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EXPLORING BLACK STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL

FACTORS RELATED TO PERSISTENCE IN A CENTRAL TEXAS COMMUITY

COLLEGE SYSTEM

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EXPLORNG BLACK STUDENT PERCEPTONS OF INSTITUTIONAL

FACTORS RELATED TO PERSISTENCE IN A CENTRAL TEXAS

COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Stephanie Jones Hawley, B.A., M.S.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Michael, who has believed in me every step of the way; to my children Kojo, Saki, Ada, and Shani, whose flexibility, and love are incomparable; to my parents Kathleen and Henry Jones whose love and support inspired the completion of this work; to my siblings Eva, Jody, and Kitty whose encouragement has always been uplifting; to my father-in-law Lendell whose concern and experience enhanced my confidence; and to my late mother-in-law Mary Lou who encouraged me to enter the world of education.

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Exploring Black Student Perceptions of Institutional Factors Related to Persistence

in a Central Texas Community College System

Publication No._____

Stephanie Jones Hawley, Ph.D.
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Supervisor: William Moore

This exploration and analysis of Black student perceptions of institutional factors that support and impede their persistence in an urban community college system provide information for college administrators and personnel to use in the development of college policies and retention initiatives. Thirty-four Black students of varying ages and educational backgrounds participated in focus group and individual interviews for eight-weeks. Several common supportive factors emerged from the collective narratives: a welcoming atmosphere on one of six campuses and select exemplary faculty and staff on several campuses. Perceptions of common impeding factors included mono-cultural campus climates; ineffective communication methods; under prepared faculty and counselors; a lack of academic support; and limited opportunities for social interaction. Participants' articulated needs included better-prepared faculty and counselors, enhanced communication; and an increase in opportunities for academic integration and ethnic group social integration within the college system and the community. Researcher recommendations to college administrators included using the organization's values as a means to develop retention policies, as well as conducting additional qualitative studies to further explore the perceptions of older students and other ethnic minority students.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The quality of education for lower socioeconomic Black communities and other poor

people in urban areas is inarguably a case of "savage inequalities" as articulated by Kozol

(1992). The inequities of the K-12 experience, particularly in urban areas, are most often

magnified when Black students aspire to higher education. Students often find institutions

unprepared to meet their needs and also find themselves under prepared for the traditional

bureaucratic systems of colleges and universities.

Community colleges have traditionally provided Black students with better access to

education than universities (Blau 1999; Roueche et al. 2001), but fewer than a quarter of

the students will attain their academic goals in community colleges. Statistics with regard

to persistence rates are disconcerting, but Black students continue to enroll. Black

students are as diverse in their educational objectives as other students: some cite transfer

as a goal; others are uncertain of their goals; and a number are enhancing skills for the

workplace. They are no different from other community college students who arrive on

campuses with the expectation that institutions are prepared to meet their needs. Some

community college personnel are prepared for students, but many others continue

applying retention models and theories developed for White majority students.

Community colleges, more than any other postsecondary institutions are becoming more diverse and institutional practices must be examined for their efficacy for the growing population (Jalomo 2001; Zwerling 1992). Administrators and policy makers seeking appropriate paradigms and strategies to support Black student persistence should consider an examination of institutional influences on student achievement.

Despite the challenges and obstacles of educating the masses, community colleges continue to hold promise for those who have traditionally been excluded from four-year institutions. Affordability, proximity, and open access make community college the only choice for many African Americans (Gillett-Karam et al. 1991; Blau and Marshall 1996). The community college has also been described as a point of emancipation for marginalized groups:

> The community college is much like our symbolic image of the Statue of Liberty. Just as the Statue has become the image attached to immigrants' journey to freedom, the community college has become the image attached to the journey toward another freedom: the freedom provided by educational opportunity. The Statue of Liberty symbolizes open access to all immigrants; the community college symbolizes open access to all who seek higher education. Where opportunity has been denied, both the statue and the community college symbolize home for a new beginning (Gillett-Karam et al 1991, p.146).

Two-year institutions have the potential to change lives, but the colleges' deficits should be identified, explored and addressed. Procedural and structural changes are needed to prepare and support the students the community college beckons. If community colleges are to do more than *symbolize* hope, they must find ways to increase the possibility of success for the 46 percent of Black undergraduates who attend two-year institutions (American Association of Community Colleges 2003).

 Black 'outsiders' must constantly adapt to a system that is often unconscious of their needs. Unfortunately, too few adapt and overcome institutional impediments. Case study research of four-year undergraduates prompted researcher Stikes (1984) to note, "The adaptations black students make on campus are significant from their point of view and need to be understood." A disproportionate number of Black students have not been able to benefit from higher education as it is currently structured. The retention rates of many urban colleges reveal a lack of awareness about how to support Black students and an inability to make systemic adjustments to help "integrate them into the academic and social fabric of the institutions" as advocated by retention theorists (Astin 1978; Tinto 1987).

The At-Risk College

An interrogation of two-year colleges indicates they are deficient in their ability to foster growth, learning, and the development of Black students as evidenced by their success rates (retention, transfer graduation, and certificate completion). Beyond the inclusion of Black student organizations as a part of Student Life, few accommodations are obvious in

urban two-year colleges. Many community colleges are 'at-risk' in terms of their ability to meet the needs of African American students.

Researchers have found that community college students, regardless of ethnicity, are 10 to 18 times more likely to drop out of two-year institutions than universities (Astin 1975). Many educators point to under prepared students and some researchers articulate personal, environmental and cultural factors as explanations for student attrition at the community college.

The personal backgrounds of Black students can not be altered, however, the community college can examine its own organizational practices with regard to supporting the social and academic integration needed for success. Administrators should seek effective methods to reduce dropouts, stop-outs and "drain-out"--"students who are excluded from the college because of administrative directives and institutional policies" (Moore 1976).

Tinto (1975; 1993) and Astin (1984) assert that social and academic integration are critical in order to increase the retention of postsecondary student, however, some researchers contend that "community colleges do not integrate their students socially and academically as strongly as do four-year colleges" (Dougherty 1994; Braxton,Vesper and Hossleer 1995; Nora 1987).

Researchers specifically concerned with ethnic minority retention believe validation is also a missing factor in the education of nontraditional postsecondary students. Validation is a multi-faceted process that supports non-traditional student development in dominant culture institutions (Rendon 1994).

Barriers to student success also include low expectations on the part of community college faculty (Brint and Karabel 1989; Cohen and Brawer 1989). Unfortunately low expectations are often manifested in a lack of attention and encouragement provided for students (Persell 1977). Students respond accordingly by withdrawing their investment of energy and commitment to the course and the professor (Weis 1985).

Part of the institutional failure to meet the needs of African American students lies in a failure to engage students in dialogue about institutional effectiveness. Black community college student needs are different from others ethnic groups, particularly with regard to financial aid and positive faculty-student interaction (Hurtado 1997; Hurtado and Garcia 1994). Studies by Mallinckrodt (1988) also determined that Black students identified institutional factors (faculty, staff, campus climate, and peer support) as primary influences on their success, whereas White students cited family support as a primary factor. Researchers have identified the availability of financial aid as a critical factor in their persistence toward their academic goals (Saenz 2002).

