary and it was explained how responses would be useful in assisting the college in improving the way it supports students in and out of the classroom. Responses remained confidential for the purposes of this study. The goal was to receive responses from at least one third of the students contacted. This allowed me to survey a small but effective pool of students. I anticipated 25-30 students being enrolled in the course; therefore the aim was to collect responses from 15-20 participants. I requested a response by a certain date from students. Participants were provided with additional information about their participation in the study, along with other specific details regarding consent at the beginning of the survey instrument. The survey was created using Qualtrics. Within the Qualtrics survey, I provided the participants with the consent information and then they answered a yes/no question regarding participation. Then they were able to answer the rest of the questions and submit the completed survey.

Instrumentation

I conducted a pre-survey of students enrolled in a first-year experience ACA 111 course. All of the students in each section of the course will access the survey through a link provided through Qualtrics. When I created the survey in Qualtrics, it provided a link that I could send via email to the participants. Qualtrics collected all the responses and then I download the responses into an excel file to use for data collection and coding.

The Participant Information Pre-Survey examined socioeconomic barriers to academic success at the college, explored knowledge and use of current student support services offered at the college, and reviewed suggestions to improve student support services. Responses were

collected, consolidated and examined. Once responses were assessed the intervention strategy was designed and implemented. The intervention strategy was created based on students' suggestions, research, and supporting data.

The data collected was analyzed for the research study. This survey included open- and closed-ended questions that provided detailed information on factors influencing students' success in their academic program. It will give a deeper insight to what students consider barriers and motivators to the education.

Participants were provided with the following overview of the research study, along with the survey questions.

1. Student Informed Consent Form. This was sent along with the survey and participants were required to indicate their understanding of the study and that they are agreeing to participate. This gave the participants an overview of the research questions, introductory protocol and information about the scholarly practitioner. As is explained in the protocol, participation was requested, not required and would remain confidential (see Appendix B).
2. Participant Information Pre-Survey. This survey collected information at the beginning of the semester about socioeconomic barriers facing students along with information about student status, gender, race, program information, transfer intents and employment. This survey also included the open- and closed-ended questions that were used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data for the study (see Appendix C).
3. Semi-structured Individual Interviews. These interviews were collected through virtual meetings or face-to-face interaction. The goal of the interview was to collect

the student's perspective and "story" of what barriers they are experiencing and how that impacts their education. This allowed for a less formal interaction with students and offer a safe-space for open communication and honest responses. Participants had the ability to elaborate on their responses and follow up questions were asked (see Appendix D).

The Participant Information Pre-Survey allowed me to collect the data necessary to attempt to answer the three research questions. The survey consisted of two parts, questions 1 - 9 in Part 1 of the pre-survey collected participant demographic data. This data included student status, gender, race/ethnicity, education goals and attainment, and employment status. Part 2 of the pre-survey collected information about participant socioeconomic barriers and what impacted their academic progress. As shown in Table 7, questions 1 - 15 included both close- and open-ended questions in order to collect quantitative and qualitative data. They examined a student's basic needs and if they were being met adequately. The pre-survey questions directly asked about on-campus resources that were available to students, as well as asking them how the college could help them meet their goals. Student responses helped identify ways they feel the college could offer more services.

The purpose of the semi-structured individual interview was to gather a deeper insight into the participant's personal challenges and motivators that impact their education. A semi-structured interview were conducted at the beginning of the semester to determine what intervention could potentially assist the students' academic progress. The interview consisted of 7 questions that elaborate on questions previously asked in the survey.

Data Analysis

Once data is collected from the post-surveys, I used the analysis of the data to protect,

Table 7

Corresponding Data Source to Research Question

Research Question	Data Collection Source
1. What are the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College?	Pre-Survey Part 2 questions 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15
2. What intervention(s) can be implemented to assist students with overcoming socioeconomic barriers?	Pre-Survey Part 2 questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 7
3. What are the effects of an intervention selected to address the challenge to help students overcome their barriers?	Post-Survey questions 1- 10

promote, and enhance the intervention. The success coaches, Aviso, and the implemented intervention worked cohesively, and the survey explored how these resources are being used together. If the programs are used together effectively, it could have led to successful students at the institution. The data collected was used to answer the larger questions of the study. It was the goal as the scholarly practitioner to frame a perspective that is well-rounded and based around conceptual framework.

Summary of Phase II

In conclusion, Phase II assisted in forming the overall study inquiry. Research design and instrumentation explained how the intervention will come to fruition. In addition, the importance of an intervention that could better serve enrolled students in identifying the socioeconomic barriers that impact their success in and outside of the classroom was discussed. Phase II has shaped the baseline data on how to examine the potential intervention in Phase III. In Phase III, a post-survey related to the intervention strategy will be conducted and provide suggestions on how to move forward.

Phase III

Phase III utilized a post-survey to evaluate the usefulness of the intervention implemented in Phase II, while seeking specific information on how the intervention has impacted students. The post-survey was also used to provide details on ways the institution may address socioeconomic barriers in the future. It answered research question three, “What are the effects of an intervention selected to address the challenge to help students overcome their barriers?” The mission of Lenoir Community College is to meet the personal, cultural, and professional educational needs of students through affordable, accessible, and innovative educational programs (Lenoir Community College, 2019). As a result, students typically find

that their experience at a community college caters more to their individual needs, and this appears to be true for students at LCC.

Additionally, non-degree programs are developed with business and industry in mind, and successes are based on community and economic development strengthened from students who contribute to the tax base and local economy. Lenoir Community College's convenient campus locations ensure that students have access and are able to participate in programs at an affordable cost. These positive elements of LCC add to the cultivation of student success. It is imperative that community colleges ensure convenience, professionalism, and empathy are available for every student.

Description of Participants and Recruitment Strategies

Following the implementation of the intervention, a link to a survey in Qualtrics was sent to the participants via email towards the end of the semester before end-of-term exams are given. This survey investigated the effectiveness of the intervention and the impact it had on students throughout the semester. Students enrolled in ACA 111 that participated in the pre-survey were asked to participate in the post-survey. Requesting the same participants who responded in the pre-survey to participate in the post-survey would benefit comparison data. The purpose of the post-survey is to determine how effective the intervention was to students who were experiencing socioeconomic barriers at the beginning of the semester. As the scholarly practitioner, I evaluated the data collected in the post-surveys to determine the effectiveness of this intervention. If successful, the college could potentially continue to invest time and resources into this intervention. There was value to evaluate the program effectiveness through student surveys and to continue to improve this intervention over time.

Instrumentation

I conducted a post-survey of students enrolled in a first-year experience ACA 111 course. All of the students in each section of the course accessed the survey through a link provided through Qualtrics. When I created the survey in Qualtrics, it provided a link that I sent via email to the participants. Qualtrics collected all the responses and then I downloaded the responses into an excel file to use for data collection and coding.

1. Participant Information Post-Survey. This survey was conducted at the end of the semester once the intervention had been implemented. It gauged the effectiveness of the program and the impact it had on the students. This survey included open- and closed-ended questions to collect quantitative and qualitative data (see Appendix E). The term “intervention” throughout this survey was replaced with the actual program/support name instead to make this clearer and more relevant to the participants.

The purpose of this post-survey was to provide an analysis of the effectiveness of the intervention designed and implemented in Phase II from a student perspective. The post-survey consisted of 10 questions that asked students about the implemented intervention and the effect it had on their progress throughout the semester (see Table 7). Questions also helped to determine the usefulness of the intervention. Responses reflected positive or negative program outcomes. The study also sought to determine whether the intervention is being used adequately and examine the use of student success coaches and how they reach out to students. Student success coaches should be able to identify those learning techniques and how students can be assisted successfully based on their individual needs. Student engagement with mentors, staff, and faculty

create a sense of belonging (Kelly, 2008). The intervention had the ability to cultivate those relationships.

The college is allocating a large amount of resources and funds towards already existing programs that may be altered to better assist students and provide more access to services. Both student success coaches and Aviso work simultaneously to better enhance the goals of the college and its strategic plan. Alongside the intervention students will have a more clear direction on how to access these resources. Administration places emphasis on the success of these programs to ensure student success in and out of the classroom. The survey explored the overall usage of the program.

The findings from the post-survey and survey were used to adapt the intervention implemented in Phase II to better assist students in successfully completing their programs of study. Additionally, the findings identified from the student survey were used by collaborative inquiry partners at the institution. The collaborative inquiry partners and I collaborated in an effort to optimize the design of the program evaluation. They each had a vested interest in the research as it pertains to the institution and success of the students. They each understand the benefits from the research that is being conducted to help create an intervention strategy to best fit the needs of the institution and the students.

Analysis of Approach

The purpose of this intended mixed-methods, action research study was to identify socioeconomic barriers preventing student success and explore a strategy to create and implement a targeted intervention to help students overcome those factors. The goal of identifying student barriers may also allow the institution to connect students to currently available resources to address outside pressures that may be preventing their success

academically. As found in the pilot study in Phase I, participants were not adequately accessing on- or off-campus resources while facing non-academic barriers. Through using quantitative and qualitative data collected in the pre-survey in Phase II, it may be determined what socioeconomic barriers students are experiencing and what can be considered a hindrance to their education. The institution may benefit from the intervention by connecting with other students falling behind in coursework due to socioeconomic barriers. The post-survey that was conducted in Phase III assisted in determining the effectiveness of the intervention and how it has impacted students positively or negatively. It is hoped that students who participated in the study benefited from the implementation of the intervention and Lenoir Community College will experience added value to the overall student experience.

Summary of Phase III

Phase III consisted of surveying students at Lenoir Community College that may be impacted by socioeconomic barriers and then surveying students that used the intervention. Participants in Phase III that took the pre-survey in Phase II were supposed to be provided the post-survey to inquire about their use of the intervention that was implemented in Phase II. The data collected in Phase III can be compared with the data collected in Phase I to determine if the implementation of the intervention was successful in achieving the goals set for the study.

Inquiry Design Rigor

Rigor is a necessary quality in scholarly inquiry; it is also important to implore trustworthy practices throughout the research study process. The validity of a research study refers to how well the results among the study participants represent true findings among similar individuals outside the study (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). As the scholarly practitioner and evaluator of the collected data, it is important to attempt to recognize and eliminate any biases or

presuppositions. I reviewed and examined the data, along with my chair and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness at LCC. I involved my collaborative inquiry partners in developing the questions in the pre- and post-surveys to ensure the appropriate questions and important aspects of the institution and its population demographic are being considered. I aimed to create a research study that has the ability to use the results of this study to inform theory or practice elsewhere.

In the Participant Information Pre-Survey, I collected data to help form a pattern of student demographics to gauge a sample of the student body. I used an introduction in the Student Informed Consent Form to help participants know who I am and why I am seeking honest and robust feedback from them. I hoped to see a more positive response in the post-survey due to the implementation of the intervention.

The overall study was intended to be a mixed-methods action research design. The surveys served as the instruments for data collection within the study design. The surveys and interviews collected both quantitative and qualitative information; therefore, I needed to address internal validity and transferability, as well as reliability of results in the discussion of rigor. Internal validity regards the internal consistency of the design. Internal validity is defined as the extent to which the observed results represent the truth in the population being studied and, thus, are not due to methodological errors (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). I sent each participant the same survey and materials to provide consistency within the research. The threats to internal validity included students not answering honestly or completing the survey in its entirety. Low participation in the study also proved a threat to the internal validity.

I expressed the importance of their responses to the participants. Additionally, it was explained that there will not be repercussions for failing to complete the survey or interview;

however, completing the entire survey/interview may be beneficial to the institution and other students at Lenoir Community College. Transferability is the ability to transfer findings from research from one group to another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used coding to analyze the data collected to understand the responses from a larger perspective. It is understood that there will be a variety of student demographics and there may be outlier responses. Every participant response was helpful in aiding in the implementation of an intervention strategy. Each student has a unique set of factors that influence their education. It is the goal of the institution to aid that student with available resources. Results generated from the research study will be analyzed for appropriateness towards the study.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

Delimitations are the limit of the scope of the study and what is within the boundaries of the research. One of the delimitations of the study is Lenoir Community College's service area of Lenoir, Greene, and Jones counties. In regard to recruitment, advertising, and promotion, employees of LCC are unable to advertise outside of the three county service area. This is due to the unwritten, but understood, agreement between community colleges within the NCCCS to not advertise within another institution's service area. The study sought participants enrolled in a course taught on main campus in Lenoir County; however, students who participate in the surveys may live outside of the service area. Another delimitation involves the narrowness of the focus of practice, as I did not directly examine the academic barriers to student success. The focus was on nonacademic barriers, specifically socioeconomic challenges, and the influence on academic progress. The method for collecting data was student surveys and semi-structured individual interviews inquiring about external challenges impacting enrollment and academic

success. The surveys/interviews did not ask questions that prompt certain students to respond effectively if they do not directly impact them personally.

Limitations are anticipated issues that may cause weaknesses and are beyond the control of the study. The anticipated limitations in this study could include students without access to high speed internet and difficulty with online instruction. Students may not have felt comfortable using a computer or participating in an online survey or virtual interview. Lack of funding or resources would also serve as limitations for the study. In addition, potentially not having the ability to access students to complete the survey/interview could have been detrimental to the study. Other limitations included buy-in from administration. Constraints also exist from internal and administrative structures all the way up to the North Carolina Community College System that shapes the way community colleges function, as well as the overall structure of the institution. My position as an administrator did not lead to limitations with accessing student data and influencing their education.

I attempted to overcome the limitations and try to prevent them from affecting the study and data by involving my collaborative inquiry partners throughout the study. I ensured participants were aware that students can access free internet anywhere on our campuses. I requested participation from multiple ACA classes to allow for enough data to be collected. Students who struggle with online instruction can be directed to the tutoring lab on campus for assistance with technology issues. Access to students was granted by my collaborative inquiry partners who have advised that, by keeping them informed throughout the study they allowed me to contact students. Informing my collaborative inquiry partners also assisted with their buy-in during the research study. In regard to my position as an administrator at the institution, I ensured the research study was free from the influences of my own biases and presuppositions.

Assumptions are what I assume is true and potentially beyond the control of the study. I assumed that participants would answer the questions honestly, although they may not feel comfortable enough to answer every question thoroughly. It was also assumed enough students would participate to provide appropriate data to analyze. I planned to visit each ACA class and introduce myself and the purpose of the study and request their participation. I wanted to explain the importance of the study and what the study is attempting to accomplish. This could have potentially increased participation and built trust with students. In addition, it was assumed the participants would be representative of the overall community experience at the institution. There were students that did not share the same experiences as their peers. I assumed all of these assumptions were true due to my personal experiences with students and my experience as a student.

As the scholarly practitioner, I needed to assure participants that their responses remained confidential throughout the study and ensured confidentiality of the overall study and results. I provided participants with details on maintaining confidentiality so they can answer the questions honestly. Participants were also assured that participation was voluntary and could be terminated at any time with no obligation to the student. I also worked with administration to ensure that I had access to the appropriate population for the study and administration provided backing.

Role of the Scholarly Practitioner

As the scholarly practitioner, I conducted the study and implemented the intervention. My involvement had an effect on the study as I could have the ability to influence the buy-in from administration, faculty, and staff. Typically, I do not work directly with enrolled students; therefore, my position would not influence their decision to participate in the study. I became

interested in researching this topic when the institution was showing declining retention numbers. Experience and background in the community college has also led to this research, as I wanted to conduct this research as a community college administrator and I am interested in learning more about these programs. I also enlisted the assistance of the Director of Innovation and Effectiveness in regards to asking relevant and contextual questions. His experience with the program and its implementation added value to the survey.

Program evaluation is important to administration to ensure that the institution continues to provide quality education to students. Program evaluation is applicable to both curriculum and continuing education/workforce development courses. Program chairs, coordinators, and directors should all take a vested interest in student and instructor feedback. The success of the student should be the focus of the institution, as well as how students are assisted in building a foundation to continue their education.

When I first began working at Lenoir Community College, I was hired as the Workforce Development Coordinator. Throughout my time in Continuing Education, I worked with students of various socioeconomic backgrounds. I assisted students with program and career exploration as well as credentialing. I worked with students on building résumés, finding employment, and overcoming challenges to their education. It was within this role that I found an interest in addressing student barriers to ensure successful academic outcomes. I enjoyed communicating with students on a personal level and connecting them to available resources.

In this role, I oversaw 15 unique programs and 32 part-time instructors. The programs included automotive, taxidermy, and other industry-related training. Students interested in gaining additional certification and education would enroll in these courses. These programs were subject to evaluations each semester. Any courses over 12 hours were supposed to be

evaluated by registered students. Courses over 12 hours also required class visitations by the coordinator or director of the program. Administration required copies of the evaluations and class visitations. Class visitations were a great opportunity for the coordinator/director to meet with students and instructors regarding the positive and negative information provided by the class. A majority of the position revolved around program evaluation and the feedback of faculty and staff. This helped us determine how we could improve either within the current semester or the next. I have also taught a few curriculum business classes as an adjunct instructor and I believe it is important to take into account feedback from students. In the past, instructors have been let go due to the overwhelming amount of complaints and negative evaluations. It could be beneficial to listen to student opinions from their viewpoint.

The purpose of this intended mixed-methods, action research study was to identify socioeconomic barriers to student success and explore a strategy to design and implement an intervention to help students overcome their socioeconomic barriers. I have an interest in how we can help build student retention through program evaluation. Student opinions should be respected, evaluated, and implemented if applicable. Caution should be used when there is an outlier negative response. There may be other reasoning behind a disgruntled student response. I also believe that open communication was beneficial in conversation between faculty, staff, and students. Administrators need to welcome current student feedback in regards to how it could help future students.