After an analysis of barriers in Predominantly White Institutions (PWI's) undergraduate programs, Jones (2001) found, regardless of academic preparation and socioeconomic status, Black students face impediments that include hostile attitudes from faculty, isolation from peers, and exclusion from social networks.

Some researchers posit that the "lack of congruency" between Black students cultural background and the pervasiveness of White culture is disconcerting and creates both isolation and alienation (Loo and Rolison 1986). Hunt, et al. (1994) argue that PWI's are not designed in the interests of African-American students and should be abandoned as a choice by those who are not acculturated to dominant cultural norms. They point to hostile campuses, cultural alienation, mono-cultural curricula, and "White created standards" as barriers to Black student success and social integration (Taylor-Gibbs 1989; Sedlacek 1999).

While attending more culturally congruent Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) is an option for some Black students, many will have to rely on the proximity, convenience, and affordability of the community college. An increasing number of African Americans will be compelled to attend two-year institutions, however, models for the success of Black community college students remain under developed.

Models and theories abound as descriptions of retention and attrition processes for dominant culture postsecondary students, however, Rendon et al. (2002, p.152) summarize the importance of praxis in the refinement of theories and models:

> …the goal of student retention research transcends making conceptual modifications in theoretical models. In the end students will elect to stay or leave college not so much because of theory, but because college and university faculty and administrators have made transformative shifts in governance, curriculum development, in-and-out-of class teaching and learning, student programming, and the institutional dimensions that affect students on a daily basis. Consequently, connecting retention research to field practitioners and policy makers in new and creative ways that involve collaborative relationships and mutual learning experiences can take student retention research to a whole new level of theoretical accuracy and applicability.

This case study was designed to explore and analyze Black student perceptions of institutional influences on their persistence and inform praxis and policies of community college organizations. The findings provide educators and policy makers at the College with insight into the specific ways campus factors influence student experiences and the means to strengthen the supportive factors identified by study participants.

Problem Area

Supporting Black student achievement is a challenge for most community colleges, however, the persistence rates of African American students at urban institutions in particular are extremely low. Current quantitative effectiveness measures do not capture Black student perceptions of factors that affect goal attainment. Survey data do not provide the insight needed to identify student needs (Bangura 1992). Quantitative measures are traditional and convenient methods to learn about student satisfaction levels and attitudes, but these measures are not designed to explore student experiences and perceptions. Without the insight provided by qualitative research, systemic changes needed to support Black student achievement will be difficult to develop and implement.

Retention literature indicates that many institutional factors have a direct impact on the success of Black students: campus climate, campus services (counseling, advising, financial aid, academic support), faculty interaction, learning experiences, peer interaction, counseling, classroom interactions, student activities, and community interactions. These institutional factors can support or impede the achievement of students, regardless of ethnicity.

Statement of the Problem

Urban Community College (pseudonym for the case study site) has been unable to support Black student success. The four-year completion rates of African-American students pursuing two-year degrees at Urban Community College (UCC) are below those

of peer institutions in the state. Qualitative data are needed to provide insight into African American students' experiences at the college.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze Black community college student perceptions of a range of institutional factors that affect their persistence to academic goal attainment. Study results and implication were used to propose policies and practices to enhance the overall experience of Black students at the study site.

Research Questions

1. What are student perceptions of institutional factors that influence persistence?

2. What are student perceptions of institutional factors that impede persistence?

3. Which institutional factors do students use to overcome perceived institutional barriers to persistence?

4. What are student recommendations to improve the experiences of Black students?

These questions were developed to frame the exploration of student perceptions. Student narratives are used exclusively to answer the questions about facilitating and impeding factors. Responses to Research Question #3 provided additional insight into supportive factors within the College. Recommendations revealed student perceptions of

institutional needs, as well as what they perceive the College should provide for Black

students.

Significance of the Study

Understanding how African American students perceive the College allows

administrators and personnel to develop policies and processes that facilitate student

achievement and increase institutional effectiveness. Student perceptions of this

particular community college can provide some insight into improving institutional

effectiveness at other urban institutions.

African Americans who choose the community college, like all students, need responsive

services and environments in order to grow intellectually, pursue their academic goals,

and compete in both local and global economies. Analyzing the perceptions of students

who have chosen to enroll and those who have persisted will provide information that can

assist the institution in efforts to better understand and serve Black community college

students. The importance of institutional effectiveness to all stakeholders in

postsecondary schools is articulated by Baird (1980):

> They [students, administrators, counselors] should know about the
>
> complexities of an institution's environment—that is, the interplay among
>
> its people, processes, and things. Important aspects of a college's
>
> environment are the perceptions, expectations, satisfactions, and
>
> dissatisfactions of the people who make up the college community with

whom they meet or communicate. An understanding of how their college

works, how it differs from other colleges, how the members perceive its

realities, and how they react to their perceptions is important so that

decision makers can avoid actions that would be detrimental to their

college. Administrators and faculty members can use environmental

information to compare their institution with similar colleges in order to

identify areas where changes are needed, to make suggestions about how

to improve the environment, and to measure the effectiveness of these

changes. Also this information can be used to identify areas of agreement

and disagreement among an institutions' significant subgroups and sub-

environments about policies, goals, facilities, and priorities.

This study's findings provide additional information about the experiences of Black

students and have the potential to promote an exploration of factors influencing the

perceptions of other ethnic groups enrolled in the College.

Limitations

The perceptions of human beings can never be fully understood or empirically measured.

Verification of students' "feelings," intuition, and interpretations is beyond the scope and

capacity of this or any qualitative study, however, student views of reality are of value to

the institution.

Qualitative research, and case study in particular is limited in terms of its ability to be generalized beyond the study participants; these students' perceptions do, however, provide insight into the needs of African American students and institutional effectiveness for students in similar institutions and communities. Time and resources did not permit a full participatory inquiry, however, the students were able to articulate their experiences and perceptions, as well as discuss strategies for success.

Assumptions

Students' personalities, backgrounds, and environmental factors also influence individual decisions to persist, and institutional factors alone do not account for persistence (Moore 1970; Bean and Metzner 1985; Sampson 2002; Grimes; Roueche 1993). It is assumed that students who are failing, dropped, stopped-out or drained out may have more negative perceptions of institutional factors. A cross-section of students was interviewed, and it was anticipated that student perceptions would not be monolithic across generations and academic status levels. Most importantly, it was assumed that the institution's leadership is interested in learning about student perceptions and the implementation of policies and practices to promote student success.

Chapter Summary

Supporting the academic success of African Americans has been a problem in urban colleges. Models and theories developed for dominant culture students are not always effective in describing the institutional influences on Black students. Leadership is not

always aware of the factors influence student persistence. Viewing the institution through the eyes of "those most affected" will provide an important perspective about how institutions can identify the needs of African American students and support their persistence.