Summary

In conclusion, this study sought to add value to student support services at Lenoir Community College. The findings from the post-survey were used to adapt or add to the intervention strategy to assist students in successfully completing their programs of study. It was

the goal as a scholarly practitioner to use the findings of the survey and interview responses to connect to the focus of practice, identifying socioeconomic barriers to student success and exploring a strategy to implement an intervention to help students overcome their socioeconomic barriers. The surveys/interviews also provided data to add to the college's theme for the 2017 – 2022 Strategic Plan: "Reimagining the Student Experience." It is important that I as the scholarly practitioner collect information that is meaningful to stakeholders (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). In addition, the findings assisted in meeting the three goals of the strategic plan, Goal 1: ENGAGE – Engaging students, each other, and community partners, Goal 2: INVEST – Investing in students, employees, and facilities, and Goal 3: ACHIEVE - Creating a quality student experience. Once data was collected, analyzed, and coded, I wanted to have the ability to protect, promote, and enhance these programs for the betterment of the institution and collaborative inquiry partners. In Chapter 4, I will review results and findings from the study and how they relate to the three research questions.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative, action research study was to identify socioeconomic barriers to student success and create and implement an intervention based on students' suggestions to help overcome their socioeconomic barriers. As previously stated in Chapter 2, the National Center for Education Statistics reports 60% of full-time students who began in the fall of 2018 at Lenoir Community College returned in the fall of 2019 and only 51% of part-time students who began in 2018 returned in the following fall (College Navigator, 2019). It was proposed in literature that students suffer from a lack of information about how to successfully navigate college and their classes (Bailey et al., 2011). By conducting this research, I hope to learn how students are impacted in the classroom due to outside factors and what services the college offers that could help address those issues. These factors may include employment, family matters, transportation, child care, or financial problems.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the participants and their demographics, qualitative data collection, and data analysis including themes that were identified following data analysis. The following inquiry questions guided the research in service to the purpose of the study:

1. What are the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College?
2. What intervention(s) can be implemented to assist students with overcoming socioeconomic barriers?
3. What are the effects of an intervention selected to address the challenge to help students overcome their barriers?

The study was originally designed to use a mixed-methods, action research design to help create and implement an intervention to initiate change for students enrolled in a first-year transfer class. As a result of the low number of participants I was unable to appropriately analyze any quantitative information and did not find anything significant in regard to statistical outcomes. Qualitative data was collected through pre-surveys and semi-structured interviews with participants. These data collection methods offered students the opportunity to discuss their personal experiences in and outside of the classroom. Chapter 4 includes descriptions of the participants, the data collection and analysis process and themes identified in the study.

Coronavirus Pandemic

In late 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced to the public the findings of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19); it is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus (World Health Organization, 2020). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) then in February 2020 made wearing cloth masks mandatory in addition to staying at least 6 feet apart, especially if indoors around people who did not live with each other. Face coverings were then required on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and train stations (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

In early March 2020, North Carolina State Governor Roy Cooper declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic (NC Governor Roy Cooper, 2020). This announcement was based on recommendations and guidance from the CDC and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). By the end of the month, Governor Cooper issued Executive Order 121, a statewide stay at home order. The order directed people to stay at home except for essential business, to exercise outdoors or to help a family

member. Specifically, the order banned gatherings of more than 10 people and directed everyone to physically stay at least 6 feet apart from others (State of North Carolina Government, 2021).

In response to the state of emergency for North Carolina and the country as a whole, Lenoir Community College closed all campuses beginning Monday, March 16. During this period, all college activities and classes were cancelled. The College administration prepared to maintain essential internal college functions during that period (Lenoir Community College, 2020g). Faculty and staff slowly began to return to campus throughout the summer of 2020. In the fall of 2020 LCC offered a variety of course options from which students could choose such as online, hybrid, in-person, and synchronous classes (Lenoir Community College, 2020g). The synchronous model was unique in regards to students having the ability to participate face-to-face or online via webcam and still be counted as present. However, normal operations were still disrupted, and the majority of students remained off campus and decided to stay at home and participate in class online. Faculty and staff physical interactions with students continued to be minimal into spring 2021. This study was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as it was originally presented, and created challenges in the proposed procedures and data collection. Due to COVID-19 I was unable to visit the ACA 111 classroom because the course had to be moved to an online format and was not meeting on a regular class schedule. I believe this impacted my ability to recruit additional students to participate in my study.

Pilot Study

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Phase I assisted in an effort to answer the first research question “What are the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College?”. A pilot study was conducted in an effort to gather initial data and confirm the need for further study related to socioeconomic barriers experienced by students at LCC.

Participants in this phase were selected via convenience sampling, which included student workers at Lenoir Community College who were also enrolled in an ACA 111 course. The pilot study utilized a participant information survey and the research survey. The pilot study involved surveying four student workers at Lenoir Community College. They represented different genders, race, social background, and academic progress.

The research collected through the pilot study shows students are experiencing socioeconomic barriers that influence their success. Based on the data collected, it was determined that additional research was necessary on how to better connect students to the vast amount of on-and off-campus resources. The context of the study shows the importance that Lenoir Community College can have on a student and their academic progress. The last two focus of practice research questions led to a better explanation of this problem of practice.

Description of Participants

Student participants for this research study were selected based upon their enrollment in the ACA 111 College Student Success course. Each student was assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality. The individual demographics of the participants in the semi-structured interviews are displayed in Table 8. The interest form for students to complete if they were interested in participating was added in the ACA 111 Moodle course shell and I sent an email to the students. The ACA Coordinator then sent me a list of students who agreed to participate and were comfortable with me contacting them.

I then sent an email to those students introducing myself and my research, and the email included the Informed Consent to Participate Form (Appendix B) along with a requested date by which to respond. In an effort to meet students at different touch-points, I called each student,

Table 8

Participant Demographics

Participant	Race	Gender	Academic Program
Nancy	Black	Female	Business Administration, AAS
Zeke	White	Male	Career Pilot Manned, AAS
Caroline	White	Female	Business Administration, AAS
Kristal	White	Female	Sustainable Agriculture, AAS

Note. Participants are students enrolled in ACA 111 at Lenoir Community College.

sent them three follow-up emails, and a text message using Aviso asking them to participate in the study once they sent their completed consent form back to me.

I emailed them a link to the pre-survey for them to complete by a certain date. After a student completed the pre-survey, I called and emailed them to request their participation in a semi-structured interview. If a student agreed to participate in the interview, I would ask them their preference on conducting the interview either virtually or in a face-to-face meeting. Depending on their response, I set up a webex virtual meeting and sent a calendar invite to their campus student email.

The day of the interview I sent a reminder email about our scheduled meeting. At the beginning of each interview. I welcomed the student participant and introduced myself and my study. I informed them of why they were being asked to participate and ensured them that their answers were confidential such that their name would not be released. They were informed that their participation in the interview would not impact their grade in the course. They were also made aware that they had the right to stop the interview at any time and if they did not feel comfortable answering the questions they did not have to answer. In addition, the participants were informed that the sessions would be recorded for transcribing and note taking purposes. Lastly, it was made clear that there were no consequences if they did not complete the interview. I wanted to make sure that the participant felt comfortable and informed as they began the process, as none of the students had ever participated in a research study. Near the end of the interview I let the participants know the recording was being stopped and proceeded to inform them of my next steps as a researcher, including that I may be reaching out to them to participate in a post-survey. In closing, I asked the participants if they had any questions for me about their interview or my study.

Participant Demographics

Participant demographics for qualitative data collection are reviewed in the following sections. Student backgrounds, socioeconomic barriers, motivators, and challenges will be examined. College resources that have been utilized will also be discussed in relation to the impact they may have had on a student's academic progress.

Participants in Qualitative Data Collection Phase

The spring 2021 ACA 111 course at LCC had 23 enrolled students, and all were offered the opportunity to earn extra credit by participating in the research study. Nineteen students agreed to participate and were emailed an Informed Consent to Participate form (see Appendix B). Five students returned their form and completed the pre-survey in Qualtrics (see Appendix C).

The participants in the qualitative data collection phase include four ACA 111 students at Lenoir Community College. Out of the 19 participants who initially completed the pre-survey, only four agreed to participate in the semi-structured interview phase of the study. Low participation may have been a result of students taking online classes due in part to COVID-19. Other factors such as lack of interest in the research subject and students' availability may have also contributed to a lack of participation. All four students were between the ages of 18-24, so they were able to provide consent to participate in the study. Three students participated in a webex virtual interview; one student came in person to interview.

The names of the participants have been changed to pseudonyms selected at random and do not provide information that would allow for the identities of the participants to be determined. The participants were all traditional students (aged 18+) and enrolled in degree programs. The students interviewed included three females and one male as previously shown in

Table 8. They each noted in their pre-survey that their overall educational experience at LCC had been mostly positive and three of the four students shared that they did not intend to transfer to a four-year school or university.

Nancy

Nancy, a black female, was seeking a Business Administration, Associate in Applied Science degree. Nancy is interested in graphic design and photography and hopes to open her own business one day. She was interested in taking business law but LCC did not offer that program. Business Administration was the next best fit for her and her educational goals. She is considering continuing her education by enrolling in Graphic Arts at Lenoir Community College after she graduates with her Business Administration degree so she could create graphics and marketing materials herself for her future business. Nancy took LCC classes in high school. In response to being asked if that experience helped her in continuing her education she said:

Yes, because it gave me the experience of LCC but not having to be on campus, but it was just like something that got me used to the courses in the college itself. So when I graduated from high school, I already knew what to expect when I get to LCC.

Zeke

Zeke, a white male, was seeking a Career Pilot Manned, Associate in Applied Science degree. Originally from Kinston, North Carolina, Zeke moved to Tennessee with his parents after graduating from high school. When asked why he chose Lenoir Community College after moving so far away, he said “The aviation program is completely online and the colleges around me do not have a flight school. I could stay at my house and complete flight school here while I work during the day.” He also stated that being online allows him to earn money while in school and he can complete course work on his own schedule. His advisor at LCC is aware he lives out

of state and Zeke does not mind paying out of state tuition because he is familiar with the college and its successful program outcomes.

Caroline

Caroline, a white female, was seeking a Business Administration, Associate in Applied Science degree. Caroline recently earned her GED and wanted to continue her education at Lenoir Community College by earning a degree. When asked why she wanted to continue her education she said, “Mainly because you can't find job without having something other than a GED. I'm sure there are jobs available like mine now that are mainly physical labor and you have to be very strong.” Caroline was the only participant who was a current WIOA Participant in the youth program, as well as the only participant who earned her GED before seeking a two-year degree. As previously stated in Chapter 1, Workforce Innovations Opportunity Act was established to assist adults and dislocated workers in retraining and obtaining employment; WIOA offers a mix of employment, training, and job placement services. WIOA helped Caroline find employment and is currently paying for her to earn her degree at LCC. In regard to the support her WIOA Advisor shows her she said, “My advisor is very helpful. She always tends to show understanding because she's been through this. She understands where I'm coming from in a lot of ways and she has good advice.”

Kristal

Kristal, a white female, was seeking a Sustainable Agriculture, Associate in Applied Science degree. Kristal is using her father's GI Bill to attend LCC and says that she treats it as a full-time job. Her father never went to college and wanted her to use his military benefits to continue her education. Her family has a small farm and has invested in livestock and she wants to work on the farm after graduation. In reference to her education, her main challenge is

technology. She struggles with PowerPoint and Excel programs. She made a point to add “I haven't done one [PowerPoint] since middle school. And throughout high school, I was on computer, like I'm not dumb with technology, but just the simple things like PowerPoint just goes over my head.” Kristal also noted that she recently found out she was expecting a baby and was due in the fall semester. She plans to take the semester off and return the following spring semester. She has full intentions of returning to complete the degree.

Summary of Participant Demographics

Each of the participants brings a different perspective to the study based on their different socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. They share the common goal of seeking higher education to find employment in their respective academic programs and want to push themselves to reach their goals. They also have the shared experience of being enrolled in the ACA 111 course which offers them the opportunity to learn about the college culture, campus, and resources. Each student used at least one of the available college resources. The presence of outside factors that could influence their education was concerning to them, such as running a family farm and finding out a baby is on the way, or living so far away from campus and participating only online. As of right now, it does not appear that these factors have impacted the participants' education negatively. Participants' use of college resources will be examined further in the Results section of Chapter 4.

Data Collection

At the beginning of the participant recruitment stage, I contacted the Dean of Arts and Sciences to ask if I could correspond with the ACA Coordinator about asking students to participate in the research study. He agreed and offered to allow extra credit to students who participated as an incentive. I moved forward with reaching out to the ACA Coordinator and

ACA 111 instructor to ask for permission to email students to request their participation in the study. Both the instructor and coordinator agreed and liked the idea of offering extra credit to students. The ACA Coordinator suggested she create an interest form to allow for efficiency in the process (see Figure 4).

Timeline of Study

Data was collected and analyzed after all of the surveys and interviews were completed. On March 1, 2021 the initial pre-survey request was emailed. An Aviso text message was sent out on March 5, 2021 and a personal phone call was made on March 25, 2021. Interviews were held between March 25-31, 2021. The results from the surveys and interviews were shared with collaborative inquiry partners on April 15, 2021. In that same meeting the creation of an intervention was discussed. The implementation of the intervention was slated for August 1, 2021.

Qualitative data collection occurred in March 2021. A pre-survey was emailed to students at the beginning of the month. Once the survey was completed, the same students were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews. These data collection methods and their processes will be discussed in more detail in the next two sections.

Pre-Survey - Qualitative Data Collection

In the beginning of the research study in early February 2021, I contacted the ACA 111 instructor to ask for permission to contact her students about participating in the study. She agreed and allowed students to earn extra credit for their participation. As stated previously in Chapter 4, I asked for assistance from the ACA Coordinator in an effort to recruit more students for the study. Her role was to be the initial point of contact with the students due to her regular involvement with that student demographic. She sent an email with a link to students enrolled in

ACA 111 Survey Participation (Extra Credit)

As an extra credit opportunity, we are offering the chance to participate in a series of surveys that will be used for research purposes. If you would like to participate, please complete the following form and someone will reach out to you via your LCC email with further instructions.

*** Required**

First and Last Name *

Your answer

LCC Email *

Your answer

Contact Phone Number *

Your answer

I agree to participate in the ACA-111 survey. *

Yes

Program of Study (Major)

Your answer

Submit

Figure 4. ACA 111 Survey Participation (Extra Credit).

the spring 2021 ACA 111 courses (see Figure 4). In an effort to keep me informed, the Coordinator sent me a follow-up email advising that she had contacted the students and placed the survey in next week's ACA-111 course content asking students to participate. She mentioned that students had been offered ten points extra credit added to their final project if they participated fully.

The following week, the ACA Coordinator sent me a list of 19 students who agreed to be contacted to participate in the study. I then emailed those 19 students on March 1, 2021; the body of the email included a brief introduction of myself as well as the purpose of the study (see Appendix K). The introductory email also included a PDF Informed Consent to Participate in Research Form (see Appendix B) for students to return by a requested date.

I wanted to be able to collect as much relevant data as possible for analysis; therefore in an effort to increase responses I sent two follow-up emails, one on March 3, 2021 and another on March 5, 2021 informing students they still had time to participate in the survey. An Aviso text message was also sent that same week (see Figure 5).

Once I received a consent form from students, I sent them a link to the Participant Information Pre-Survey (see Appendix C) in Qualtrics. The survey included 24 multiple-choice and short answer questions. The questions were intended to collect demographic information on the participant. It also gathered information about student status, gender, race, program information, transfer intents and employment. The survey also included open- and closed-ended questions to collect qualitative data.

The Participant Information Pre-Survey was part of the action research design method selected for the study to help identify the commonality of lived experiences of students enrolled in a first-year transfer class. The pre-survey was emailed to students who completed the

Message From LCC Aviso Via Aviso



LCC Aviso

1:23 PM

This message is intended for Santa Pabon. If you wish to no longer receive text messages from LCC Aviso, reply with STOP.

+ Add Note



LCC Aviso

1:23 PM

Santa Pabon You still have time to participate in a short survey for extra credit in your ACA class. Check your Lancermail for more information. Dusk Stroud

+ Add Note

Note. Student name has been changed to pseudonym due to privacy.

Figure 5. ACA 111 AVISO Text Message.

necessary requirements (see Appendix L). The goal of the survey was to find out how Lenoir Community College is supporting student success in degree programming.

In addition to the emails and text messages that I sent to students, I called their phone numbers listed on the Excel sheet provided by the ACA Coordinator. Four students told me they were still interested and to email them the consent form again. I left voicemail messages with six students; these students responded they were no longer interested in participating in the study. There was one student that was sent the survey but did not complete it, and another student completed the survey but chose not to interview. In total, there were five out of 19 students who completed the survey, and out of the five, four agreed to interview with me. I was diligent with reaching out to students via multiple methods. I was cautious to not bother students with too much communication. I understood that students do not check their email or phones every day; however, it was crucial to use different communication methods to assist in gathering participants.

Semi-Structured Interviews – Qualitative Data Collection

Upon receiving a completed Participant Information Pre-Survey from students, I sent them an email requesting their participation in an interview and provided the following dates as options: March 24, 2021; March 25, 2021; March 26, 2021 (see Appendix M). The Semi-Structured Individual Interview included seven questions that were developed based on the pilot study and pre-survey (see Appendix D). The interviews were conducted through virtual meetings or face-to-face interaction depending on the participant's preference. Each interview was recorded and transcribed by Otter.ai, an online application that helps transcribe and record information from voice conversations that makes the data collected easily accessible and understandable. The Otter.ai application uses artificial intelligence (AI) to create sharable and

searchable notes that combine audio, transcription, speaker identification, and key phrases (Otter.ai, 2021). The goal of the interview was to collect each student's perspective and "story" regarding barriers they were experiencing and how that impacts their education. Participants had the ability to elaborate on their responses and relevant follow up questions were asked as necessary. The purpose of the semi-structured individual interview was to gather a deeper insight into the participant's personal challenges and motivators that impacted their education.

In addition to emailing participants about the interview, I called their cellphone number listed on the provided contact sheet. I provided the same information that was included in the email. Once a student agreed to interview, a date and time, along with the type of interview (virtual or face-to-face) was determined. I made sure participants understood that they were able to select the type of interview that made them most comfortable or was most convenient. When the date, time, and structure were scheduled, I sent the participants an email containing the meeting information (see Appendix N). The email to participants included the date and time of the interview, the type of interview structure, the login details for the virtual interview, if applicable, and contact information if there were any questions prior to the interview.

Based on the availability of the participants, the interviews took place over a two-week period. Each interview lasted no more than 30 minutes and the lengthier interviews were a result of participant interest level, length of responses to questions and follow-up questions asked to ensure clarity. During the interviews, participants appeared to be at ease and comfortable with the questions and providing responses. Each was asked for permission to record the interview and all agreed to the interview being recorded. I advised that transcripts would be made from the recordings and that their responses would be confidential. I also attempted to ensure participants that the interview could be considered a safe space and encouraged them to talk openly.

Nancy

Nancy was the first participant interviewed and it was conducted virtually via webex on March 29, 2021 at 9:48 a.m. She had previously indicated that she worked full time and was taking all online courses during the semester. She requested to complete the interview virtually, as she was unable to come in person for a face-to-face meeting. Nancy was late logging on for the interview, so I sent a reminder email with the login details and asked her to respond if she was unable to attend at that time so we could reschedule. The interview was recorded using webex and lasted 28 minutes and 28 seconds. The transcription was made using Otter.ai and was 12 pages in length.

Zeke

The interview with Zeke was set up to be conducted virtually via webex on March 31, 2021 at 9:49 a.m. The participant was able to connect using his cell phone. As previously mentioned, Zeke lived out of state and was unable to attend an in-person meeting. The interview was recorded using webex and it took 24 minutes and 41 seconds to complete. The transcription was made using Otter.ai and was 12 pages in length.

Caroline

The interview with Caroline was conducted virtually via webex on March 25, 2021 at 9:58 a.m. This participant displayed particular interest in the study and gave elaborate detailed responses to the survey questions. They were interested in giving as much feedback as possible so the information collected could be used ultimately to assist other students. The interview was recorded using webex and it lasted 29 minutes and 36 seconds. The transcription was made using Otter.ai and was 13 pages in length.

Kristal

The interview with Kristal was conducted in person in my office on March 25, 2021 at 1:41 p.m. with the door closed as to avoid disruptions or distractions and allow for the participant to feel comfortable responding. The office is located in the Admissions Department in the Administration Building on the main LCC campus in Kinston, North Carolina. The interview was recorded using Otter.ai and it took 23 minutes and 15 seconds to complete. Although this interview was conducted in-person, it was the shortest of the four interviews. The transcription was made using Otter.ai and was nine pages in length.

At the conclusion of the interview with each participant, I thanked them for participating and informed them the recording would be stopped. After the recording ended, I made them aware of the next steps in the study. The next steps consisted of transcribing and analyzing data, and then determining an intervention strategy based on the data and overall student response. I advised them that once the intervention strategy was implemented I would reach out to them about participating in a possible post-survey. Each participant was encouraged to contact me with any questions about the research study or their participation and ensured that they had accurate contact information.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed by reviewing participant responses in the pre-survey and semi-structured interviews. Motivators and barriers were specifically analyzed to determine a pattern across responses. This assisted in building codes and themes in regard to the research study. In addition, the responses from certain questions in the survey and interview were used to answer the three research questions.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data collected from the pre-survey was exported from Qualtrics into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Five students participated in the pre-survey, which consisted of two parts and 24 questions. The survey collected demographic information for each student. It also gathered information about student status, gender, race, program information, transfer intents and employment. The survey also included open- and closed-ended questions to collect richer data related to barriers that may be experienced by the participants. Data was broken into categories: student status, gender, race, academic program, transfer intents, and employment (see Table 8). Question 4 on the survey collected initial information about personal barriers: “What barriers outside of the classroom impact your education?” Participants were provided with the following options to answer this question: food insecurity, housing, transportation, technology competency or other. This question was aimed towards collecting data about socioeconomic barriers and to determine if students were impacted by a lack of resources. With low participation in the pre-survey, it is difficult to get an accurate response that is reflective of the overall student body at the institution. Chapter 2 highlighted significant research in regard to barriers most students face in their first year and they included food insecurity, housing, transportation and technology competency. Participants in the research study only acknowledged experiencing housing and technology issues, which correlated with the barriers identified in the literature, as well as a specific barrier that was not covered previously, WIFI signal (see Figure 6).

WIFI signal does not necessarily fall under technology competency due to it being a lack of a specific resource. Due to COVID-19, lack of internet has grown as an educational barrier to completing assignments outside of the classroom setting. Students that are no longer attending on campus may be less apt to come on campus to utilize the on-campus free WIFI.

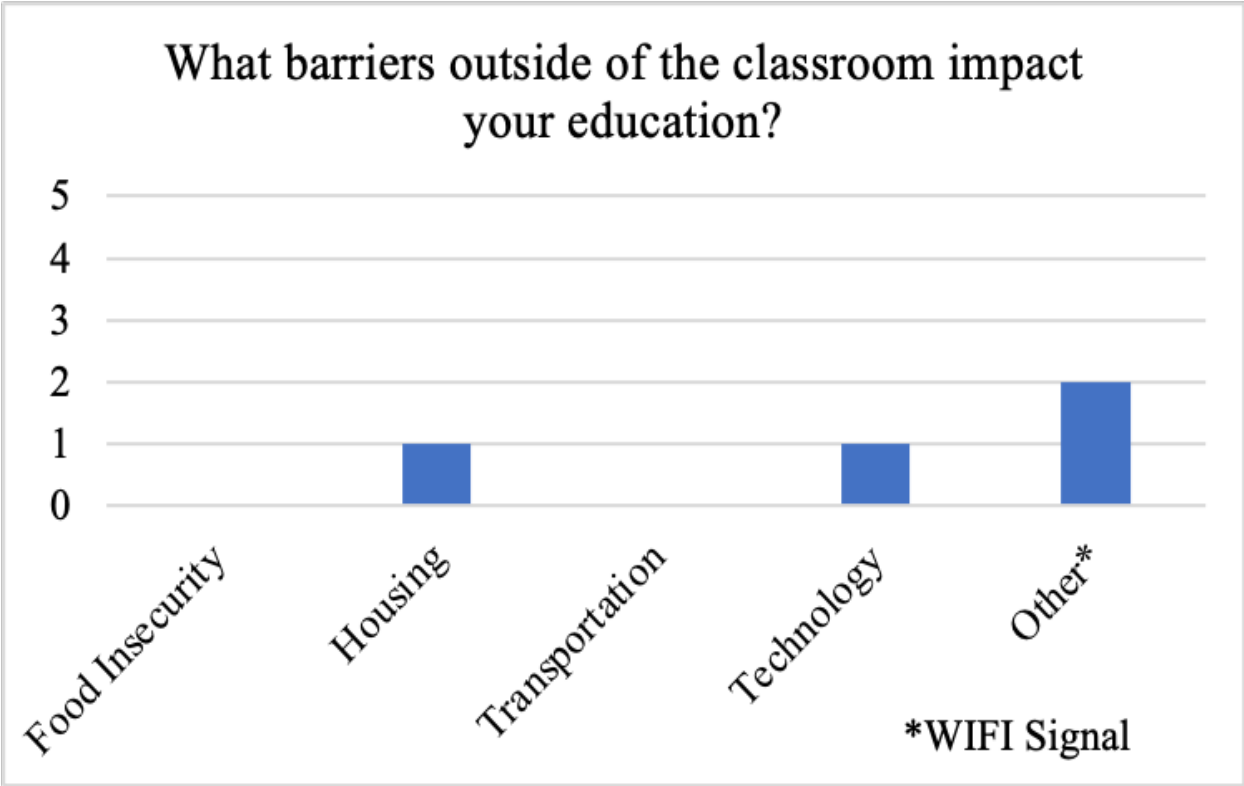


Figure 6. Pre-Survey Part 2 Question 4 Participant Responses.

On question 8, 100% of participants responded unanimously that their overall experience at the college has been positive. Questions 10 through 15 on the survey sought to collect more specific information regarding the participants' socioeconomic backgrounds. The questions requested a "yes" or "no" response, and provided space for participants to elaborate on their answers. Overall the responses to these questions were positive and led to a deeper understanding of the students' life outside of the classroom (see Figure 7). The questions focused specifically on housing, sleep health, food security, safety, mental health, and reliable transportation. Participants shared they were receiving adequate housing, food, and sleep.

Question 10 asked participants, "Do you have a consistent roof over your head? What other family/ nonfamily members do you live with? Is there enough space where you live for everyone?" Three of the participants answered that they lived with their parents and siblings. One student lived by themselves and the fifth lived with her husband and stated she was expecting their first child. All five respondents had consistent housing and had plenty of room for everyone. Next, question 11 asked, "About how many hours of sleep do you get every day?" Participants were given the following options from which to choose regarding their personal sleep schedules: 1-2 hours, 4-6 hours, and 8-12 hours. Three participants responded that they receive 4-6 hours of sleep. The other two participants answered 8-12 hours of sleep. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends between 7-9 hours of sleep per night for adults 18-60 years old (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). This means that three of the participants are not receiving adequate sleep each night. This could potentially be due to working full-time and having family responsibilities while sharing a living space.

Question 12 asked, "About how many times a day do you eat? Is there enough food in your house for you and your family? Do you need assistance getting food?" The responses all

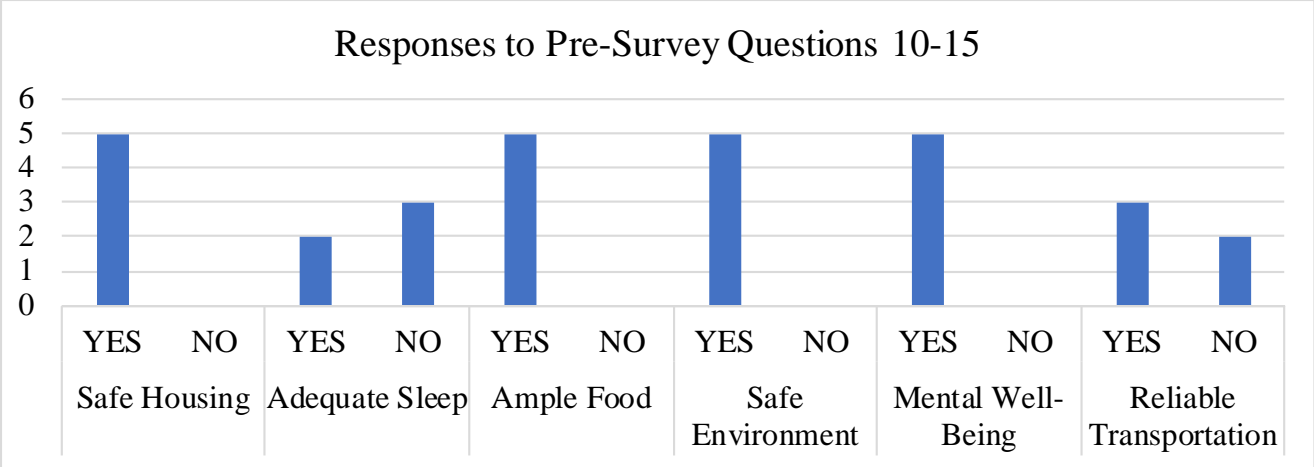


Figure 7. Pre-Survey Part 2 Questions 10-15 Participant Responses.

indicated adequate food and nutrition. No one asked for assistance or for more information about obtaining food.

Question 13 asked, “Do you feel physically safe at home? School? Work? If not, what makes you feel unsafe?” Each participant responded with feelings of safety and comfort in and outside of the classroom. I assume that this was positive and honest feedback from the students, they may have felt uncomfortable to answer in a way that reflected negatively on their situations.

Following up from the previous question, question 14 asked, “Do you feel mentally/psychologically safe at home? School? Work? If not, what makes you feel unsafe?” Again, unanimously the responses were positive with feeling mentally and psychologically safe in their classrooms and outside of the college setting. No one responded with needing services from the ADA Advisor on campus to assist them with their mental well-being.

Lastly, question 15 asked, “How do you get to school? Is your transportation reliable? What would happen if your transportation didn’t work?” The responses were positive but led to a deeper insight related to the lengths students went through to get to school. While all of their transportation was reliable, two participants relied on family members to drop them off and pick them up from school. The remaining three students owned their own vehicle and could drive themselves to the college. The students who were unable to drive themselves to school were taking all online classes due to COVID-19 and did not have to worry about seeking assistance with transportation. They stated online courses helped alleviate the stresses of finding a ride every day.

Questions 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 in Part 2 of the Participant Information Pre-Survey assisted in answering the second research question, What intervention(s) can be implemented to assist students with overcoming socioeconomic barriers? In an effort to answer research question 2,

first I wanted to determine what participants would self-disclose as problem areas in their education. Question 2 asked, “Are there areas in your academic program that you think need improvement?” Participants were able to select more than one item, and each item was selected at least once (see Figure 8).

Part 2 pre-survey questions 3, 5 and 6 asked participants about their overall experience researching and utilizing on-campus resources (see Figure 9). Pre-survey question 3 asked participants, “Are there on-campus services you have researched to help you with previously stated barriers?” Four students answered that they have not used any services on campus to assist them with any previously stated barriers such as GPA, grades and attendance. One participant responded that they had researched an on-campus service, the Online Tutoring Lab. They did not elaborate if they utilized that service.

After providing responses about barriers outside of the classroom in question 4, question 5 asked, “Are there any on or off-campus services you have researched to help you with those factors?” Again, only one student answered that they researched services to assist in overcoming barriers, however, they did not list what that service was in the survey. The rest of the participants answered that they had not researched services.

Next, question 6 asked, “Have you had any interaction with an LCC Student Success coach and if so, how was that experience? Did you feel it helped or hurt your situation?” Three participants answered that they had no interaction with a Student Success Coach. One student responded by answering, “My success coach has checked up on me concerning my English grades. She just kind of reminded me that I need to stay on top of my work.” This was promising that a student had a positive and helpful interaction with the student success coach.

Qualitative data was collected from questions in the pre-survey and interviews conducted

Are there areas in your academic program that you think need improvement?

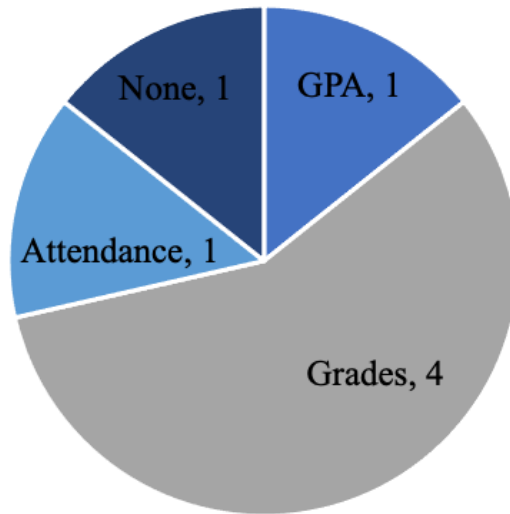


Figure 8. Pre-Survey Part 2 Question 2 Participant Responses.

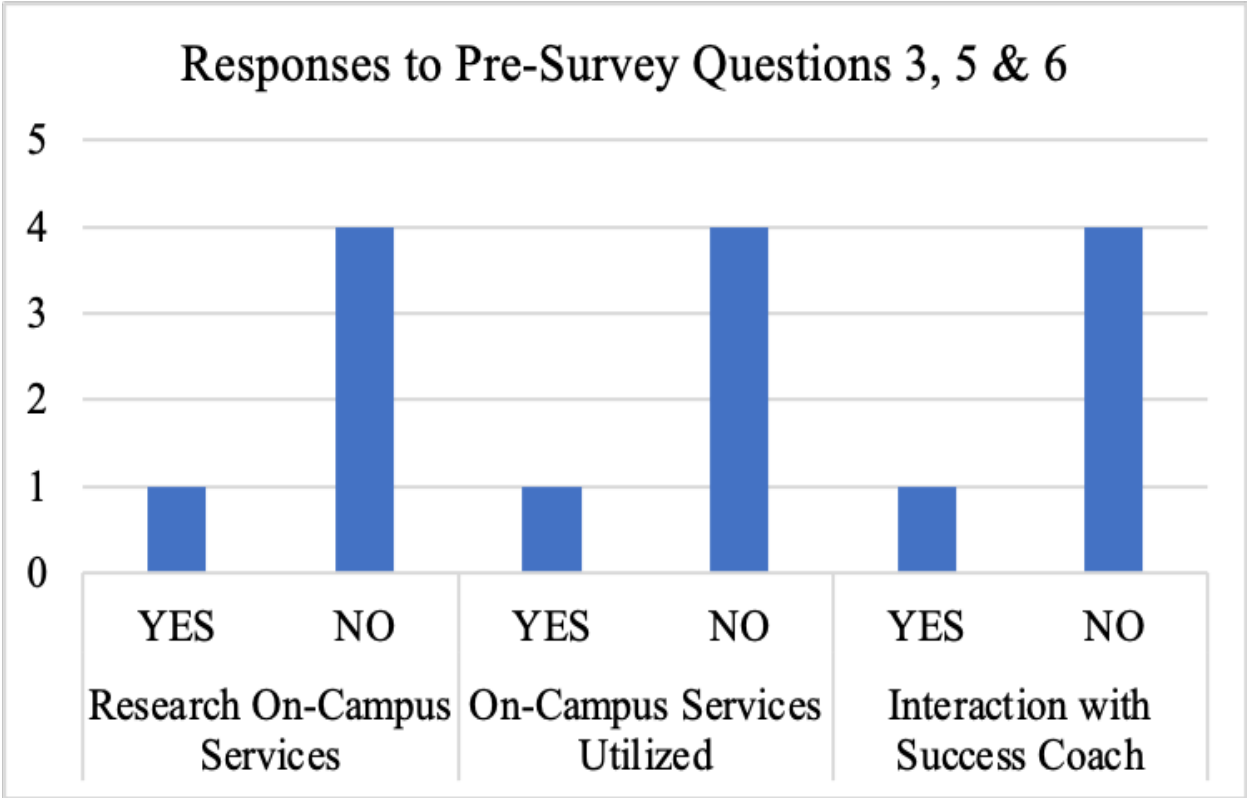


Figure 9. Pre-Survey Part 2 Questions 3, 5 & 6 Participant Responses.

in person and virtually via Cisco webex. Interviews conducted through webex were recorded for accurate note taking. Once all of the interviews were conducted, I downloaded the transcription to a Microsoft word document. Transcriptions were then reviewed for accuracy or misspellings in case Otter.ai misinterpreted words or pronunciations. The recorded webex meetings and Otter.ai transcripts were reviewed when determining themes to help recap the interview.