While it is assumed that perceptions can never be fully understood or empirically tested, information provided from first-hand accounts can be used to draw conclusions about the College's effect on student persistence. Retention theorists urge researchers to engage in studies that will promote praxis with regard to student success. This exploration and analysis of Black student experiences at one Central Texas urban community college provides information with implications for both practices and policies to support Black student achievement.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This survey of literature includes a brief synopsis of retention and attrition theories; studies about Black postsecondary student retention; and research about the imperative for qualitative research with regard to institutional effectiveness. The paucity of qualitative studies conducted solely about Black community college student perceptions of institutional factors necessitated the inclusion of quantitative research and literature about both four-year institutions and secondary schools.

The second part of the literature review was developed and organized to gain insight into specific institutional factors that Black students in other undergraduate institutions have articulated as key to their success. Qualitative studies included in the review involve case study, interviews, interactive qualitative analysis, focus groups, observations, and naturalistic inquiry, however, some employ quantitative measures. The emergent factors and themes in the literature review were used to develop unstructured interview questions and prompts for the focus group and individual interview sessions. While some of the factors were altered and replaced, the same factors were used as a means to begin the initial organization and thematic coding of the data from Phase I.

Retention and Attrition Models and Theories

Five different approaches to the study of retention have been identified by researchers and retention theorists: economic, societal, psychological, organizational and 'interactionalist'. Economic models emphasize the cost and benefits of a higher education to the individual. Societal research considers the impact of dropouts on the society while psychological constructs examine the psychological maturity of individuals. Organizational constructs focus on the institutional characteristics that influence retention and the interactionalist approach considers the interaction between the student and the institution (Braxton et al. 1997).

Much of the retention and attrition literature before the 1980's is mono-cultural in scope. Rootman (1972) constructed the Person-role fit model, which emphasized the individual's background and traits with institutional expectations. The assumption that race, culture, gender, and ethnicity had no role in the understanding of the differences in the decisions to persist or depart from college is evident. Many retention models, theories, and studies ignore critical social and cultural factors that impact student experiences (Hurtado 1997).

Much of the more contemporary literature tends to subsume all 'non-white' students under the 'minority' rubric, which does not always allow for an examination of the issues that are germane to particular groups. Hurtado developed one of the few models that encompasses the social and cultural dynamics of ethnicity, class, and sexuality. While the model is based on four-year students, it provides insight into social engagement and

psychological perspectives that promote an understanding of the complexities of culturally diverse student bodies. The model illuminates the complexity of culture and the differences in social adaptation. Braxton (2000) notes that much of the postsecondary retention research over the past decade years centers on Blacks and Hispanics, but studies about American Indians, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and other groups are also critical.

Many studies about Black students, regardless of the students' socioeconomic level and background, tend to focus on cognitive and non-cognitive deficits: a lack of motivation, a lack of persistence; a lack of financial support and "normative problems" (Lang and Ford 1988; Taylor 1989; Wilson 2000). African American students are often compared to White middle class students; their socioeconomic backgrounds analyzed; locus of control measured; and degrees of helplessness categorized (Nettles and Gosman 1986), and with the exception of customer satisfaction surveys, they are rarely engaged in dialogue about institutional effectiveness. Students are often acted upon: admitted, tested, sorted, referred, and placed (Harrington and Sum 1999; Armstrong 2001). Theories of unmotivated minority student reluctance to acculturate and assimilate to the dominant culture are cited as the root of the problem with little examination of systemic problems (Braxton 2000, p.129). An understanding of divers student backgrounds helps college personnel to meet their needs and expectations, but myths and stereotypes of individual and cultural pathologies create diversions and does not encourage investigations of institutional factors.

Caplan and Nelson (1973) were among the first researchers to delineate between "person-centered and situation-centered problems." Person-centered researchers were more prone to look at the individual and the problems of persistence as residing exclusively within individuals and or their "disadvantaged" cultures (Braxton 2000; Valencia 1997). However, Merritt et al. (1977) and Allen (1988) are among several researchers who continued to pursue person-centered models by looking at the skills and traits of successful Black students: "coping with racism, positive identification with the College; ability to become bicultural (understanding self and institutional culture); possess strong support systems; and strong leadership skills."

Interactionalist models and theories by Bean and Metzner (1985) Pascarella et al. (1986), Tinto (1987) and Spady (1970) identify the confluence of institutional factors and individual traits that contribute to student persistence and attrition: personal traits, academic preparation, institutional commitment, environment, and institutional characteristics. Pascarella and Terenzini (1979) note the absence of significant interactions with other college members as the single leading predictor of college attrition." Interactionalist theorists, particularly Tinto and Astin agree that the degree to which students become socially involved or 'integrated' is a great predictor of persistence toward academic goals. These theories provide valuable insight about the complexity of persistence and certainly have some applicability to African American students. Several educators and researchers contend that African American students need the presence of

significant numbers African-American students and faculty (Tinto 1987, p. 210; Karam-Gillett 1991 p.221 and Wright 1987).

Boylan, Erwin, Saxon and White (1994) found that a study of institutional factors is appropriate in an effort to alleviate minority student attrition:

> Non cognitive support systems for minority students in American colleges and universities in fact are a major factor in their attrition. Many minority students do not have access to services designed to improve their academic skills, develop their self-esteem and enhance their coping skills.

The researchers' point is confirmed by additional research by Love (1993) and Glenn (2001) in studies that indicate the importance of the influence of institutional factors. Underlying the well-taken point about a lack of college support systems, is the assumption that minorities are deficient, by virtue of their ethnic minority status. African American students account for 23 percent of remedial students (Boylan et al 1994), however, 'Black,' 'minority,' 'of color,' ' under prepared,' 'remedial,' and 'at-risk' appear to be fungible terms in the literature. Implied is the idea that any of the existing programs designed for at-risk or under prepared learners should meet the needs of Black students (Kozleski et al 1993; Boylan et al 1994; Lang and Ford 1988). However, in-depth qualitative analyses of student perceptions, staff attitudes and behaviors,

organizational deficiencies, and the overall lack of preparation on the part of colleges to provide support for the Black students are seldom conducted.

Institutional Surveys and Case Studies

Richardson and de los Santos (1988) conducted a three-year national study of ten predominantly White colleges and universities that have achieved success in graduating minority students over a ten-year period. While this research categorizes all "non white" students under one label, the recommendations have some applicability for institutions seeking systemic change. The study results indicate that success for other institution can be replicated if administrators and leaders engage in the following strategies:

1. announce their commitment to dismantle racial and ethnic inequities
2. be prepared to spend money, time, and staff to recruit retain, and graduate minority students
3. utilize minority leaders from the community
4. track their progress
5. provide campus-wide support services to minority students
6. emphasize quality
7. reach out to community churches and organizations
8. bridge the educational gap by providing more tutoring, extended classes, and supportive labs
9. hire more diverse instructors and reward good teaching

10. create and maintain a comfortable learning environment for all minority

students and instructors

The researchers contend that an adherence to these practices will provide the support needed by minority students. While this study indicated what is needed in the structuring of environment for minorities, specific systemic changes needed for Black students at the selected institutions are not addressed.