The respondents answered questions related to their plans after LCC, personal motivators and barriers, use of campus services, suggestions to the college, and personal experiences during their time in their program of study. Student responses were coded to find centralized themes related to barriers and motivators.

Otter.ai (2021) provides a group of summary keywords from each transcription. I used the summary keywords to determine similar codes that could be analyzed to establish relevant themes. Some of the most frequent summary keywords included: resources, transportation, online classes, grades, interaction, advisors, success coach and motivators. These summary keywords were present in each interview. I utilized SaIdaña's text on how to code qualitative research. The text demonstrated how to code using manual coding with pen and paper (Saldaña, 2013). I used manual and inductive coding to determine codes and themes. I read through the data and each line one-by-one and I derived my codes from the data. I labeled and organized the qualitative data identifying the different themes and relationships. Four themes emerged as a result of the codes (see Table 9).

Question 7 was clear in its wording that the college was seeking feedback on how to improve the overall student experience. The question asked, "How could Lenoir Community College better help students meet their educational goals?" One participant gave feedback based on their personal experience; "I think the support I've received has been good enough for me."

Table 9

Qualitative Data Codes and Themes

Code	Theme
Transfer to a University-Low Adding to the Workforce – High Unsure	Primary purpose for attending LCC is workforce preparation
Family Support Friendships Employment Goals G.I. Bill Online Classes Advisors/Instructors	Expected motivators influenced persistence in a positive manner
Transportation to Campus Technology Competency WiFi Signal Work Schedule Lack of Motivation Time Management	Self-identified external barriers influenced drop-out/stop out and academic success
Grades Falling Low GPA Mental health struggling Helpful instructors Friendly Atmosphere Opportunities to learn	Personal positive or negative experiences impact success while enrolled at Lenoir Community College

Another student answered, “Not sure.” Another student was quite frank in their response, “I feel that from my experience that the teachers helping is good enough for me. I don't see much so I don't know if there're ways to help better the way students can meet educational goals.”

In response to two students answering “good enough”, I attempted to probe for a better understanding of the participant's perspective. However, I had difficulty getting students to open-up during the interview and was unable to extend the conversations much beyond the protocol. If I were to conduct additional interviews, I would attempt to collect more information. While this may not have been seemingly helpful to the study, it was honest feedback during the time of COVID-19. Students appeared to have very little face-to-face interaction with faculty and staff on campus and therefore are not as apt to seek out on-campus services. There appeared to be a gap between the students and their engagement. In the last response, a participant suggested, “More flexibility especially for students who work 12 hours or more.” Research shows a majority of community college students work while going to school. The Community College Research Center reports that around 80% of community college students work, with 39% working full-time (Community College Research Center, 2021). This response now guides the study and potential intervention on how to address students who work part-time or full-time while going to school and are enrolled in classes either virtually or face-to-face.

Theme 1: Primary Purpose for Attending Lenoir Community College is Workforce

Preparation

The first theme was primary purpose for attending Lenoir Community College is workforce preparation. This is an important topic of discussion, as an institution needs to be aware of what the student's long term goals are and how they can assist the student in meeting that goal. Participants were asked about their purpose for attending Lenoir Community College;

all participants were currently seeking a two-year degree. Only one student mentioned the possibility of transferring to a four-year university upon graduating from LCC but seemed hesitant. Another student was unsure of what they wanted to do after graduating. The majority of participants had plans to go straight into the workforce and use their degrees to assist them with finding a job in their desired field. When asked why they did not decide to go to a four-year university upon graduating from high school, Nancy responded:

I feel like you can get the same education that you can get at a four-year school. So, it was just like okay, well why spend all of that money, when you can do the same thing, at your local college.

Employment after college was a common response by participants. Additionally, the degree program students were enrolled in was the deciding factor in seeking a job after college.

Kristal disclosed she wanted to be self-employed and when asked about her plans after LCC, she answered:

I'm getting a GI Bill, so it's like I have to do it or not get to use the money. My father was in the military and did not go to college, I am using his benefits to come to school. My older brother finished his first year with the GI Bill, each child just got a year to use, he [my brother] just finished his first year.

While the personal goals after college may have differed from person to person, the consensus of responses were that a two-year degree was needed to meet educational and career goals. Participants felt strongly that their degree program would help them reach their goals if they continued and earned a two-year degree.

Theme 2: Expected Motivators Influenced Persistence in a Positive Manner

The second theme was expected motivators influenced persistence in a positive manner.

Research has shown that motivators are the driving force behind student success. Tinto (1993) writes:

Involvement with one's peers and with the faculty, both inside and outside the classroom, is itself positively related to the quality of student effort and in turn to both learning and persistence. (p. 71)

Family support, friendships, employment goals, online instruction and advisors'/instructors' support were all mentioned throughout the interviews. They emerged as codes and helped shape this particular theme. When listing motivators related to why students wanted to earn their degree, Zeke answered, "I've always wanted to be an airline pilot, and it's pretty hard to find a job without a higher education degree. So, I have this motivation to get my dream job." He continued by stating, "My parents, my siblings and my grandparents, and I think even my great grandma, all went to Lenoir Community College." He added that this was his motivation to enroll at LCC, he wanted to continue the family legacy of attending the same college as them.

Caroline responded, "My advisor is very helpful. She always tends to help because she's been through this. She understands where I'm coming from a lot of ways and she has good advice." She continued by adding, "My interests have been all over the place. Business Administration was actually just something that I know can be used anywhere and in the field will help if I decide to go in a certain path having that to back me up."

Kristal talked about family as her motivator and stated:

My husband's granddaddy decided to spend all his money on cows. Who are in our backyard and my husband he currently doesn't work either, like an actual job, but he's working with the cows. I always wanted to do something with animals. But since we got

the cows they are pretty much our lives now. That's what determined me seeking a sustainable agriculture degree.

Online instruction was important to several participants for a variety of reasons. Nancy explained why virtual education was beneficial for them, "Being online helps me be able to work and go to school at the same time. I do not have to choose between the two I can do both and still make money and earn a degree."

The motivators influencing persistence in degree programs appear to stem from a positive and supportive system that includes college personnel and family. The commonality was a strong family support system and long-term goals.

Theme 3: Self-Identified External Barriers Influenced Drop-Out/Stop Out and Academic Success

The next theme was self-identified external barriers influenced drop-out/stop out and academic success. The issues in and outside of the classroom need to be discussed in order to assess where a student is physically and mentally. Barriers were discussed in the interviews; they included transportation to campus, technology competency, WiFi signal, work schedule, and lack of motivation. When asked about anything that prevents them from doing their best in school, Nancy answered:

I work on a 12 hour shift. So we work from three to whenever, on Friday we work from three to around two-thirty. When I get home, I already like start on my homework, because I already have a lot assignments due as well. I don't really go to sleep, like early mostly kind of late. When I do get home, I just go ahead and try to finish my classwork. I normally start on my classes early, so, when Sunday comes and the assignment is due I don't have no assignments to do. But juggling work and school can be very difficult.

A work/life balance continued to be a common issue with all of the other participants. Caroline mentioned transportation constraints and was asked the same question about what prevents her from doing her best. She responded:

I don't have a license myself yet. So all of my transportation relies on having someone else to be available to take me to school and work. It's hard to make sure my classes don't interfere with my work schedule because I want to earn money to support myself and help my family.

Caroline continued by discussing taking completely online classes:

When one class is not completely online it is probably my favorite because my instructor for that class makes sure everyone understands what they're talking about. I don't do so well with all online classes unlike I do with face-to-face classes.

While the barriers did not make the participants completely stop out or drop out, that is not the case for every student. These students showed persistence in the face of adversity and uncomfortable situations.

Theme 4: Personal Positive or Negative Experiences Impact Success while Enrolled at Lenoir Community College

The last theme was personal positive or negative experiences impact success while enrolled at Lenoir Community College. This theme addresses personal experiences specifically related to Lenoir Community College, and this could assist in an effort to increase certain resources or program offerings in order to meet students where they are in their education and well-being. Several codes were identified based on questions regarding positive or negative experiences during the participant's educational journey. The more negatively-influenced experiences included failing grades, low GPA, and their mental health struggles; while overall

the more positive experiences included helpful instructors, a friendly college atmosphere, and opportunities to learn. Caroline described a scenario when she was enrolled in the GED program at Lenoir Community College:

I was attending a class here to make sure I was ready for the GED. And my [WIOA advisor] popped in one day and she was trying to find out if I qualified for the WIOA Youth program and I did. We spoke and I became one of her students on her case load and she ended up paying for my GED test. She also helped me to pay to get my Career Readiness Certificate. She's been helping me, I think simply paying for my classes each semester takes a large load off of me.

As a follow-up to Caroline's response regarding her experience in the GED program, I asked about the result of the advisor's intervention and if she might have dropped out without that assistance. She responded, "Well, I definitely would not have got my Career Readiness Certificate. But I probably would still got my GED, I might have still gone for a degree program but it would not have been as easy."

When asked about a situation that was difficult while in school and if it impacted him negatively, Zeke answered:

When you are solely online, you don't always get the opportunity to ask questions (to your instructor). I guess that means they're always open to questions like through email, but sometimes I have a little bit of trouble explaining it through email. I then have to wait for response and then another response if we are corresponding back and forth. Then if I need more help I'd have to go back and ask again. So I think that communication works better in an in person class.

Nancy described a scenario that she considered a learning and teaching moment:

I did end up getting a low grade in one of my classes and that's because I missed a test. And honestly, I didn't even know I had one [a test]. I really like to always be on top of it but it was one day I was like super tired from work and didn't notice I had to take a test. It put me at a 75 from a 90 so he kind of dropped my grade a whole lot, but I knew I could catch back up, because I've been on it since and now its back over a 75.

The responses of the participants seem to indicate that just because a student has a negative experience in college does not always mean it will impact them in such a way that they will stop or drop out; however, resources need to be in place for students to access and make that connection. This will lead to a positive experience for the students and it could impact them in a positive manner that would encourage them to persist in their degree program. Overall, the interviews helped gather qualitative data that adds to the study and leads to a better understanding of the student experience.

Results - Phases I and II

This section will review the results from the study in regard to analyzing the three focus of practice research questions. In this section, I will also discuss the results from the data collected and analyzed during phases I and II, as well as provide answers to research questions 1 and 2. The results allowed me to work with collaborative inquiry partners to determine a possible intervention implementation strategy. Following implementation and data collection, the data was analyzed with regard to focus of practice research question 3. The purpose of this action research study was to identify socioeconomic barriers to student success and explore a strategy to implement an intervention to help students overcome those factors. The study was separated into three phases in an effort to answer the focus of practice research questions. Phase I included

conducting a pilot study, Phase II involved a pre-survey and interviews, and Phase III included creating an intervention and implementing it followed by collecting data via a post-survey.

In Phases I and II the surveys allowed for the collection of qualitative information; while the semi-structured interviews collected qualitative data. The analysis of the results led to the creation of an intervention strategy. Each participant received the same survey and materials to provide consistency within the research.

In this study qualitative data was collected to provide deeper insight into the focus of the study. In this particular study, qualitative data was collected using open-ended and close-ended questions in a pre and post-survey. In addition, semi structured interviews were conducted to gather student perspectives in a natural setting.

In order to focus on the goal of the study, the survey and interview were conducted with students at the beginning of the semester to collect initial data regarding barriers that may have existed. The results from the study assisted in answering the focus of practice research questions and led to a better explanation of the problem of practice. In addition, the results led to the creation of an intervention and implementation strategy.

Analysis of Focus of Practice Research Question # 1

In reference to the first focus of practice research question, it was important to identify barriers that may exist outside of the classroom by surveying students on campus through a pilot study. These barriers encompassed employment, technology and lack of transportation. A significant absence of these basic needs could influence student success negatively. Questions in the pre-survey also collected data that was analyzed to answer the first research question.

Focus of Practice research question 1: What are the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College?

As previously stated in Chapter 3 and early in Chapter 4, I conducted the pilot study to collect contextual background information on the problem. I was also attempting to confirm what I believed to be taking place in the campus community. The survey questions focused on known socioeconomic barriers. The information gathered through the pilot study confirmed that this was an actual problem.

Results from the pilot study revealed the following problems that were particularly challenging in participants' current environment: falling behind in course work, low grades, limited free time due to working part-time jobs, meeting with on-campus resources due to having to come in person, and a lack of motivation due to work/life balance. Their motivation is purposeful in trying to set and meet personal goals.

The participants confirmed that in regard to challenges they were facing, the student success coaches offered suggestions on what the students could do better but failed to probe for a deeper understanding of the student's true barriers. These factors exist outside of the classroom and beyond the institution's reach if they continue to be unaware of what is happening. It could be argued that the students themselves do not recognize their own barriers that hinder their success inside of the classroom. These factors may include food insecurity, job security, housing, transportation, childcare, and mental health care.

Analysis of Focus of Practice Research Question # 2

Phase II was designed to determine the intervention strategy that would best fit the needs of Lenoir Community College and its students through surveying and interviewing participants. The intervention was developed based on participant responses and meeting with collaborative inquiry partners.

Focus of Practice research question 2: What intervention(s) can be implemented to assist students with overcoming socioeconomic barriers?

There were multiple intervention strategies suggested based on student responses as well as meeting with collaborative inquiry partners. It was through meeting with collaborative inquiry partners that the specific suggestions were offered and collected. Suggestions included the following: (a) additional information about campus resources inside the Experience LCC information packet that goes out to students for new student orientation; (b) an informational video about campus resources could be created; (c) a stand-alone resource guide encompassing campus resources that would be given to every student upon applying to let them know early on about resources available to them; (d) campus tours scheduled throughout the month for walk-ins; (e) advisors could share information about resources with students, as well as WIOA; and (f) an individualized interest survey that would gather information about barriers and motivators upon applying to the college.

In an effort to answer focus of practice research question 2, in April 2021, I invited my collaborative inquiry partners to a meeting to discuss my results from interviews and surveys of student responses. In addition, the meeting was to assist in determining an intervention strategy based on participant responses and collaborative inquiry partners response. I sent an email inviting them to have an open discussion about my study and results (see Appendix O).

The Senior Vice President of Instruction and Student Services and SACSCOC College Liaison, Dean of Student Services/ Title IX Coordinator, Dean of Arts and Sciences, all four division Student Success Coaches and the Director of Student Success and Equity all from Lenoir Community College attended the meeting. The meeting lasted approximately 40 minutes

and the conversation was robust and helpful in viewing the study from an outside perspective. The session was recorded via webex and transcribed by Otter.ai.

I shared the results with the collaborative inquiry partners to see what they suggested based on what was found. I presented my findings from the pre-survey and semi-structured interviews, as well as the possible intervention strategies suggested by participants. In addition, I incorporated suggestions from the literature about what works at other institutions. The collaborative inquiry partners agreed that all of the suggested intervention strategies could not be conducted but that they had strong and supportive ideas. One intervention strategy gained the most attention based on suggestions from participants and collaborative inquiry partners. The dynamics in the room were positive and welcomed open-discussion. After reviewing suggestions from participants, there were conversations in the room about what intervention would be most helpful and efficient for both time and cost.

The top suggested intervention was a stand-alone resource guide encompassing campus resources. The guide was to be given to every student that applied to the college informing them about resources available to them on campus. The name “Lancer Assistance Guide” or LAG was suggested. I created a brochure with the on-campus print shop and the Lancer Assistance Guide would include campus resources available to all LCC students. The tagline, “Do not “LAG” behind,” was suggested by a student success coach. It would include a frequently asked questions document and it could be sent to incoming students for the fall semester. The brochure would include campus contact information for the applicable resources. It was also suggested that the Lancer Assistance Guide could be emailed through Aviso or the campus student email. The Vice President of Instruction provided me with the opportunity to talk to students about the Lancer Assistance Guide at the summer student orientation, Experience LCC. In addition, the Dean of

Student Services suggested that the Lancer Assistance Guide be sent along with admission letters that are sent via US postal mail to incoming students.

During the meeting, the overall goal of the intervention was discussed. I was asked by a collaborative inquiry partner if the goal of the intervention was awareness or usage. I responded that the goal was awareness that would ultimately lead to use of the on-campus resources. I then took time over the next couple of weeks to review notes from collaborative inquiry partners and responses from research participants to determine what would be the most ideal intervention strategy. I read over notes from the meeting and looked for commonalities in thoughts and ideas that also matched with what students presented in their responses.

Intervention Strategy

When considering an intervention strategy, I utilized information collected in the meeting with collaborative inquiry partners and student responses from the Participant Information Pre-Survey and interviews in the spring semester. Based on suggestions from both groups, the Lancer Assistance Guide was created during the summer semester of 2021. The goal of the Lancer Assistance Guide was to include campus resources on a compact panel card that could be emailed, mailed, and handed out to students. I then began the steps to create the Lancer Assistance Guide. First, I had to consider what resources should be listed on the Lancer Assistance Guide; I considered what campus resources were currently available as well as what the literature in Chapter 2 suggested were some of the biggest socioeconomic barriers facing students. In addition, responses from the participants in the Pilot Study, Participant Information Pre-Survey, and semi-structured interviews helped frame the resources outlined in the draft.

The resources that were listed on the initial draft were Cars for College, Disability Services, Lancer Food Pantry, Tutoring Services, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity

Act (WIOA) / NCWorks Career Center (see Table 10). I then emailed the on-campus Graphic Designer in the Print Shop on July 9, 2021 to help me create a draft of the Lancer Assistance Guide. I explained I was working on a new initiative to implement in the Admissions Office and that I was requesting her assistance with designing the piece.

Once I received the initial draft of the Lancer Assistance Guide, I emailed the Dean of Student Services on July 20, 2021. As my direct supervisor and a collaborative inquiry partner, I felt it was beneficial to have her input early in the process. She would also be able to provide insight regarding campus resources I may have not included. The original plan was to have every student receive a Lancer Assistance Guide in their welcome letter to the college after they applied as a curriculum student in the month of August.

Upon emailing the Dean, we sat down and discussed the intervention strategy. She suggested that mailing the Lancer Assistance Guide to every student might be too cumbersome and demanding because of the number of new students the college receives in August. It was suggested that I email students the Lancer Assistance Guide to reach them in a more efficient and effective way. We also discussed the timing as to when it would be appropriate to send the Lancer Assistance Guide, to ensure the students would get the most use out of the document. It was recommended that we wait to send it out to students. She was impressed with the document and felt it was ready to be shared with the point of contact for each resource.

Next, I emailed each point of contact for the five resources listed on the Lancer Assistance Guide on July 21, 2021. I explained I was working on a new initiative in the Admissions Office. I attached the Lancer Assistance Guide and mentioned that I welcomed and appreciated any feedback that they may have on the intervention strategy as I began implementation. In addition, I reached out to the Director of Marketing, Recruiting and

Table 10

Lancer Assistance Guide Campus Resources

Resources	Description	Website
Cars for College	The Cars for College mission is to help low-income working students become more self-sufficient by assisting them with their vehicle transportation needs. The goal is to assure students have access to a safe, legal, affordable, and dependable vehicle to get to college.	https://www.lenoircc.edu/carsforcollege/
Disability Services	A member of the Student Services counseling staff is also designated as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisor. The ADA Advisor assists students and visitors with reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to services, events, and academic accommodations at the College.	https://www.lenoircc.edu/future/disability/
Lancer Food pantry	A campus-based initiative, the Pantry is open to all members of the campus community (students, staff, and faculty).	https://www.lenoircc.edu/lancerfoodpantry
Tutoring Services	The Tutorial Lab offers free tutoring in most curriculum subjects. Peer tutoring can be accessed face-to-face or virtually. Students can also access NetTutor from their course in Moodle. Students' may ask their instructor to complete a referral form for them.	https://www.lenoircc.edu/programsofstudy/tutoringcenter/
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) / NCWorks Career Center	The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global community.	https://www.lenoircc.edu/workforcedevelopment/wioafunding

Communications for her approval of the document. It is college policy that all printed and electronic communication must be approved by the college marketing department.


I received feedback from each point of contact either through phone, email, or in person. They gave me suggestions on what needed to be changed or updated. For Tutoring Services, we determined that there was incorrect information listed on the college website and it needed to be updated. Therefore, through collecting information for the Lancer Assistance Guide we were able to update necessary information for students on the Lancer Assistance Guide and the college website. After receiving necessary feedback, I contacted my dissertation chair to give updates about the status of my intervention strategy on July 23, 2021. We discussed options and decided how I should move forward with my intervention strategy.

Implementation

The ACA 111 course began on August 23, 2021 with 42 students initially enrolled. After discussing the Lancer Assistance Guide with the Dean of Student Services, it was determined for the sake of time it would be beneficial to email students a copy of the Lancer Assistance Guide. Additionally, sending the Lancer Assistance Guide (see Figure 10) out at the beginning of the semester allowed for students to use it throughout the semester. September 1, 2021 was the beginning of the implementation of the intervention strategy. On September 1, 2021 an Announcement was posted in the ACA 111 course and emailed to students enrolled in the course (see Appendix P). The announcement included an introduction of myself and my research. I attached a copy of the Lancer Assistance Guide for review. I also informed them that I would be sending out a survey via Qualtrics the following week and if they completed the survey they would receive extra credit.

LANCER ASSISTANCE GUIDE

LENOIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE



As a student, challenges may be experienced while enrolled in classes, but data has shown that successful students are those who know when they need assistance and how to take advantage of the resources offered.

The Lancer Assistance Guide is here to inform you of the resources that are available to you as a student at Lenoir Community College!

CARS FOR COLLEGE

The Cars for College mission is to help low-income working students become more self-sufficient by assisting them with their vehicle transportation needs. The goal is to assure students have access to a safe, legal, affordable, and dependable vehicle to get to college.

Debbie Wise, Development Assistant
Administration Building, Room 131
(252) 233-6824 | dcwise02@lenoircc.edu

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) / NCWorks Career Center


The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global community.

Samara Sutton Taft, Director of WIOA
Title I Programs/NCWorks Career Center Manager
Bullock, Room 120
(252) 527-6223, ext. 111 | sltft27@lenoircc.edu

TUTORING SERVICES

The Tutorial Lab offers free tutoring in most curriculum subjects. Peer tutoring can be accessed face-to-face or virtually. Students can also access NetTutor from their course in Moodle. Complete the Tutor Request form via the QR code below, or ask your instructor to complete a referral form for you.


Karen Hill, Tutorial Lab and RISE
Transition Coordinator
Science/LAP Building, Room 121
(252) 527-6223, ext. 972 | kkhill59@lenoircc.edu



LANCER FOOD PANTRY





Lancer Food Pantry is here to help! A campus-based initiative, the Pantry is open to all members of the campus community (students, staff, and faculty).

Jamal McMillion, Minority Male Success Initiative Coordinator
Administration Building, Room 140G
(252) 527-6223, ext. 343 | jlmcmillion66@lenoircc.edu



For more information about any of the programs listed, please contact:

Dusk Stroud,
Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management
Administration, Room 140A
(252) 527-6223, ext. 394 | dostroud89@lenoircc.edu

CONNECT WITH US    

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www.lenoircc.edu

Figure 10. Lancer Assistance Guide.

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Collecting and Analyzing Results

Students enrolled in ACA 111 were allotted one week to complete the Participant Information Post-Survey. This survey was conducted once the intervention had been implemented. The goal of the post-survey was to gauge the effectiveness of the document and the impact it had on the student. The survey included open- and closed-ended questions to collect qualitative data. On September 8, 2021 the Participant Information Post-Survey was posted in the ACA 111 Moodle Shell as an announcement. The intentions of this announcement were to inform the students about the Participant Information Post-Survey and how to successfully participate in the research (see Appendix Q).

The consent form was included in the survey as the first question. Participants had to then respond with their approval to participate and acknowledge they read the consent to participate. As a follow-up and gentle reminder to students, on September 10, 2021 a text was sent using Aviso to the ACA 111 class asking them to complete the survey by September 15, 2021. The text was sent to 36 students enrolled in the course (see Figure 11). Students were given until September 15, 2021 to complete the survey. As of that date, the post-survey had received 10 responses. On the same day, I sent the ACA 111 class an announcement thanking them for their participation and informing them they had received extra credit.

Post-Survey Results

Data was analyzed by reviewing participant responses in the post-survey. The effectiveness of the Lancer Assistance Guide was specifically analyzed to determine a pattern of usefulness across responses. In addition, the responses from certain questions in the survey were used to answer the third focus of practice research question. The Participant Information Post-Survey in Qualtrics received 10 responses from student participants. There were two initial

Message From Dusk Stroud Via Aviso



Dusk Stroud

8:02 AM

Here is the extra credit survey about the LAG: https://ecu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_01F70K79Ywp6NP8 Please complete by September 15. Thanks! -Dusk

+ Add Note

Figure 11. ACA 111 Extra Credit AVISO Text.

statements that provided students an opportunity to consent to participate. All of the participants signed their consent electronically as the first question in the survey. The second question was a short introduction about the researcher and the study; it was required for the students to respond that the statement was read and understood.

Qualitative data collected from the post-survey was exported from Qualtrics into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The survey consisted of 10 questions (see Appendix E). The survey collected feedback from students about the Lancer Assistance Guide and its usefulness to them as currently enrolled students. It also gathered information about barriers and motivators impacting their success in their academic programs. The survey included open- and closed-ended questions to assist in the collection of qualitative data.

Question 1 asked students about their exposure to the intervention strategy, The Lancer Assistance Guide: “You have received an electronic copy of the "Lancer Assistance Guide" an intervention that was implemented this semester at Lenoir Community College. It was implemented based on responses from students who participated in the Participant Information Pre-Survey at the end of last semester. Did you review the Lancer Assistance Guide inserted in your ACA 111 Moodle shell?” Participants answered unanimously that they had received and reviewed the Lancer Assistance Guide.

Questions 2, 3, and 4 of the Participant Information Post-Survey assisted in answering the third focus of practice research question, What are the effects of an intervention selected to address the challenge to help students overcome their barriers? Question 2 asked “Are there areas in your academic program where you could see improvement from using the resources listed on the Lancer Assistance Guide?” The options specifically focused on GPA, grades and attendance, and participants were able to select more than one option. GPA was selected twice, grades were

chosen eight times, and attendance three times. No one selected the “other” option (see Figure 12).

Question 3 asked; “Did you access on- or off-campus services that helped you with those factors?” This question was a follow-up to question 2 in an effort to see what services helped students overcome barriers that may affect GPA, grades and/or attendance. One student answered yes, and seven responded no. The students that responded yes were able to list the service utilized. The services mentioned were the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act and Tutoring.

Question 4 aimed to gather information about personal barriers; “Are you still experiencing barriers outside of the classroom that impact your educational journey?” Two students responded yes, six responded no and two students answered yes along with the barriers they were experiencing. School and social life were mentioned by one student. The other participant answered that work was a barrier to their academic progress. This question sought to gather information about socioeconomic barriers and to determine if students were impacted by a lack of resources.

Question 5 asked, “Are there any on or off-campus services you have researched that have NOT helped you with those barriers?” in an effort to follow-up on responses to Question 4. Participants answered unanimously “no,” that there were no resources that did not help them overcome barriers.

In regard to Lenoir Community Student Success Coaches, Question 6 asked; “Did you have any interaction with an LCC Student Success Coach and if so, how was that experience? Did you feel it helped or hurt your situation?” Seven participants responded with “no.” The remaining three students answered in more detail about their interaction with a Success Coach.

Are there areas in your academic program where you could see improvement from using the resources listed on the Lancer Assistance Guide?

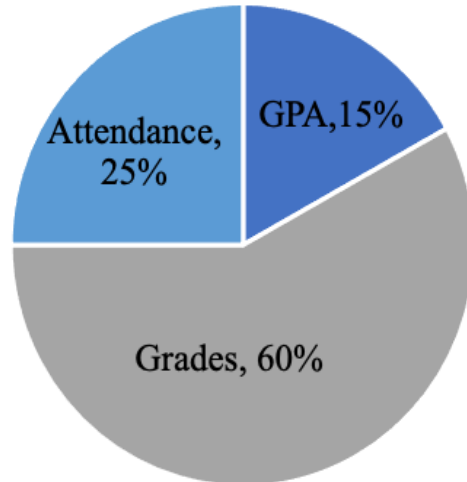


Figure 12. Post-Survey Question 2 Participant Responses.

The first student answered, “I’m going to meet with her tomorrow and I’m hoping it helps me get a better control of everything.” The second student responded, “I haven't had any interaction with an LCC student success coach.” Lastly, the third student wrote, “Yes, she helped me enroll and receive services in the WIOA program and she checks on me weekly.”

On question 7, nine of participants responded unanimously that their overall experience at the college has been somewhat positive. One responded that their experience was neither positive nor negative. The participants were able to provide feedback through question 8, an open-ended question, “What was something in the Lancer Assistance Guide you liked the most? The least?” Responses were overall positive and the Lancer Assistance Guide appeared to be well-received (see Table 11).

Question 9 asked participants, “Was there a barrier that you were experiencing before using the Lancer Assistance Guide that is no longer a problem for you and your education?” Two students responded technology competency. Another two participants answered transportation. The remaining five students selected “other,” and four of those students indicated nothing was an issue. The last of the five participants listed “purchasing books” as an issue before the Lancer Assistance Guide.

Lastly, question 10 asked, “How could Lenoir Community College change/update the Lancer Assistance Guide to help meet your educational goals?” This question sought to collect information as to how the intervention strategy could be improved for further use at the institution. Eight participants answered the open-ended question (see Table 11).

Collaborative Inquiry Partners

In an effort to receive valuable feedback about the Lancer Assistance Guide, on October 13, 2021, I invited my collaborative inquiry partners to a meeting to discuss my results from the

Table 11

Student Responses to Post-Survey Questions 8 and 10

What was something in the Lancer Assistance Guide you liked the most? The least?	How could Lenoir Community College change/update the Lancer Assistance Guide to help meet your educational goals?
The transportation they provide and wasn't anything that I didn't like.	I think it's fine and I personally think it helps a lot of people.
Most was valuable information and helpful.	Lenoir Community College could change the Lancer Assistance by making it into a video guide organization.
LCC Success Coach nothing else.	Help me with work.
I will need to utilize my resources to help me complete these assignments.	Nothing needs to be updated or changed.
I liked the tutoring services and WIOA the most.	Nothing.
How they are actually trying to help students.	I think it doesn't need to be changed.
I like how informative it was! I really enjoy all of Lenoir's resources to help people out!	No change necessary.
I liked that I was able to receive help to pay for my books. I do not dislike anything in the assistance guide.	No change necessary.
I liked everything.	They are doing a great job.

creation and implementation of the intervention strategy and student responses from the post-survey. In addition, the meeting was to assist in evaluating the intervention strategy based on participant responses and collaborative inquiry partners response. I sent an email inviting them to have an open discussion about my study and results.

The collaborative inquiry partners meeting was held on October 25, 2021 at Lenoir Community College in the board room. The collaborative inquiry partners present included: the President of the college, Success Coaches from Arts and Sciences, Workforce Development, and Health Sciences and Nursing, the Vice President of Instruction, the Associate Vice President of Instruction, the Student Success/ADA Advisor, the Director of Student Success and Equity and the Dean of Student Services/Title IX Coordinator.

The session was recorded via webex and transcribed by Otter.ai. The presentation included information about the study as well as the results from the post-survey that was conducted in the fall semester. At the end of the presentation I opened the floor for suggestions, feedback, and constructive criticism.

Discussion

The following section provides details on the discussion that occurred during the meeting. I mentioned 23 were offered the opportunity to earn extra credit by participating in the research study. Nineteen students agreed to participate and were emailed an Informed Consent to Participate form and only five students returned their form and completed the pre-survey in Qualtrics. I added when it was time for interviews out of the 19 participants who initially completed the pre-survey, only four agreed to participate in the semi-structured interview phase of the study. The Arts and Sciences Success Coach mentioned that low responses could be due to the pressures of students' academic and family obligations.

I shared the details of the initial survey responses, where students indicated they were experiencing barriers related to transportation, technology, food access, and academics. Collaborative inquiry partners recommendations were also valuable in determining what information to provide. The availability of the resources listed on the Lancer Assistance Guide was important, as I wanted to make sure the resources were currently available and students would have access.

The Workforce Development Success Coach inquired why 8 out of 10 students surveyed had no interaction with a success coach. She was curious if students that performed well academically did not need their services or was it because the success coaches had not followed-up with students. The Dean of Student Services suggested it could be that most of the students were high school students and would not need to access the success coaches. I clarified that there was only one high school student in the ACA 111 course and she did not complete the survey. The group speculated that high performing students are typically the students that complete extracurricular activities such as surveys, clubs and student activities. If that is the case then the students that completed this survey may have not needed the services of a success coach. It was also mentioned that the students that would have benefitted the most from completing the survey were the ones that may not have completed it.

The Associate Vice President of Instruction offered a solution to students struggling to purchase textbooks for their classes. He mentioned there has been discussion about making all classes at the college include "First-Day access" e-textbooks. Students would no longer have to worry about ordering and purchasing textbooks, as the required textbook would be located inside their online courses. He also mentioned the goal was to move all textbooks online by Fall 2022.

Suggestions Moving Forward

The Student Success/ADA Advisor asked if the Lancer Assistance Guide could be added into every Moodle class shell so all students could access the guide. The Director of Student Success and Equity proposed adding the Lancer Assistance Guide in the myLCC student platform for easy access for students. She also suggested the post-survey be mandatory as an enrollment quiz in the course to capture higher responses.

It was suggested that success coaches and advisors have Lancer Assistance Guides in their offices so that they could hand those out to students if it was to come to their attention students were having issues outside of the classroom. The Student Success/ADA Advisor proposed that it would be beneficial to expand the Lancer Assistance Guide by adding more information under ADA services about mental health services. I reiterated that research shows that if students are provided with information regarding available resources as early as during the application process, they will be more informed and better prepared for college.