The *Transition to College Project* study (Rendon et al. 1994, pp. 44-45) was designed to discover how engagement in academic and non-academic experiences influenced students. One hundred and thirty freshmen students of varying ethnicities and backgrounds from four different four-year and two-year institutions in a Mid Atlantic state were interviewed. Findings suggest that "the most vulnerable nontraditional students can be transformed into powerful learners through in-class and out-of class academic an/or interpersonal validation." The researcher also noted that involvement in college is not easy for nontraditional students and suggests that "validation" may be a prerequisite for involvement to occur. She outlines the basic tenets of the validation model as it pertains to ethnic minority students:

1. Validation is an enabling, confirming and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that foster academic and interpersonal development.

2. When validation is present, students feel capable of learning; they experience a feeling of self worth and feel that they, and everything that they bring to the college experience, are accepted and recognized as valuable. Lacking validation, students feel crippled, silenced, subordinate and/or mistrusted.

3. Like involvement, validation is a prerequisite to student development.

4. Validation can occur both in- and out-of-class. In-class validating agents include faculty, classmates, lab instructors, and teaching assistants…

5. Validation suggests a developmental process. It is not an end in itself.

6. The more students get validated, the richer the academic and interpersonal experience

According to the Project researchers, validation is most effective when offered early on in the student's college experience during the first year of college and during the first weeks of class. According to Rendon, validation requires initiative on the part of the institution. The findings from the *Transitions to College Project* indicate ethnic minority student perceptions of involvement may be different from the traditional definition. She further notes:

It appears that nontraditional students do not perceive involvement as them taking the initiative. They perceive it when someone takes an active role in assisting them. The role of the institution is fostering validation is

active—it involves faculty, counselor, coaches, and administrators actively

reaching out to students or designing activities that promote active

learning and interpersonal growth among students, faculty and staff…

Expecting students to involve themselves with the social and academic

infrastructures of an institution will work only for students who have the

skills to gain access to these opportunities. Clearly some students will be

able to get involved on heir own. But, merely offering opportunities for

involvement will not work for passive students or for those who do not

know how to take full advantage of the system. What is needed is the

active academic and interpersonal validation of these students—a process

that affirms, supports, enables, and reinforces their capacity to fully

develop themselves as students and as individuals (p.45).

While Rendon's study includes the perceptions of other ethnic minorities and dominant

culture students, the specific needs of African American students are not articulated.

Glenn (2001) however, conducted a study of Black male student retention in Texas

community colleges using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The survey of sixty-

one colleges and two case studies revealed campus factors that enhanced graduation and

success rates: freshman-only advising; orientation courses for credit; monitoring of at-

risk student attendance, targeting minority groups with specific retention plans; and

required tutorial and mentoring activities for certain at-risk students.

Love (1993) determined interaction with faculty, institutional leadership, finances, social

interaction, and student services as variables having the greatest impact on Black student

persistence. Gates (1989) found through research of an exemplary retention program

(commended by the U.S. Department of Education) at Delaware State College that a

number of factors contributed to the 84 percent retention rate between 1977 and 1981. A

required orientation program, identification of students who were academically

challenged; an early warning system; intense counseling; tutoring; and academic

workshops for freshmen are a part of the program.

Campus Climate

 Pope (1998) and Escamilla (2001) found campus receptivity tends to be one of great

importance to Black student persistence. The study of Black, Hispanic and Anglo student

persistence factors indicates that Blacks, more so than other ethnicities "scrutinize the

campus in order to determine how comfortable and friendly campus environments were"

(p.166). Allen (1991) asserts that Black student alienation on predominantly white

campuses is derived from their perception of the racial climate and consequently may

adversely affect and limit their academic achievement.

Support Services

In a comparative study of male and female perceptions of persistence factors in a Dallas,

Texas community college, Ihekwaba (2001) found that while both men and women

considered family an influencing factor, both groups articulated college resources, financial aid, career services, counseling services, advising and registration assistance (p.258-259) as contributors to their persistence. Participants in a qualitative study of Black student persistence at Moraine Valley Community College identified Financial Aid, Tutoring Services, Job Placement Services, Student Support Services, the Minority Transfer Center and the Disability Office as resources critical to their achievement (Turner 2003).

Financial aid has been cited as a key campus resource for retaining African-American students. The lack of funding and assistance to students from lower socioeconomic levels is detrimental to enrollment and persistence (Roueche and Roueche 1993 p. 253). Clewell and Ficklen (1986) confirm the importance of financial aid in the persistence levels of African American students and see the inability of an institution to provide assistance as an obstacle at the majority of institutions. Carter (1988) determined that over 80 percent of Black students at private colleges and 90 percent of African American students at public colleges have received federal financial aid (p.89). The study also determined that "the consequences of the trends" in increased tuition and reduced financial aid has caused Black parents to look at alternatives, including prepaid tuition, tuition gift certificates, and innovative loan programs with lending institutions.

A study of four North Carolina community colleges by Glass and Garrett (1995) found semester-long orientation programs increased goal attainment by students of all

ethnicities. Researchers at the University of South Carolina also found the Freshman

Seminar Program to help retain higher numbers of African Americans from the freshman

to the sophomore year than Whites (Bilal 1996 p.42). Coll and Von Seggern (1991)

reported that freshman orientation and pre-college orientation programs allowed students

to preview college expectations and begin the socialization process. These studies

indicate the importance of an extended formal orientation into the college.

Mason (1998) conducted a study of African American male persistence in a Chicago

community college in an effort to develop a persistence model. Among the institutional

factors that directly affected student persistence toward their goals, the researcher found

counseling (encouragement from alumni and mentors). Findings from Mallinckrodt

(1988) and Mason's studies resulted in several institutional changes: coordinated

advising; academic skills workshops; financial aid workshops; job placement seminars;

faculty and staff training to prepare them for student support; and community outreach

programs.

Dorsey (1996) conducted a quantitative study of males at an urban college in Baltimore

and based on those findings suggests that institutions provide mentoring programs, study

skills workshops, and orientation programs. The critical nature of mentoring programs

was confirmed by a qualitative study conducted by Harris and Fletcher (1999). After

studying the effects of school and county characteristics on community college student

transfer rates, Blau (1999) found that African American community college transfer

rates were higher in large schools where day care services are provided.

Mallinckrodt and Sedlacek (1987) determined use of the recreational facilities,

involvement in the student government and campus employment were key to students

completion. The researchers assert that these activities promote social integration into

"the entire campus community" and thereby support persistence and academic

achievement.

Academic Learning Experiences

 At the heart of the community college education is the classroom learning experience.

Cohen and Brawer (1996) point out the importance of both social and academic

involvement in the classroom because of the transient nature of the community college.

Part-time students, adjunct faculty and a commuter culture diminish opportunities for

social and academic integration. The classroom becomes one of the only spaces where

reasonable opportunities for interaction and the development of relationships can take

place Tinto (1993).