The President proposed adding information about the Lenoir County Transit under the transportation section of the Lancer Assistance Guide. He explained that every student would not qualify for Cars for College, however, LCC would help pay for transit tickets for students. He also suggested adding QR codes under each resource for consistency and to make resources more easily accessible.

The Vice President of Instruction recommended adding the Lancer Assistance Guide to the top of the ACA 111 course syllabus or add the Lancer Assistance Guide to an existing college document, "Where to Go When You Need to Know." This document consists of a comprehensive list of on-campus personnel and their roles to assist students academically. He suggested combining the information into one document.

Overall, I thought the feedback was positive and the suggestions offered were very helpful regarding how I could improve the Lancer Assistance Guide. I thanked the collaborative inquiry partners for attending the meeting and explained the next steps as I move forward in the process.

Analysis of Focus of Practice Research Question #3

In Phase III I implemented the intervention that was created based on the data collected and analyzed in Phase II. Also in Phase III, I evaluated the data collected following implementation to determine the outcome of the intervention. A Participant Information Post-Survey was used to evaluate the intervention strategy. The post-survey was also used to provide details on ways the institution may address socioeconomic barriers in the future. In addition, results from the post-survey helped to answer focus of practice research question 3: What are the effects of an intervention selected to address the challenge to help students overcome their barriers?

The post-survey was shared with 36 students enrolled in the fall section of ACA 111. Ten students participated in the post-survey and received extra credit for participating. GPA, grades and attendance were reviewed in regard to the effectiveness of the Lancer Assistance Guide and its impact on participants.

When asked about on or off campus services that assisted students, participants responded that both the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act and Tutoring were useful. In an effort to address persistent issues in the students' lives, a question was asked seeking to collect information about socioeconomic barriers and to determine if students were impacted by a lack of resources. School and social life were mentioned by one student and another participant answered that work was a barrier to their academic progress. Participants answered unanimously

that all of the resources at LCC were helpful in overcoming personal barriers. Two out of the 10 students mentioned a personal interaction with a Lenoir Community College Success Coach and responded it was helpful in their academic progress. Nine of the participants responded unanimously, that their overall experience at the college has been somewhat positive.

Participants were able to provide feedback about the Lancer Assistance Guide and the responses were overall positive and the Lancer Assistance Guide appeared to be well-received. When asked if there was a barrier that they were experiencing before using the Lancer Assistance Guide that is no longer a current problem for them and their education, two students responded technology competency. Another two participants answered transportation and the remaining students answered nothing was an issue. The last of the participants listed “purchasing books” as an issue before the Lancer Assistance Guide.

The question of how the college could change or update the Lancer Assistance Guide was asked in an effort to improve the intervention strategy. Eight of the 10 participants answered the open-ended question. Participants answered, “no change necessary,” “they [LCC] are doing a great job,” and “nothing needs to be updated or changed.” One participant gave an insightful suggestion, “Lenoir Community College could change the Lancer Assistance Guide by making it into a video guide.”

Summary

Chapter 4 provided an overview of the description of participants and their demographics, qualitative data collection, and data analysis that resulted in themes based on the coded data. In addition, the Coronavirus pandemic was examined and the impact it had on the overall research study. The four students interviewed were ACA 111 students enrolled at Lenoir Community College, and they were able to provide personal experiences of barriers and

motivators that have influenced their education. Four themes emerged from codes based on student responses and helped guide the results of the study. Based on data collected from participants and collaborative inquiry partners, the intervention, the Lancer Assistance Guide, was created and implemented. Following implementation, additional data was collected and evaluated to determine the overall impact of the intervention. Ten students participated in a Participant Information Post-Survey to evaluate the usefulness of the intervention strategy while seeking specific information on how the Lancer Assistance Guide has impacted students. The post-survey was also used to provide details on ways the institution may address socioeconomic barriers in the future.

Chapter 5 will include an overview of the findings, as well as an interpretation of the findings in relation to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. Limitations and delimitations of the study will be discussed, along with implications of the study results relative to practice. The impact of the study results on social justice and equity will also be reviewed, along with the impact of the overall research experience on my role as a scholarly practitioner. Finally, Chapter 5 will conclude with recommendations for future research and final conclusions.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study examined the relationship between socioeconomic barriers students encounter and the interventions to address those factors at Lenoir Community College (LCC). The focus of practice was based upon the identification of specific student socioeconomic barriers and increasing student support services through implementation of an intervention to impact the identified students. The purpose of this action research study was to identify socioeconomic barriers to student success and explore a strategy to implement an intervention to help students overcome those factors. As a result of this study, I implemented an intervention based on students' self-identified socioeconomic barriers, potentially increasing retention and the obtainment of degrees. The results of this research study determined the intervention strategy, the Lancer Assistance Guide, and it was implemented. The Lancer Assistance Guide was evaluated for usefulness while seeking specific information on how the intervention strategy impacted students. The results were also used to provide details on ways the institution may address socioeconomic barriers in the future. Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the action research study. The findings will be interpreted, conclusions based on the results will be reviewed and recommendations for future research will be presented.

By conducting this research, I sought information on how students are impacted in the classroom due to outside factors. Additionally, I researched what services the college offers that could help address those same issues. These barriers included employment, family matters, transportation, and technology issues.

Surveys and semi-structured interviews served as the instruments for data collection within the study design. The surveys and interviews collected qualitative information. In Phase I, a survey was developed from the pilot study originally conducted in the same phase. Questions

were formed that addressed barriers, demographic information, and personal motivators. Some of the questions were also based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the basic essentials a human needs to survive. In Phase II, the data collected from Phase I was analyzed. In addition, data was collected from the pre-survey and semi-structured individual interviews during this phase. These data were also analyzed and used to develop and create an intervention to address socioeconomic barriers identified by students. The pre-survey was conducted at the beginning of the semester. The pre-survey was given to incoming students enrolled in ACA-111. In Phase III, the intervention strategy, the Lancer Assistance Guide was implemented based on participant and collaborative inquiry partners response and feedback. Every student enrolled in an ACA-111 section was sent the Lancer Assistance Guide. The post-survey was sent to those same students to determine if the Lancer Assistance Guide assisted students in overcoming barriers previously identified in Phase I and II.

Summary of the Findings

In this study, qualitative data was collected to provide deeper insight into the focus of the study through close-ended and open-ended questions in the pre and post-survey and semi-structured interviews. The interviews allowed for gathering of student perspectives in a more natural setting. This section will review a summary of the findings.

Twenty-three students were offered the opportunity to earn extra credit by participating in the research study. Nineteen students agreed to participate in the qualitative data collection phase and were emailed an Informed Consent to Participate form. Five of the 19 students returned their form and completed the pre-survey in Qualtrics. The names of the participants were changed to pseudonyms selected at random and did not provide information that would allow for their identities to be determined. Four of the five students participated and were all traditional students

(aged 18+) and enrolled in degree programs. The students interviewed included three females and one male as previously shown in Table 8.

A Participant Information Pre-Survey was used as a screening tool to collect data from students. The pre-survey consisted of 24 questions to collect data on demographics, personal motivators and socioeconomic barriers that students potentially face. The student surveys were intended to address the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College. Secondly, the surveys aimed to gather information on possible interventions that could be implemented to identify individual students' needs. Lastly, the data collected from the survey provided information concerning potential motivators for students to remain enrolled in their academic programs. These surveys also provided the data necessary to conduct a data analysis.

Questions in the pre-survey collected data that was analyzed to answer the first focus of practice research question; What are the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College? Question 4 in the pre-survey collected initial information about personal barriers: "What barriers outside of the classroom impact your education?" This question intended to collect data about socioeconomic barriers and to determine if students were impacted by a lack of resources. With low participation in the pre-survey, it was difficult to get an accurate response that was reflective of the overall student body at the institution. Chapter 2 showed significant research in regard to common barriers most students face in their first year and included food insecurity, housing, transportation and technology competency. Participants in the research study only acknowledged experiencing housing and technology issues as previously identified barriers and one unidentified barrier, WIFI signal (see Figure 6).

Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews that were also held in an effort to gather more personal information on each participant. The purpose of the semi-

structured individual interview was to gather a deeper insight into the participant's personal challenges and motivators that impacted their education. The semi-structured interview was conducted at the end of the semester to determine what intervention could potentially assist the students' academic progress moving forward. The interview consisted of seven questions that elaborated on questions previously asked in the pre-survey.

I established codes and themes based on interview responses. Each interview was recorded and transcribed by Otter.ai, an online application. Interviews conducted through webex were recorded for accuracy. Qualitative data was collected from interviews that were conducted in person and virtually via Cisco webex.

The respondents answered questions related to their purpose for attending LCC, personal motivators and barriers, use of campus services, suggestions to the college, and personal experiences during their time in their program of study. Student responses were coded to confirm centralized themes of barriers and motivators.

Some of the most frequent summary keywords included: resources, transportation, online classes, grades, interaction, advisors, success coach and motivators. These summary keywords were present in each interview. The interviews and surveys provided enough insight to begin to answer the second focus of practice research question. I used manual and inductive coding to determine codes and themes. I labeled and organized the qualitative data identifying the different themes and relationships. Four themes emerged as a result of the codes (see Table 9).

The first theme was the primary purpose for attending Lenoir Community College was workforce preparation. Participants were asked about their purpose for attending LCC; all participants were seeking a two-year degree. Each participant noted in their pre-survey that their

overall educational experience at Lenoir Community College had been mostly positive and three of the four students shared that they did not intend to transfer to a four-year school or university.

The second theme was expected motivators influenced persistence in a positive manner. Family support, friendships, employment goals, online instruction and advisors'/instructors' support were all mentioned throughout the interviews. They emerged as codes and helped shaped this particular theme.

The next theme was self-identified external barriers influenced drop-out/stop out and academic success. The issues in and outside of the classroom needed to be examined in order to assess a student's physical and mental well-being. Barriers were discussed in the interviews; they included transportation to campus, technology competency, WiFi signal, work schedule, and lack of motivation.

The last theme was personal positive or negative experiences impact success while enrolled at Lenoir Community College. This theme addressed Lenoir Community College specifically, and this assisted in an effort to increase certain resources or program offerings in order to meet students where they were in their education and well-being. Several codes were formed based on questions around positive or negative experiences during the participant's educational journey. Some students had negative experiences that included failing grades, low GPA, and mental health struggles; while overall the more positive experiences included helpful instructors, a friendly college atmosphere, and opportunities to learn.

Interpretation of the Findings

The surveys and semi-structured interviews collected qualitative data. The results from the study assisted in answering the focus of practice research questions and led to a better explanation of the problem of practice. In addition, the analysis of the results as well as meetings

with collaborative inquiry partners led to the creation of the intervention strategy, the Lancer Assistance Guide.

Theoretical Framework

The theories most relevant to the study were Tinto's Student Departure Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The first theory was Tinto's Theory of Student Departure. According to Tinto's theory, the decision to "drop out" arises from a combination of student characteristics and the extent of their academic, environmental and social integration in an institution (Tinto, 1975). Tinto's model is based upon three major sources of departure: academic difficulties, inability of individuals to resolve their educational and occupational goals, and their failure to become or remain a part of the social life of the institution (Tinto, 1975). This theory also discusses implementation strategies through student motivation. If students' needs are not met by way of accessing college resources they will continue to experience difficulty throughout their educational journey (Tinto, 1993).

Using Student Departure Theory to guide aspects of this study, I identified and explored the three major sources of departure. I analyzed the socioeconomic barriers that lead to students' academic difficulties, inability to resolve goals, and failure to remain engaged within the institution. This theory directly related to this study and the intent to identify socioeconomic barriers affecting students. Student motivation is important to enrollment and retention rates in community college programming.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs also contributed to the framework of this study. Maslow stated that human beings are constantly in pursuit of needs, of which there are five levels. These five levels in the original model are arranged in a pyramid with the base being physiological needs and continuing to safety needs, social needs, self-esteem and finally at the top self-

actualization (Banerjee, 2014). Through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs two specific tiers were particularly relevant to this study and were considered: physiological needs that include air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing and safety needs that include personal security, employment, resources, health, and property. Both of these tiers influenced the socioeconomic barriers impacting students at Lenoir Community College.

Tinto's Student Departure Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs helped guide the study and provided appropriate background information that led to a better understanding of the barriers that may be experienced by students at Lenoir Community College. The study confirms that needs must be met first in order for students to be successful in their academic progress. Internal and external factors were explored that influenced student success and allowed for a robust amount of data to be collected over the course of this study.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations that presented themselves throughout the research study included a shortage of available data, difficulty with implementation, unresponsive and uninterested student participation and the Coronavirus pandemic. There was not a robust amount of data surrounding socioeconomic barriers and the relation to students at Lenoir Community College. This study was centered around identifying and alleviating those barriers impacting success within the institution. As a first-time scholarly researcher, implementation was difficult as it pertains to adequately addressing students in an effort to gather personal data. In addition, students seemed uninterested in participating in the study. Extra credit was offered to entice participation in the study; however, it did not lead to an overwhelming amount of interest when it was time for students to take action. Lastly, the global Coronavirus pandemic impacted the study negatively in

relation to the ability to reach students. This will be discussed in more detail further in this section.

Transferability

The study was a qualitative research design. The pre and post-surveys served as the instruments for data collection within the study design. The surveys and interviews collected qualitative information; therefore, I needed to address internal validity and transferability, as well as reliability of the results in the discussion of rigor. I sent participants the same survey and materials to provide consistency within the research. The threats to internal validity included students not answering honestly or completing the survey in its entirety. Low participation in the study also proved to be a threat to the internal validity.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) were first in addressing rigor in their trustworthiness model of qualitative research. They clarified trustworthiness by developing four terms in an effort for more accuracy in relation to internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. The terms included: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In regard to this study, transferability was especially relevant. Transferability is the ability to transfer findings from research from one group to another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

It was important to establish a high level of trust with the participants as I communicated with them throughout the study and data collection. Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed their criteria for trustworthiness to address the need of truth value between researchers and participants.

To ensure transferability, this study used data analysis, a pre and post-survey, and semi-structured interviews. I also used coding to analyze the data collected to understand the responses from a larger perspective. It was understood that there would be a variety of student

demographics and there may be outlier responses. Every participant response was helpful in aiding in the creation and implementation of an intervention strategy. Each student had a unique set of factors that influenced their education and opportunities for success. Results generated from the research study were analyzed for appropriateness related to the intention of the study.

Instrumentation

Data analyzed in this study was collected using three instruments: an online pre-survey, a semi-structured interviews protocol, and an online post-survey. The pre-survey consisted of 24 questions to collect data on demographics, personal motivators and potential socioeconomic barriers. The process for students to participate appeared to impact student participation. There were multiple steps needed for students to participate. Semi-structured interviews were also utilized and consisted of seven questions that elaborate on questions previously asked in the pre-survey. All but one interview was conducted virtually, and this led to a lower level of connection with participants. The lack of a personal connection may have led to less detailed and engaged responses. A post-survey was also used that consisted of 10 questions to collect data to evaluate the usefulness of the intervention implemented. The survey sought specific information on how the intervention impacted students. There were less steps for students to complete to participate in this part of the study and it appeared to be more efficient and led to a higher response rate.

Coronavirus Pandemic

In response to the Coronavirus pandemic in fall 2020, LCC offered a variety of course options from which students could choose, including online, hybrid, in-person, and synchronous classes. The synchronous model was unique in regard to students having the ability to participate face-to-face or online via webcam and still be counted as present. However, normal operations were still disrupted, and the majority of students remained off campus deciding to stay at home

and participate in class online. Faculty and staff physical interactions with students continued to be minimal into spring 2021. This study was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as it was originally presented, and created challenges in the proposed procedures and data collection. Due to COVID-19 I was unable to visit the ACA-111 classroom because the course had to be moved to an online format and was not meeting on a regular class schedule. I believe this impacted my ability to recruit additional students to participate in my study. I relied heavily on virtual communication with students through email, text, and course announcements.

Implications of the Findings for Practice

Lenoir Community College does not currently have a practice in place to identify socioeconomic barriers affecting students once they are enrolled at the institution. There is no way to identify barriers or motivators of currently enrolled students other than advisors using intrusive advising to connect on a more personal level. However, there are a plethora of on and off-campus services that are available to students. It is a matter of connecting students to those resources that can best respond to their socioeconomic barriers. Advisors, instructors, and collaborative inquiry partners have access to and knowledge of those resources but may not realize the student is experiencing barriers to their academic success. Depending on an advisor's level of personal attention, student barriers may go unnoticed or unidentified, therefore leaving the student vulnerable to low persistence and semester-to-semester retention.

When students communicate with college personnel that they are interested in attending college, immediate action needs to be put in place to determine the needs of students. Students may be unsure of their long-term intentions past enrolling in classes. Several other factors need to be considered, such as: tuition costs, transportation to the college, and balancing work/class schedules. Intrusive advising may lead to a better understanding of individual stories if the right

questions are asked. The overall goal should be to gather information about the student at the time of interest before they are admitted and enrolled.

The original intention of the research study was for the institution to use a tool to collect information about students and their socioeconomic barriers. However, while the pilot study and pre-survey showed a presence of barriers influencing students, there was not enough student participation to gather a holistic view of the student body. Low participation was due to the Coronavirus pandemic and instruction that was moved online. Information and feedback collected from collaborative inquiry partners and participants helped shape the intervention strategy. It was determined that it would be beneficial to create a document that would inform new and current students about available resources. If advisors or other college personnel did not identify or were unaware of socioeconomic barriers, the document would provide the students with the information to be able to connect to those resources on their own. Additionally, students may be hesitant to disclose personal and academic barriers. The intervention would provide them with information to overcome their individual barriers without requiring them to discuss their personal situations.

Socioeconomic barriers can include employment, family matters, transportation, and technology issues. Research has shown that institutions that provide students information about resources as soon as they apply to the college they are more informed and prepared for college. Data collected throughout this study has proven issues are present but can be resolved by asking students what the college can do to assist them in their academic journey.

The results from this study could have positive implications for institutions trying to address socioeconomic barriers impacting students. Research along with this study has shown that those previously mentioned barriers do exist and need to be resolved in order to increase the

opportunity for academic success (Tinto, 1975). Institutions need to take a proactive approach to address barriers that impact students outside of the classroom. Unresolved issues could impact retention and persistence rates at the institution and could negatively impact funding based on enrollment.

Implications from both the pre and post-surveys suggest that participant feedback is crucial for creating and implementing an intervention strategy. Collaborative inquiry partner buy-in and students who participated in the surveys provided an insight into real life scenarios and how the institution can assist students. It is important to get a wide demographic of participants to allow different backgrounds and opinions. In regard to this study, student participants included a variety of races, genders, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds which played a pivotal role in collecting more accurate data. The pre-survey allowed collection of participant backgrounds information that helped shape the intervention strategy. The post-survey assisted in evaluating the intervention strategy and how it could be improved for future use.

Implications from semi-structured interviews suggested that student stories are important to the collection of more detailed information about participants. A bulk of the data was collected through interviews. This provided a set amount of time to converse with the participants individually and learn more about them and their background. In addition, it presented the opportunity to build a personal relationship with participants and made the research study come alive with real scenarios that students were experiencing. It was beneficial to shaping the overall study and intervention strategy.

It was proposed from collaborative inquiry partners that every student should receive a copy of the Lancer Assistance Guide at time of application. Once students received the resource

guide either electronically or physically they could use it to access resources. While students may not need those resources at the time of application, issues may arise during their time enrolled in their respective academic programs. With contact information included on the Lancer Assistance Guide, students know who to contact in times of crisis or if barriers were to arise. Providing every student with a copy of the Lancer Assistance Guide may provide an opportunity for socioeconomic barriers to be addressed much earlier on in the semester to lower drop-out/stop out numbers.

Implications on Access and Equity

I examined issues of educational equity by identifying the socioeconomic barriers that may be affecting the success of the students at LCC. This study made a difference for all students regardless of their program of study enrolled at Lenoir Community College. An intervention was implemented to ensure that all students are aware of available resources that allow students to know about and have access to the resources that can make them successful. This was not just for the students who are full-time or traditional students, this was an effort to reach the non-traditional students that may have been first-generation or low-income. All students should have access to readily-available resources regardless of institution size or geographic area. Regardless of their personal life outside of the classroom, all students should be able to attend class and have the same experiences as their peers. There are, however, external factors that may be out of an institution's control. Institutions are unable to assist students if they are unable to recognize or understand what the student is experiencing. The results from the research study assisted in identifying ways to implement already-existing resources and connect them with student barriers. This helped utilize the college's resources to the fullest potential. Once student barriers are

identified, the institution can then determine ways to offer students suggestions on how to better their circumstances.

Recommendations

Following the completion of this study, further research has been considered. The collection of additional research can add to the success of the study intervention, as well as expand upon the initial focus of practice. Recommendations for further research include reviewing the outcomes of successful interventions at other institutions and making relevant updates to the current intervention based on the information. It is also recommended that retention rates are examined in more detail, specifically semester-to-semester retention, in an effort to determine how the current intervention could play a role in increasing retention. Another important aspect of the current study was the involvement and impact of advising and personal attention. Staff and faculty training and professional development opportunities should be created to address this issue so they will better understand their role in student success. As previously mentioned, if advisors are not asking questions based on students' socioeconomic needs, then students may not know to disclose that information to their advisor. The last consideration for further research could include how institutions address onboarding for new students entering academic programs. Onboarding research could reveal ideal ways to address student issues at the time of application much earlier than course enrollment.

Current research for this study considered nonacademic barriers to student success in relation to socioeconomic barriers that may be affecting persistence and academic success. Food insecurity, job security, housing, transportation, technology competency and mental health care were just a few of the topics that were examined when conducting the research study. Research shows students who are low-income, minority, and first-generation continue to reflect lower

completion rates (Calcagno et al., 2008). Calcagno and colleagues have recommended implementing stronger and more specific admissions requirements. Requiring a more selective admissions criteria, however, would mean creating more barriers for the students that community colleges are trying to enroll (Calcagno et al., 2008). Student engagement was also reviewed as research has shown positive student engagement has become a measure of institutional success.

Other research areas such as partnerships with external sources, special funding, and mentorship could be considered. Partnerships with institutions may already exist and researching on how to train faculty and staff on reaching out to community partners and connecting students to those resources would be beneficial. There are special funds and grants on campus that are under-utilized because employees are unsure of how students can qualify. They may also be unaware of who students need to talk about accessing funds to resolve issues. Mentorship in the higher education realm could also be considered for future research. The Minority Male Success Initiative could attest to the outcomes of mentorship with adult learners. Research on successful mentor and mentee relationships could be reviewed to determine if it would work at the institution.

Growth & Development as an Educational Leader

As the scholarly practitioner, I conducted a research study and implemented an intervention strategy. I have learned how to review literature and collect qualitative data in relation to a study. In addition, I learned how to include collaborative inquiry partners and students in resolving issues within the institution. I believe my leadership traits have been strengthened as a result of the study as well as my interest in pursuing a higher-level administrative role at the institution. As a result of collecting data and reviewing literature, I better understand how to address socioeconomic barriers and how to positively impact student

engagement to increase success in and outside of the classroom. In addition, I have learned to place a strong emphasis on student success and equity while also connecting students to resources to assist them in meeting their educational and personal goals. I have enjoyed the ability to become involved with campus and community initiatives and welcome new challenges and experiences that could assist me in growing as a professional and a leader in higher education. Lastly, the conclusions and findings from this research study will provide necessary information, data and procedures for future researchers on how to impact student success at their respective institutions.

Conclusions

I aimed to create a research study that could suggest that progress toward educational equity may be achieved through identifying barriers and implementing an intervention plan that could potentially increase student success. In addition, the research would provide the ability to use the results of this study to inform theory or practice at other higher education institutions.

Research shows if barriers are identified earlier in students' academic journeys, the institution can implement interventions that could potentially assist students before it is too late. Students who access available resources may be better equipped to navigate college beyond their time at their current institution.

Lenoir Community College allocates a large amount of time and resources towards addressing non-academic issues; however, students may not be adequately connected to those opportunities. Socioeconomic barriers included employment, family matters, transportation, child care, and technology issues. The results of this study show that students are experiencing barriers, and the Lancer Assistance Guide informed students on how to access resources that could help address identified barriers.

Throughout the study, collaborative inquiry partners provided practical support and recognized that the benefits from the research being conducted, would lead to the creation of an intervention strategy to best address the needs of the institution and students. Collaborative inquiry partners participated in discussions focused on creating and implementing an intervention to help cultivate student retention and persistence based on data collected in the study. Their input on the direction of the intervention strategy helped strengthen the impact of the study.

This research study examined the relationship between socioeconomic barriers students encounter and the interventions to address those factors at Lenoir Community College. Specifically, the study determined the barriers and motivators that influenced participants' education in regards to retention and persistence in academic programs. The study sought to show that socioeconomic barriers were indeed a major hindrance to student success at LCC and it was important to create and implement an intervention strategy to mitigate some of the student concerns.

Based on the results of the study, it is crucial that institutions take action and determine how to identify the socioeconomic barriers that impact student success. If those issues go unnoticed or unresolved it can lead to low retention and enrollment. It is also important for faculty and staff to take the time to talk to students to ensure them that a support system is in place to assist them throughout their time in higher education.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 ·
rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Dusk Stroud](#)
CC: [Heidi Puckett](#)
Date: 12/23/2020
Re: [UMCIRB 20-002970](#)
FACE THE FACTS: IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SOCIOECONOMIC BARRIERS THAT IMPACT SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED AT LENOIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 12/22/2020. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 1 & 2ab.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

Document	Description
Consent Form(0.03)	Consent Forms
Email Script Updated 12.18.2020(0.02)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Interview Questions(0.02)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Pre and Post Surveys(0.02)	Surveys and Questionnaires
Study Protocol(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX B: STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Informed Consent to Participate in Research Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: FACE THE FACTS: IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SOCIOECONOMIC BARRIERS THAT IMPACT SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED AT LENOIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

Principal Investigator: Dusk Stroud | Dr. Heidi Puckett
Institution, Department: East Carolina University, Department of Educational Leadership
Address: 4469 Davis Hardy Road, Kinston, NC 28504
Telephone #: (252) 560-6823

Participant Full Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____
Please PRINT clearly

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) *and* Lenoir Community College (LCC) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

The purpose of this mixed-methods, action research study is to identify socioeconomic barriers to student success and explore a strategy to implement an intervention to help students overcome those factors. You are being invited to take part in this research because you have been identified as a student enrolled at Lenoir Community College and as a student that is or has been enrolled in the ACA 111 College Student Success course. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn how students are impacted in the classroom due to outside factors. In addition to what services the college offers that could help address those issues. These factors may include employment, family matters, transportation, child care, or financial problems.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 30 people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

Students under the age of 18 are not eligible to participate. Other than age requirements, there are no specific reasons why you should not take part in this research.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?

You can choose not to participate.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?

The research will be conducted through online surveys. You will not need to come to any physical location. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 2-3 hours over the next six months (one semester).

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to do the following:

1. Participant Information Pre-Survey
 - This survey will consist of twenty-four questions.
 - This survey will collect demographic information on the student. It will also gather information about (student status, gender, race, program information, transfer intents and employment). This survey also includes open- and closed-ended questions to collect quantitative and qualitative data.
2. Participant information post-survey
 - This survey will consist of ten questions.
 - This survey will be conducted at the end of the semester once the intervention has been implemented. It will gauge the effectiveness of the program and the impact it had on the student. This survey will include open- and closed-ended questions to collect quantitative and qualitative data.
3. Semi-structured Individual Interviews
 - These interviews would consist of seven questions.
 - The interviews would be collected through virtual meetings or face-to-face interaction.
 - The goal of the interview would be to collect the student's perspective and "story" of what barriers they are experiencing and how that impacts their education.
 - Participants will have the ability to elaborate on their responses and follow up questions will be asked

Both surveys use an action research design method to help identify the commonality of lived experiences of students enrolled in a first-year transfer class. The goal of this survey is to find out how Lenoir Community College is supporting student success in degree programming. The purpose of the semi-structured individual interview is to gather a deeper insight into the participant's personal challenges and motivators that impact your education. Your participation is voluntary but will be useful in assisting the college in improving the way it supports students in and out of the classroom. The interviews will be audio/video recorded when conducted. You will be made aware when recording is beginning and stopping.

What might I experience if I take part in the research?

We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?

We not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study

Will it cost me to take part in this research?

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?

The people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. Only I will have access to identifiable info and it will be kept secure. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- Lenoir Community College. Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.
- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.
- People designated by East Carolina University.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?

Responses will remain confidential for the purposes of this study and pseudonyms will be used to protect participants and their responses. Data and identifying information will be kept for the length of the research study. Students' real names and information will not be saved or stored in any files. The data collected from student surveys will be stored on a flash drive along with other data collected throughout the research study. Only I will have access to this information. The drive will be locked in a file cabinet in my office along with a password protecting access to the files. The UNC system requires that study data be kept for 3 years following the completion of the study.

What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive. Leaving the study at any point will not impact your grade in the ACA course

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at 252-560-6823 (Monday - Friday, between 8:00a.m.-5:00 p.m.).

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director for Human Research Protections, at 252-744-2914

Is there anything else I should know?

The results of the study being used to improve available services at LCC that could benefit them and other LCC students.

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

Participant's Name (PRINT)	Signature	Date
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Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above, and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)	Signature	Date
---	------------------	-------------

Principal Investigator (PRINT)	Signature	Date
---------------------------------------	------------------	-------------

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION PRE-SURVEY

PART 1

1. What best describes your status as a student?
 - a. First-generation
 - b. Recent high school
 - c. Non-traditional student (aged 25+)
 - d. Traditional student (aged 18+)
 - e. Transfer from a University

2. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Decline to state
 - d. Other

3. What is your race/ethnicity?
 - a. _____

4. What degree or certificate program are you enrolled in at Lenoir Community College?
 - a. _____

5. Do you plan on transferring to a 4-year institution after graduation from Lenoir Community College?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure

6. If you responded “Yes” on Question #5, where do you want to transfer and in what degree program would you enroll?
- a. Institution: _____
 - b. Program: _____
7. If you answered “No” on Question #5, what is your reasoning for not transferring to a four year institution?
- a. Financial Aid
 - b. Uninterested in continuing in school
 - c. A bachelors degree would not help meet your employment goals.
 - d. Other: _____
8. If you selected “Unsure” on Question #5, why are you unsure about transferring to a four year school?
- a. Lack of information
 - b. Uncertain of career aspirations
 - c. Lack of support from family and/or friends
 - d. Other _____
9. Are you currently employed?
- a. Yes or no
 - b. _____

PART 2

1. Are there sources of motivation that influenced you to enroll at Lenoir Community College?
 - a. Friends
 - b. Family
 - c. Employment
 - d. Other: _____

2. Are there areas in your academic program that you think need improvement?
 - a. GPA
 - b. Grades
 - c. Attendance
 - d. Other: _____

3. Are there on-campus services you have researched to help you with those factors?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. If yes, what services were they? _____

4. What barriers outside of the classroom impact your educational journey?
 - a. Food insecurity
 - b. Housing
 - c. Transportation
 - d. Technology Competency
 - e. Other: _____

5. Are there any on or off-campus services you have researched to help you with those factors?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. If yes, what services were they? _____
6. Have you had any interaction with an LCC Student Success Coach and if so, how was that experience? Did you feel it helped or hurt your situation?
7. How could Lenoir Community College better help students meet their educational goals?
8. Would you say your overall educational experience at LCC been more positive or negative?
 - a. Positive
 - b. Negative
9. Is there anything that you feel prevents you from doing your best academically?
 - a. Childcare issues
 - b. Work schedule
 - c. Lack of support
 - d. Other: _____
10. Do you have a consistent roof over your head? What other family/ nonfamily members do you live with? Is there enough space where you live for everyone? Explain.

11. About how many hours of sleep do you get every day?
- a. 1-2 hours
 - b. 4-6 hours
 - c. 8-12 hours
 - d. Other: _____
12. About how many times a day do you eat? Is there enough food in your house for you and your family? Do you need assistance getting food?
13. Do you feel physically safe at home? School? Work? If not, what makes you feel unsafe?
14. Do you feel mentally/psychologically safe at home? School? Work? If not, what makes you feel unsafe?
15. How do you get to school? Is your transportation reliable? What would happen if your transportation didn't work?

APPENDIX D: SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

1. What motivates you to continue your degree program even when things get difficult?
2. Were there other sources of motivation that influenced you to enroll at Lenoir Community College?
3. What factors inside of the classroom impact your education?
4. Are you currently homeless or at risk of being homeless?
5. Do you feel your grades reflect the best work you can do? Why/ why not?
6. Do you feel like you get enough sleep? When you wake up do you feel well rested?
7. Is there anything else outside of academics that gets in your way of doing the best you can in school?

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION POST-SURVEY

An intervention was implemented this semester at Lenoir Community College. It was implemented based on responses from students who participated in the Participant Information Pre-Survey at the beginning of the semester.

1. **You have received an electronic copy of the "Lancer Assistance Guide" an intervention that was implemented this semester at Lenoir Community College. It was implemented based on responses from students who participated in the Participant Information Pre-Survey at the end of last semester.**

Did you review the Lancer Assistance Guide inserted in your ACA 111 Moodle shell?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Are there areas in your academic program where you could see improvement from using the resources listed on the Lancer Assistance Guide?
 - a. GPA
 - b. Grades
 - c. Attendance
 - d. Other: _____
3. Did you access on- or off-campus services that helped you with those factors?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. If yes, what services were they? _____
4. Are you still experiencing barriers outside of the classroom that impact your educational journey?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. If yes, what barriers are they? _____
5. Are there any on or off-campus services you have researched that have NOT helped you with those barriers?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. If yes, what services were they? _____
6. Did you have any interaction with an LCC Student Success Coach and if so, how was that experience? Did you feel it helped or hurt your situation?
7. Would you say your overall educational experience at LCC has been more positive or negative?
- a. Somewhat positive
 - b. Neither positive nor negative
 - c. Somewhat negative
 - d. Extremely negative
8. What was something in the Lancer Assistance Guide that you liked the most? The least?
9. Was there a barrier that you were experiencing before using the Lancer Assistance Guide that is no longer a problem for you and your education?
- a. Food insecurity
 - b. Housing
 - c. Transportation
 - d. Technology Competency

e. Other: _____

10. How could Lenoir Community College change/update the Lancer Assistance Guide to help meet your educational goals?

APPENDIX F: AVISO GRADE ALERT

Dear Sally Student,

I noticed your grade in MATH 103-Algebra II is low. Your success is a priority at Lenoir Community College, and I want you to know I am here to help.

I encourage you to set up a meeting with your instructor, Iris Instructor, at iris.instructor@aviso.com to discuss ways in which you can improve your performance in this class. In addition, I can connect you with campus resources and study strategies that will provide further support.

There is still time to improve your grade in this course.