Learning communities and interdisciplinary courses have increased the participation and

success of students of all ethnicities. Seattle Community College System, Evergreen

College and studies at Berkley and the University of Texas at Austin by Treisman (1992)

have demonstrated the efficacy of 'communities of learners.' Treisman found the

academic performance of African American and Hispanic students exceeded those of

Whites and Asians when students were organized and encouraged to tutor and support

one another's academic development. Social interaction coupled with intensive time

invested inn learning Calculus concepts resulted in a superior performance.

Education professor and researcher, Perry (2003) developed a theory describing the

importance of "intentional intellectual communities." The theory confirms the results of

Treisman's study of African-American and Hispanic student performance after

participating in the tutorial and peer-supported groups. Perry's intentional intellectual

communities are groups of students organized for academic purposes. Intellectualism

becomes a part of both their individual and organizational identity. Perry supports her

theory with studies conducted in South Carolina with low-income K-12 students

organized into academic cohorts. After having been engaged in the group, the students

out performed their upper middle class peers in the same school district.

Perry elucidates further on her findings and theory with examples from higher education:

> African-American youth succeed in educational settings that have a
> leveling culture, a culture of achievement that extends to all of its
> members. African-American children and youth succeed in higher
> education institutions that in themselves—or in special programs, like the
> Meyerhoff Scholars at the University of Maryland at Baltimore—
> intentionally craft a social identity for African-American students as
> achievers. Even institutions that don't respond or pay attention to African-

American culture seem able to counter society's ideology about Black

intellectual incompetence if they have established a strong culture of

achievement and view African-American students as full participants.

That appears to be the case even when African-American students

encounter individual teachers who do not see them as intellectually

competent (p.3).

Faculty Interaction

Faculty are key to student success according to many researchers (Roueche and Roueche

1993, p.115; Pascarella and Terenzini 1979; Tinto 1993; Weddington 1976). Their

attitudes, preparation, and commitment to understanding and teaching learners of all

competencies and ethnicities is critical, and has been discussed over the past few decades

as pointed out by Moore (1970):

Just as there are [B]lack student who are marginal in their achievement

there are many times more [W]hites; and there are, of course, Mexicans

and Puerto Ricans. The problem is more one of commitment to a quality

educational program…The problem requires teachers with know-how…it

demands complete knowledge and understanding of the learner" (pp.222-

223).

Townsend (1994) confirms that faculty engagement is a significant factor in student retention and found that "difficulties with faculty interaction as the key reason why Black students decide to leave college."

Faculty-student reactions were determined to be the critical factor in student retention because of their impact on grade point averages, increased satisfaction with the college, decreased feelings of alienation in a number of qualitative and quantitative studies" (Endo 1982; Fleming 1984).

Student contact with faculty inside and outside of the classroom increases student's probabilities for success. Implications of Dorsey's 1994 study of urban males indicate that instruction provided by faculty with a special interest in African-American males. La Ganga (1999) confirms the strategy of hiring and training faculty with an interest in teaching diverse populations.

Allen & Haniff (1991) determined that African-American student perceptions of the campus climate are related to their perceptions of the their relationships with faculty and other personnel. Bilal (1996) found positive student-faculty relationships as a prime variable affecting students' grade point averages and engagement in the classroom

Peer Interaction

Regardless of where they occur, the relationships students develop with peers positively impact their connections with the college. Spradley 2001 has found that urban male adults academic support increased with peer support. Academic achievement and classroom interaction increased over the course of the semester.

Critical Mass was revealed as the most important campus element because it is the resource for the peer interaction. Critical mass increases the likelihood of culture and community development that facilitate relationship development (Person and Christensen 1996). Opportunities for community development occur with sufficient numbers of other Black students as revealed in Hughes' (1987) phenomenological study. Social networks provide support for success.

Opportunities for Community Connections

 Black male persistence toward goals was enhanced by participation in community-based organizations (Spradley 2001). The researcher found that students' grades improved substantially because of volunteer work and civic engagement. Cobb (1995) notes that "give back to my community thinking" is an important part of both the social and academic integration of African American students.

A 1996 Oberlin College study emphasized the role of service learning in their efforts to help students persist toward their goals. Extensive survey results revealed that "the greatest influence on graduation was an involvement in community service (Paine 2003). The Center for Service and Learning found that African American students were over represented in the program. The college also found their overall graduation rate was 87 percent, but the Black graduation rate was 91.4 percent. Paine concluded that students were committed to applying their on-campus learning in multicultural settings.

Chapter Summary

Most existing models and theories do not provide specific information about the institutional factors that affect African American students. However, the validation model developed from the *Transitions to College Project* provides a framework for understanding how both in- class and out-of- class validating factors influence students.

Institutional factors that affect African-American student success emerged from the literature review include campus climate, faculty interaction, learning experiences, peer interaction, academic support, counseling, classroom interactions, and community interactions. The emergent themes were used to prompt responses during individual and focus group interviews.

 Many studies in the literature review *describe* factors that converge to influence student success, but do not explain *how* they affect students, nor do they detail the experiences

that create student perceptions. Other studies include the voices (qualitative input) of undergraduate students at four-year institutions, however, few studies include Black community college students' exclusive responses to the range of institutional factors they perceive as influencing their persistence. In many studies, African-American students— not their perceptions-- are treated as objects of investigation as opposed to participants in articulating challenges and changes needed within the institution. The following qualitative study adds to the body of knowledge about institutional influences on the educational experiences of African American community college students.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Overview

This chapter describes the methodology and the rationale for the choice of qualitative

methodology with a naturalistic approach. The employment of case study, focus groups,

and unstructured interviews are described. Included in the chapter are a reiteration of the

purpose of the study, the research questions, the research design, problem, participants,

sampling method and rationale, data collection, and data analysis.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to explore and analyze African-American student

perceptions of institutional factors that influence their academic achievement at the

selected site. Student perceptions provided insight into the facilitating and impeding

factors with regard to their persistence. Implications were used to make recommendations

to the institution's leadership to strengthen or implement policies and practices to support

Black student success. While this study was an exploration of student perceptions and

interactions within the institution, the findings were used to recommend systemic and

organization change.

Research Questions

1. What are Black student perceptions of institutional factors that influence

   persistence?

2. What are Black student perceptions of institutional factors that impede persistence?

3. Which institutional factors do students use to overcome perceived barriers?

4. What are participants' recommendations to improve services to Black students?

Research Design

Qualitative research design is often described as emergent or evolving because the nature of this type of inquiry is often exploratory (Tillman 1990; Mertens 1997). A qualitative methodology will be used in the exploration of student perceptions of institutional factors that influence their persistence.

Qualitative research allows for a rich explanation of perceptions and experiences. Patton (1985) asserts:

> "Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations and their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting—what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, why their meanings are, what the

world looks like I that particular setting…The analysis strive for depth of understanding.

The rationale for using a qualitative approach is confirmed by Mertens (1998): "…qualitative methods have led to insights into the cultural values, institutional practices, and interpersonal interactions that influence special education practice." Patton (1990) asserts that deep inquiry and direct quotations provide a perspective that best captures the story and circumstances of the participants."

The population defined for participation in the study necessitates a qualitative approach. According to Stanfield (2000), inquiry into the experiences and perspectives of African Americans are best understood through a qualitative lens. Bangura (1992) notes the limitations of quantitative strategies to understand retention issues and factors with regard to Black students.

 Johnson (2002) reports the conclusions of retention model critics, Attinasi and Tierney about the importance of qualitative data gathering in the understanding student persistence and departure:

> …they [Attinasi and Tierney] agree on three significant points for retention research. First each claims research on student departure should be qualitative, favoring discourse-oriented approach. Second, they both argue that this discourse-oriented research must be culturally sensitive or

culturally based, preserving the context within which decision to depart or persist are made. Finally, Attinasi and Tierney independently base their own discourse-oriented research on the assumption that when students decide to persist or depart they so within the context of a socially constructed reality (p.159).

This exploratory study is both "culturally sensitive and culturally based" in that African American community college students share experiences among other African American students and in the natural setting of the College in a space designated for Black student socialization.

Phenomenological Approach

This approach to research focuses on "experiences believed to be important sociological or psychological phenomena of our time or typical of out time or typical of a group people

…and transitions that are common or of contemporary interest (Tesch 1984). This study is an exploration of Black student perceptions of factors that affect persistence, "a topic of interest" and importance to students, researchers and administrators. Merriam and Associates (2002, p. 93) assert, "The defining characteristic of phenomenological research is its focus on describing the 'essence' of a phenomenon from the perspectives for those who have experienced it." An exploration of these students' perceptions is a means to both describe and analyze what students articulate as their "lived experiences."

Naturalistic Inquiry

A naturalistic inquiry approach was implemented in the design of this study. Naturalistic inquiry is described as "holistic, non-linear, iterative process, whereby subjective reality is created by the observer." Undergirding the approach is the belief that those who have the experience are the most knowledgeable. Participants will remain in a natural or appropriate setting for the interviews. This approach is often contrasted with positivist approaches that "seek to control" the environment for quantitative measurement. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe a few of the interdependent and most salient characteristics of naturalistic inquiry: "research is conducted in a natural setting, human instruments are used for data-gathering; purposeful sampling; and case study as a method of reporting."

This study also includes elements of critical theory, in that it is " race specific," and includes participatory aspects, however, the purpose was to explore and understand student perceptions as opposed to promoting activism on the part of the participants.

Case Study

Berg (1998) explains that case study methods involve systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how it operates or functions. It is not actually a data-gathering technique in itself, but a methodological approach that incorporates a number of data-gathering measures (Hamel et al. 1993). Stake (1994) notes that case study is not a methodology, but is a method by which researchers learn about a specific subject, site

or instance and report the findings. Schwandt (1997) posits that "the case is the "object" of the study… " The College is the object of this particular study, however, it will be examined through the perceptions and narratives of the students."

Focus Groups

Focus groups are used in an effort to capture understanding from the vantage points of the participant group. The principal reason for using focus groups is to allow participants to discuss and share ideas that can be developed, questioned, and challenged. Dynamics between individuals provide a "synergy" that enhances the descriptive data. The group members interact to generate the description and solutions to common problems (Berg 1998). With regard to research, Stage and Manning (2003) explain the strengths of focus group interviews:

> One participant may have to defend or provide further explanation for his or her belief because it directly conflicts with another participant's experience. The publicly expressed statement of disagreement, conflict, and conviction allows the researcher to interpret the meaning possessed by the participant…When participants publicly defend their responses in the presence of others and within the context of challenges expressed by fellow group members, the researcher witnesses the strength of the convictions held. This dynamic adds to the richness of the data as well as the power and meaning of the study's findings (p.51).

Further, the researchers indicate that the discussion takes place among the participants as well as with the facilitator. Rossman and Rallis (1998) confirm the importance of group interaction:

> The interaction among the participants is the critical characteristic of this type of interviewing. This technique assumes that an individual's attitudes and beliefs do not form in a vacuum. People often need to listen to others' opinions and understandings to clarify their own.

Researchers suggest focus groups should contain no more than seven to ten participants (Krueger 1994). Research synthesis by Axelrod (1975) and Morgan (1989) yields eight key elements of an effective focus group; these elements were used in the preparation, development, and facilitation of the groups:

> A clearly defined objective and or research problem; the nature of the group; conducive atmosphere and environment; an aware listening facilitator; a well- organized and prepared facilitator; facilitator guidance, but restrained contribution; research assistance; and systemic analysis.

Krueger (1988) notes the important characteristics and protocol of focus group questions: brainstorm questions with participants, interviews should include fewer than 10 questions, establish the context of the question focus on open-

ended questions, avoid "why" questions. Students will help define the

areas and themes for discussion.

The limitations of focus groups include the persuasive nature of one participant's views

on others. Stage and Manning (2003, p.55) warn again "groupthink" and consensus.

Introverted students may also be reluctant to share perspectives that are in conflict with

the group. These limitations require "vigilance" on the part of the facilitator to encourage

and provide opportunities for less vocal group members (p.56).

The Site

Urban Community College is a multi-campus institution located in a Central Texas city.

The College is comprised of several campuses of varying sizes and enrollments. For the

purposes of this case study, pseudonyms will used as references to the campus sites and

personnel.

UCC leadership fosters the concept of "one institution" as a means of managing and

distributing resources. Campuses are located throughout the city in diverse

neighborhoods: northern and southern suburbs, an inner city site, locations in the

downtown business area, and others in the eastern and western sectors of the city.

The campus site of the study (Cypress Hill Campus) was purposely selected. It is one of

the smaller campuses, however, the highest percentage of African American students

attend classes on the site and the African American Student Organization also meets

regularly on the campus. It is also the only site with an African American Cultural

Center. Campus characteristics and demographics enhanced the opportunity to select a

cross section of participants. References made to other campuses throughout the study

include Laurel Creek, Lakeside, Oceana, Red River, and Crestview.

While the study was conducted on one campus, student perceptions of the entire college

were sought. More than half of the college's students attend classes on multiple

campuses, therefore most students were able to provide perceptions of other campuses

and impressions of the college as an organization.

The Problem

Urban Community College has been unable to support Black student success. The four-

year completion rate of African-American students pursuing two-year degrees at Urban

Community College (UCC) are below those of peer institutions in the state. Qualitative

data are needed to provide insight into African American students' experiences at the

college.

Sampling

Purposeful sampling which included maximum variation and chain sampling were used

to select participants. McMillan (2000, p.108) refers to purposeful sampling as

"judgement sampling." Glaser and Strauss (1967) posited that selecting "widely varying

instances of a phenomenon would yield "conceptually dense and more useful data."

Patton (1990, p.172) suggests that " Findings from even a small sample of great diversity provides important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity." Chain sampling (referrals from members of the designated community) allowed the researcher to identify students who represent a cross-section of the Black student population enrolled in academic programs.