Your Success Coach,

Terry Teacher

terry.teacher@aviso.com

APPENDIX G: AVISO ALERT

Subject: Student has been identified for an Alert

Our records indicate that Sally Student has been identified for an Alert for Success Coach

Referral (Poor Attendance/Participation) by Terry Teacher

APPENDIX H: LETTER OF SUPPORT FORM



Department of Educational Leadership

210 Ragsdale Building | Mail Stop 515 | East Carolina University | Greenville, NC 27858-4353
252-328-6135 office | 252-328-4062 fax | www.coe.ecu.edu

Dear Inquiry Partner,

I am writing today to request your support of my intentions to conduct research in pursuit of a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership (EdD) at East Carolina University (ECU). In an attempt to increase communication in partnering with my institution and administration, this degree program involves conducting research at Lenoir Community College. I believe it is important to involve inquiry partners early on in the process for successful outcomes.

I appreciate the support you have shown me thus far in seeking a doctorate in higher education administration, as well as the support you have shown students at the your institution. While existing resources allocated on campus are greatly impactful for our students, tremendous need still remains. My study is titled “FACE THE FACTS: IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SOCIOECONOMIC BARRIERS THAT IMPACT SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED AT LENOIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE.” The focus of practice will be based upon the identification of specific student socioeconomic barriers and increasing student support services through implementation of an intervention to impact the identified students.

As you may know from your experience in higher education, students do not always share the challenges they are experiencing with faculty and staff; therefore, they miss opportunities to access resources. Recognizing the level of involvement the program requires, I want to demonstrate up front that my institution and administration are aware of my intent to conduct research and implement an intervention strategy through this program. This serves as an initial indication that you support my pursuit of further academic preparation and in-field school leadership experiences. By indicating your support at this time, you are not making a commitment to me as a prospective candidate for a school leadership position upon completion of the degree. Rather, this form indicates that you are supportive of me pursuing research in this program and will support me in these experiences throughout the duration of the study.

I understand that I have much to learn, and I must work hard at aligning myself and my activities with Lenoir Community College’s mission and vision. I hope to provide acknowledgement that clear communication among everyone will be essential to my ultimate success.

I am willing to discuss this further and answer any questions you may have. Thank you again for your support of my study “FACE THE FACTS: IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SOCIOECONOMIC BARRIERS THAT IMPACT SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED AT LENOIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE,” your students, and institution.

Sincerely,
Dusk Oliver Stroud, Student
Doctor of Education, Educational Leadership



Researcher

I am interested in conducting research on campus and recognize that I will need the support of my institution and administration in fulfilling my academic and field-work experiences. I am requesting your initial support so I may satisfactorily complete the research process. Please know I will work to establish and maintain relationships built on trust and mutual respect, and I will serve the college and align my efforts with Lenoir Community College's mission and vision.

Student's Name: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Inquiry Partner

I have read the cover letter and support the application of this student to pursue research at this time.

Name: _____ Institution: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX I: SITE LETTER

Dr. Rusty Hunt
President
Lenoir Community College
231 NC Highway 58
Kinston, NC 28504

December 9, 2020


Dear Dr. Hunt,

I am the Principal Investigator for *Face The Facts: Identifying Potential Socioeconomic Barriers That Impact Success for Students Enrolled at Lenoir Community College*, a study being conducted through the department of *Educational Leadership* at East Carolina University. This study intends to focus on identifying socioeconomic barriers of students who are enrolled in curriculum programs and how those challenges impact their participation in the program at LCC. The research will provide information related to interventions developed by myself alongside suggestions identified by current students that they would anticipate as being helpful. The study will also initiate an intervention through LCC to help students reach their educational goals, while building a deeper understanding of what can potentially impact students in a positive manner. This study pertains to my role as the Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management within LCC. As part of this research, I would like to request permission to conduct the following specific activities at Lenoir Community College and within the first-year experience course ACA 111:

- *Access to identify and recruit prospective participants based upon enrollment in the first-year experience course ACA 111 and self-reported socioeconomic barriers in an initial assessment*
- *The support of Dr. Heidi Puckett, Dissertation Chair from East Carolina University, to assist in the collection of consent from participants*
- *The ability to survey and interview participants and collect student artifacts produced within the course with the consent/permission of the participants themselves*
- *Permission to implement a developed intervention (unknown at this time) based on student feedback.*

Please sign the bottom of this letter if the activities described above meet your approval. If you have questions and would like to reach me, please do not hesitate to do so.

Sincerely,



Dusk Stroud, MBA
Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management; Lenoir Community College
dostroud89@lenoircc.edu

Permission Granter's Signature and Date:

I have received and reviewed the letter submitted by Dusk Stroud regarding the research project outlined above and give permission for him to conduct their research activities at *Lenoir Community College*.


Signature

12/10/2020
Date

APPENDIX J: LCC RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM

Please submit one copy of this completed form and all attached materials electronically to:
jetyndall78@lenoircc.edu

Date: **December, 9 2020**

Investigator(s): **Dusk Stroud**

Investigator Credentials: **Doctoral Candidate department of *Educational Leadership* at East Carolina University**

Title of Proposal: ***Face The Facts: Identifying Potential Socioeconomic Barriers That Impact Success for Students Enrolled at Lenoir Community College***

Research Question(s):

- 4. What are the socioeconomic barriers impacting student success at Lenoir Community College?**
- 5. What intervention(s) can be implemented to assist students with overcoming socioeconomic barriers?**
- 6. What are the effects of an intervention selected to address the challenge to help students overcome their barriers?**

Purpose of the Study:

- To fulfill requirements related to courses/degree program at a college/university
- Course project
- Thesis (attach Proposal)
- Dissertation (attach Proposal)
- Other
- As part of an externally funded project **Funding Agency:**
- For my own scholarly interest
- Other Please **Describe:**

Briefly answer the following questions:

1. Describe the subjects (include method of obtaining participation, criteria for selection, age, payment/incentives, etc.):

Participants in the study must live within the service area of the college that includes Lenoir County, as well as adjacent Greene, and Jones counties.

Participants will be selected based on their enrollment in a first-year experience ACA 111 course. All students enrolled in this course qualify to participate.

Participation in the survey will be voluntary and it will be explained how responses would be useful in assisting the college in improving the way it supports students in and out of the classroom. Responses will remain confidential for the purposes of this study. The goal is to receive responses from at least one third of the students contacted. This would allow me to survey a small but effective pool of

students. I anticipate 25-30 students being enrolled in the course; therefore the aim is to collect responses from 15-20 participants. I will request a response by a certain date from students. Participants will be provided with additional information about their participation in the study, along with other specific details regarding consent at the beginning of the survey instrument. The survey will be created using Qualtrics. Within the Qualtrics survey I will provide the participants with the consent information and then they will answer a yes/no question regarding participation. Then they will be able to answer the rest of the questions and submit the completed survey.

2. Description of methodology (include variables to be measured and how they will be measured). Include copies of survey(s) and/or interview questions in attached materials and entire proposal:

The overall study is a mixed-methods action research design. The surveys serve as the instruments for data collection within the study design. The surveys and interviews are collecting both quantitative and qualitative information. I will send each participant the same survey and materials to provide consistency within the research.

I will conduct a pre-survey of students enrolled in a first-year experience ACA 111 course. The Participant Information Pre-Survey will examine socioeconomic barriers to academic success at the college, explore knowledge and use of current student support services offered at the college, and review suggestions to improve student support services. Responses will be collected, consolidated and examined. Once responses have been assessed the intervention strategy will be designed and implemented. The intervention strategy will be created based on students' suggestions, research, and supporting data.

The data collected will be analyzed for the research study. This survey includes open- and closed-ended questions that will provide detailed information on factors influencing students' success in their academic program. It will also give a deeper insight to what students consider barriers and motivators to the education.

I will conduct a post-survey of students enrolled in a first-year experience ACA 111 course. All of the students in each section of the course will access the survey through a link provided through Qualtrics. When I create the survey in Qualtrics, it will provide a link that I can send via email to the participants. Qualtrics will collect all the responses and then I can download the responses into an excel file to use for data collection and coding.

The purpose of this post-survey is to provide an analysis of the effectiveness of the intervention designed and implemented in Phase II from a student perspective. The post-survey consists of 10 questions that ask students about the implemented intervention and the effect it had on their progress throughout the semester. Questions will also help to determine the usefulness of the intervention. Responses may reflect positive or negative program outcomes. The study also seeks to determine whether the intervention is being used adequately and examine the use of student success coaches and how they reach out to students. Student success coaches should be able to identify those learning techniques and how students can be assisted successfully based on their individual needs. Student engagement with mentors, staff, and faculty create a sense of belonging (Kelly, 2008). The

intervention should have the ability to cultivate those relationships. The purpose of the semi-structured individual interview is to gather a deeper insight into the participant's personal challenges and motivators that impact their education. A semi-structured interview will be conducted at the end of the semester to gauge the effects of the implemented intervention. The interview consists of 7 questions that elaborate on questions previously asked in the survey.

3. Potential benefits of this study: **We don't know if students will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to them but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.**

4. Are there any potential negative effects from this study? If yes, please explain.

We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. How will anonymity and confidentiality be controlled for: **Responses will remain confidential for the purposes of this study and pseudonyms will be used to protect participants and their responses. Data and identifying information will be kept for the length of the research study. Students' real names and information will not be saved or stored in any files. The data collected from student surveys will be stored on a flash drive along with other data collected throughout the research study. Only I will have access to this information. The drive will be locked in a file cabinet in my office along with a password protecting access to the files.**

5. Is deception involved or is there any aspect of the procedure that could cause stress, discomfort or adverse reactions? Yes____ No X
If yes, please explain.

6. What will you need from the College in order to complete this research (data, list of names, etc.)?

Before reaching out to potential participants, I plan to ask for permission from inquiry partners and deans. In addition, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness will be able to provide a comprehensive list of enrolled students. I do not want colleagues to feel disrespected by contacting students without first asking. Once approval is received from inquiry partners, an email will be sent to students asking for their participation.

7. Potential Benefits to LCC: **The results of the study being used to improve available services at LCC that could benefit them and other LCC students.**

8. How will informed consent be delivered (please attach informed consent form if applicable): **As the scholarly practitioner, I will provide subjects with an Informed Consent Form that they must complete to be a part of the study. See attached.**

Requirements for Informed Consent

Informed consent means the knowing consent of an individual without undue inducement or any element of force, fraud, duress or any other form of constraint or coercion.

Minimal information for informed consent:

1. General purpose of the research and a description of the procedures.
2. Statement that participation is voluntary and that the participant may withdraw at any time without prejudice.
3. Explanation of whom to contact for answers to questions about the research.
4. If a signature is needed for the subjects, additional information should be provided, including:
 - a. Duration of subject's participation
 - b. Description of reasonably foreseeable risks
 - c. Description of benefits of the research
 - d. Disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures
 - e. Place for a signature and date

Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Activities, which meet this definition, constitute research for purposes of this policy, whether or not they are conducted or supported under a program which is considered research for other purposes. For example, some demonstration and service programs may include research activities.

Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

See Informed Consent to Participate Form Attached.

● Jonathan Tyndall

11:04 AM



RE: [EXTERNAL] Research Proposal Form- Dusk Stroud
To: Stroud, Dusk

This email originated from outside ECU.

Thanks Dusk,

Dr. Grimes and Dr. Hunt have approved the request. Just let me or Mrs. Susan know when you need data pulled.

Jonathan Tyndall
Director of Innovation and Effectiveness
Administration Bldg, Room 121 K
jetyndall78@lenoircc.edu
252.527.6223 ext. 319

From: Stroud, Dusk <stroudd11@students.ecu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 12:31 PM
To: Jonathan Tyndall <jetyndall78@lenoircc.edu>
Cc: Dusk Stroud <dostroud89@lenoircc.edu>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Research Proposal Form- Dusk Stroud

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Lenoir Community College organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon Jonathan,

Attached is my LCC Research Proposal Form. I have also included the following supporting documentation:

1. Informed Consent to Participate Form – Student Participants will receive this once they agree to participate.
2. Site Letter – This has been given to Dr. Hunt.
3. Study Protocol - ECU
4. Pre and Post Survey/Interview Questions
5. Letter of Support Form – This will be given to my Inquiry Partners for their approval.

If you need anything else please let me know. If the proposal is approved I will add it within my dissertation.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Best,

APPENDIX K: INTRODUCTION TO ACA STUDENTS EMAIL

Good afternoon LCC ACA 111 Student!

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a short survey. My name is Dusk Stroud, I am the Director of Admissions at Lenoir Community College. I am also a student at East Carolina University working on my Doctorate in Higher Education. I need your help as a student enrolled in ACA 111 at LCC. You have agreed to be contacted by me by way of your ACA 111 class.

My research is focused on how students are impacted in the classroom due to outside factors. In addition to what services the college offers that could help alleviate those issues. These factors may include employment, family matters, transportation, childcare, or financial problems.

If you agree to participate, please email me back with your completed Informed Consent to Participate in Research Form that is attached. I will be sending out surveys via a Qualtrics Survey that should take 10-15 minutes to complete and can be completed at home and submitted automatically. If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out. Please send me your form by **Wednesday, March 3rd at 5:00 p.m.**

I appreciate your time and participation!

APPENDIX L: SURVEY LINK EMAIL

Good afternoon!

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a short survey. Please follow this link to complete the survey:

https://ecu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eQjo0pcTz7P02mq

It should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. Please read the directions carefully and respond to the best of your ability. Please complete the survey by Wednesday, March 10th at noon.

Keep in mind all responses are confidential and your name will not be used. If you have any questions or need clarification on something feel free to contact me at any time via email or phone.

Thank you again for participating!

APPENDIX M: INTERVIEW REQUEST EMAIL

Good morning!

I wanted to thank you for completing the short survey last week for extra credit in your ACA 111 course. I appreciate the time you took out of your busy schedule. I would like to set up a one-on-one interview with you to get more information on how you think Lenoir Community College could improve student success and resources. The interview should last no more than 15 minutes and your responses will remain confidential; I will not share your personal information with anyone.

Would you be available to either sit down with me face-to-face one day when you are on campus or would you rather have an online interview on your computer?

I have the following times available this week and I can work around your schedule:

Wednesday, March 24

- Anytime between 8:00am-10:00am
- Anytime after 3:00pm

Thursday, March 25

- Anytime between 8:00am-3:00pm

Friday, March 26

- Anytime between 8:00am-5:00pm

I look forward to hearing back from you!

APPENDIX N: INTERVIEW CONFIRMATION EMAIL

Good morning, Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me Monday, March 29 at 10:00 via webex.

Topic: ACA 11 Interview

We will go over a few questions regarding Lenoir Community College and how we could improve student outcomes.

If you have any questions or need more information, please feel free to email or call me. If you have issues logging on please let me know.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate! I look forward to speaking with you.

APPENDIX O: STAKE HOLDER INVITATION EMAIL

Good afternoon,

I hope all is well with you. As you may be aware, I am enrolled at East Carolina University seeking a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership with a concentration in Higher Education Administration. I am currently in the Research Study data collection phase of my dissertation. You have been identified as a **collaborative inquiry partner** in my research study. I believe you have the ability to provide input and your opinion is valued.

The purpose of this mixed-methods, action research study is to identify socioeconomic barriers to student success and explore a strategy to implement an intervention to help students overcome those factors. By doing this research, we hope to learn how students are impacted in the classroom due to outside factors. In addition to what services the college offers that could help address those issues. These factors may include employment, family matters, transportation, child care, or financial problems.

I have reserved the Administration Auditorium for us to meet and review student responses to a survey that was sent out to ACA 111 students. I also interviewed four students. The purpose of the meeting is for us to discuss a possible intervention strategy that could be implemented to assist students enrolled at Lenoir Community College. The intervention will be based on student responses and suggestions. You do not have to prepare anything prior to the meeting. **If you are unable to attend the meeting in person please let me know and I will set up a webex link for you to attend virtually.**

If you have any questions about the meeting or my research please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX P: ACA 111 EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT

Good morning LCC ACA 111 Student!

I wanted to share an extra credit opportunity for you! Along with teaching ACA, I am the Director of Admissions here at Lenoir Community College. I am also a student at East Carolina University working on my Doctorate in Higher Education. I need your help as a student enrolled in ACA 111 at LCC.

My research is focused on how students are impacted in the classroom due to outside factors. In addition to what services the college offers that could help alleviate those issues. These factors may include employment, family matters, transportation, childcare, or financial problems.

I am attaching the Lancer Assistance Guide for your review. I encourage you to review the LAG and see how it can potentially help you while enrolled this semester. Next week I will send out a survey via a Qualtrics Survey that should take 10-15 minutes to complete and can be completed at home online and submitted automatically. The survey will ask you about the Lancer Assistance Guide and its impact on you as a student. If you complete the survey I will award you extra credit. Participation is not mandatory and will not negatively impact your grade in the course if you choose not to participate.

APPENDIX Q: ACA 111 POST-SURVEY ANNOUNCEMENT

Good afternoon, LCC ACA 111 Student!

I wanted to follow up with you about the extra credit opportunity mentioned last week! I hope you had an opportunity to review and utilize the Lancer Assistance Guide. Even if you were unable to use it within the last week, it is my hope you will be aware of those resources that could potentially help you in your future as you continue your educational journey.

I am including the link to the Participant Information Post-Survey in Qualtrics below. You may click the link below and it will take you to the Qualtrics Survey.

[Participant Information Post-Survey \(Qualtrics Survey - will open in new window\)](#)

The Qualtrics Survey should take 10-15 minutes to complete and may be completed at home online and submitted automatically. The survey will ask you about the Lancer Assistance Guide and its impact on you as a student. I have attached the LAG for you on this message in case you missed it last week. The survey will be 100% anonymous and your information will not be shared. The first question in the survey will ask you to sign electronically if you consent to participate and there will be a welcome message from me. Please be sure to answer both of those questions first. If you complete the survey I will award you extra credit. Participation is not mandatory and will not negatively impact your grade in the course if you choose not to participate. Please complete this survey by next Wednesday, September 15th.

If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out. I will send a follow-up email next Wednesday, September 15th.

I appreciate your time and participation!