In an effort to select participants at varying academic levels and ages, students were extended oral invitations to participate in the study in first-year and second-year classes, as well as evening classes. The researcher visited four developmental writing classes; two sophomore level Government classes; two Black History classes, two evening classes; and during several African American Student Organization meetings. Participants were also encouraged to invite peers to participate in the study. Students were solicited on the Cypress Hill Campus exclusively, however, the majority of students attend classes on two or more campuses. The researcher contacted, screened, and scheduled students for focus group sessions**.** Eight key informants, those students who have persisted to goal completion (completers), were selected through snowball sampling. Key informant interviews were "based on the assumption that in-depth interviews with a few 'key' participants, individuals who are particularly knowledgeable and successful would provide insights and understandings about the problem" (McMillan 2000, p.268).

Participants

A diverse group of thirty-four students from the Cypress Hill Campus were selected for the study. However, twenty-eight of the participants attend classes on two or more other campuses. All were enrolled in academic programs and none were enrolled in vocational or certificate programs. Thirty-four participants were interviewed 2-3 times during an eight week period. Eighteen male and sixteen female students participated in the study. Twenty-seven are first-generation college students. Thirty-one identified transfer as their academic goal. Participants ranged in age from 18-52. The majority of students were between 27 and 40 years of age. Eight students are in their final semester before completion and twelve are in their first or second semester at ACC. Six are ex-military personnel and two participants have earned undergraduate degrees. Two have earned certificates at state proprietary schools. One earned a two-year degree from UCC nearly a decade ago. Two are the parents of college freshmen attending four-year institutions. Thirty-three have attended ACC for fewer than three years. One participant has attended UCC sporadically over the course of five years. Only four of the participants live within the vicinity of the Cypress Hill Campus.

Data Collection

In the exploration of student perceptions, the researcher is the instrument. Mertens (1998) asserts, "…the researcher is the instrument for data collection…the qualitative researcher decides which questions to ask and in what order, what to observe, what to write down".

While the researcher was certainly the instrument for this exploratory research, participants were involved in determining what was important during the focus group and member checking sessions. Member checking involves confirming and validating the interpretation of data with the individual participants. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews were conducted during both phases of the study. Focus group and interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

Data Analysis

The researcher had originally planned to use HyperRESEARCH™ 2.6 ,computer software. Mertens 1998, p.353. describes the function of computer assisted data analysis: "These (code-and retrieve programs) specialize in helping you divide text into segments or the interpretation reported to the participants." The software is designed to aid in data organization and analysis, however, it was limited in its ability to code and categorize student vernacular. The software was unable to effectively sort the slang and idioms into meaningful categories. The method was abandoned in favor of the researcher's organization and reiterative coding system.

 Audio taped transcripts and field notes were thematically coded and categorized. Participants provided clarification and reinterpretation of data as necessary. Thematic analysis was implemented as a means to discover patterns within the narratives.

A phenomenological approach involves " reduction horizontalization, and imaginative variation" The stories were dismantled or 'de-contextualized' and then re-organized in an effort to 'answer' the research questions. Merriam and Associates (2002, p. 94) elucidate further on the process that was employed for this study:

> Phenomenological reduction is the process of continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure or meaning in and of itself *Horizontalization* is the process of laying out all the data and treating data as having equal weight; that is, all aspects of data have equal value at the initial data analysis stage. Data are then clustered into themes and, and repetitious statements are removed…Imaginative variation involves examining the data from divergent perspectives and varying frames of reference.

Ethnographic Analysis

This exploration employs some ethnographic techniques with regard to reporting data. The development of categories and sub categories were used to organize Phase I findings. Lofland and Lofland (1995) note, "educational ethnographies make use of category schemes" or typologies. Typologizing is described as the process of charting possibilities that result from the conjunction of two or more variables" Tesch (1990) reports that "these relationships in data can be displayed in diagrams and grids. These cognitive maps (Werner and Schoepfle 1987) are used to organize and display information about the validating and invalidating attributes of institutional factors.

Given the limitations of the technology, peer review, field notes, and member checking were used extensively in an effort to promote the validity of coding and interpretation of the data.

Validity

Member-checks, regular review of interview and field notes, as well as peer debriefing were used as measures of consistency as described in qualitative research literature (McMillan 2000, p.273; Cresswell 2003). Member checking allowed participants to add information, reinterpret narratives, and confirm or refute interpretations. With regard to peer review, two colleagues reviewed field notes and data periodically as the study progressed, asking critical questions as themes emerged.

Researcher Positionality

Rossman and Rallis (1998, p.67) note that reflexivity is a part of the qualitative research process. An understanding of how the researcher is "connected" to the subject and participants is assumed to have an effect on data collection and analysis of qualitative data. As a first-generation college student in the 1970's, my navigation through the higher education system was facilitated by encouraging parents and knowledgeable and committed faculty.

As an African-American female student, researcher, and teacher at PWI's most of my life, I have observed that colleges can unconsciously impede the academic achievement

of Black students. While Black students overcome institutional barriers and impediments, particularly with family support, the challenge is made more difficult by unconscious personnel and seemingly immutable structural barriers.

In an effort to remain conscious of my role as researcher, I kept detailed field notes and a reflective journal. In addition to these documents, I worked with two colleagues, one Black male and one White female over the course of the study to review the coding and interpretation of data. These reflective sessions, coupled with extensive member checks helped to reinforce the validity of the findings.

Chapter Summary

Understanding student perceptions is the crux of this exploratory study. Qualitative methodology, which included naturalistic and phenomenological approaches as well as case study are a part of the research design. Focus group and individual structured and unstructured interviews facilitated data collection and the identification of factors that influence Black student persistence. Assessing the perceptions of the individuals of the participant groups, member checking, and peer debriefing provided the validity and consistency needed to understand student perceptions. The researcher's positionality indicates that she is conscious of the commonalities she has with the community of learners she engaged in this exploratory study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Overview

This chapter is a report of the findings for both phases of the study. Both phases were conducted using qualitative methodology that included clustered focus groups and individual interviews. Both narrative and naturalistic approaches were used for data collection.

Phase I

The first phase served as an introductory session, whereby participants discussed their experiences at various junctures of their college experience. During the first focus group meeting of eight participants, some expressed discomfort with the well-furnished, private conference room and with the size and composition of the focus group. They felt the setting was "too much like a classroom." The researcher determined the room was not suited to the relaxed atmosphere needed for the focus group interviews.

After some discussion, the group decided small cluster groups of 2-3 and individual interviews conducted in the African American Cultural Center were more conducive for conversation. The Center is located in a public area near the student lounge. Seven different cluster group and individual interviews were conducted over and eight-week period. Four older students expressed an interest in interviewing together and two older

male students declined to have their interviews electronically recorded, but agreed to allow the interviewer to take handwritten notes.

The first sessions were open discussions whereby participants' shared college experiences. Participants were asked to discuss how they initially became interested in the college: first contact with personnel and peers; campus visits; support services; and faculty contact. Additional prompts encouraged students to discuss their favorite instructors, tutors, and peers. Students were also asked to share problems they had encountered during enrollment or in the classroom. Most shared short narratives and vignettes about classes, faculty, services, facilities, and other elements in the college that had been helpful or problematic. Individual interviews and focus group sessions ranged from 45 minutes to two hours in length. The narratives were taped and transcribed.

Several recurrent themes emerged during the initial interpretive coding: Critical Mass, Veterans Affairs, Faculty, Campus Security, Disorganization, Publication Images, Equity, Community Outreach, Counseling Department, Mr. Willis, Math Department, Mr. Brooks, Tutoring, Ms. Rita Mae, Black staff, Black History, the Lakeside Campus, and Student Life.

The researcher constructed recording charts as described by Miles and Huberman (1984) as a means to begin organizing the data. Original charts were developed from factors that emerged from the literature review, however, several factors were deleted and added as

comparisons and thematic coding were conducted. Precautions were taken to avoid

imposing a mechanistic structure on the qualitative data as noted by Marshall (1985):

> In the effort to have systematically collected analyzed data and valid
>
> analyses, a researcher could reduce and confine a study within valid, but
>
> insignificant parameters…It could lead to premature coding, forcing data
>
> within a theoretical framework closing of alternate conceptualizations and
>
> precluding discovery of hidden, secret, unrecognized, subtle,
>
> 'unimportant' data connections, and processes.

Student narratives were coded and organized under the following categories: Climate,

Support Services Personnel, Faculty, Academic Experiences, and Student Life. A

preliminary report was prepared for student review in Phase II of the study.

Phase II

During the second phase, students were given the preliminary report of their responses

from the individual and clustered focus group interviews. However, students expressed

more interest in an oral review and discussion of the findings. Students appeared more

comfortable with the interviewer, each other, and the process. They also agreed to meet

in larger more generationally diverse groups for follow-up sessions. Participants clarified

interpretations and provided additional information. During this session, they were also

involved in semi-structured interviews of 1.5 –2 hours. Participants were given a copy of

five questions and were asked to make notes for their oral responses. They were asked to illustrate their responses to the following questions with examples or stories (narratives):

1. Which UCC services have been most helpful?

2. Which services have been the most problematic?

3. Which campus services do you use to overcome problems?

4. What are your recommendations for improving the college for Black students?

5. If you were to produce a commercial for UCC to recruit Black students, what would you say are its best features? What should potential students be careful of? How can they avoid this?

Participants responded with detailed narratives that often directly answered the questions, while some 'answers' were often embedded within complex narratives. Student responses to the unstructured interviews were integrated with Phase I narratives. The narratives were thematically re-coded and additional sub-factors and categories emerged. 'Technology' emerged as a facilitating factor for older and traditional participants. A variety of themes and factor attributes emerged as responses to the research questions were discerned within the data.

Member checks were conducted with students in individual and clustered focus groups. Two participants who had declined to have their initial sessions audio recorded participated in the second and third audio taped sessions. Member checks emphasized

and confirmed the importance of limited numbers of helpful individuals (faculty and staff) as facilitating factors as opposed to particular departments and services.

Reporting Methods

Phenomenological "horizontalization" as articulated by Moustakas (1994) was used to organize the findings: "Horizontalization is an interweaving of person, conscious experience, and phenomenon. In the process of explicating the phenomena, qualities are recognized and described." The synthesis of responses, the recurrent factors, and attributes were assembled under the research questions.

 Merriam and Associates (2002, p.94, para.4) assert, "The final step in a phenomenological study is to construct a synthesis of textual and structural descriptions of the phenomenon being studied." Many student stories included contextual information that was not germane to the question, therefore portions of stories, quotes, and phrases that specifically answered the questions were assembled for coherence and readability.

Each section or sub category begins with a highlighted statement drawn from the respondents' narratives and is followed by the researcher's italicized defining or thematic statement. This specific part of the report is a part of the axial coding developed for Interactive Qualitative Analysis (Northcutt and McCoy 2003). While this is not an Interactive Qualitative Analysis, the reporting method provides a means to effectively organize the data.

FINDINGS

Findings are reported as both individual narratives and a synthesis of responses. Data are categorized under the four overarching research questions:

1. What are student perceptions of institutional factors that facilitate persistence?

2. What are student perceptions of institutional factors that impede persistence?

3. Which institutional factors do students use to overcome perceived barriers?

4. What are participants' recommendations to improve services to Black students?

The responses for research questions #1 and #2, were thematically coded and organized under institutional factors and sub-factors identified in the second phases of the study. Findings for research question #3 are categorized under the primary methods students use to overcome barriers. Findings for research question number #4 are thematically arranged. Findings for each factor are followed by a brief description of the emergent themes within the narratives.

Research Question #1

<u>What are student perceptions of institutional factors that influence</u>

<u>persistence?</u>

Participants identified several factors that support persistence: Cypress Hill and Lakeside Campus Climates; Individuals in Support Services; Exemplary Faculty; Applicable, Interactive, Culturally Relevant Learning; Participation in the African American Student Organization and Technology.

Climate

Students identified the family atmosphere of the Cypress Hill Campus and the critical mass of African American students as positive influences on their achievement. Some students identified the Lakeside Campus climate conducive to learning and interaction as well.

It's like home and it's like family. *The Cypress Hill Campus is an intimate and welcoming environment.* **"**This is a friendly atmosphere. People over here are very helpful and you can tell they care about Black folks. People will stop and talk to you. People speak even when they don't know you. People always speaking. Cypress Hill is my home campus. What I like about this campus is how friendly people are. It feels like you are welcomed here. You can talk with them about whatever issue. They make time to talk to you and they can help you**.** We always get our classes and do all our stuff at Cypress Hill. You get real good service here. On most other campuses, you might sit and wait for hours, but here at Cypress Hill we get help pretty quick. Irregardless of ethnicity, it's almost like a family environment up here. Even though I take more classes on other campuses. This is my home campus-- I mean Cypress Hill is family, especially with Ms. Rita Mae. You can go and talk to people-- you got Mr. Willis, you got Ms. Rita Mae. The counselor around here come out and talk. They go out their way to get to you and come out to talk to you. You really feel like they are your friends here."

"This is the only campus where you get that individualized attention. I mean you don't have to wait in line to talk to the counselor or the instructor about something. They're not in a big hurry to run back to their offices or getting ready for another class. They have time for you and they don't rush you. No matter how busy it gets at Cypress Hill, you always feel like they're listening to you and not rushing you. I don't think it has anything to do with size. I think people over here just put forth the effort. I mean even though I am on other campuses, I know the people in admissions, financial aid, and counseling by name over here. This is like an exciting thing for me to be in college and especially in college with different campuses. I like Cypress Hill too because of the camaraderie. The atmosphere is little bit more subtle here. It's like home and it's like family. It's not college in your face. It's good people come together and they talk. I really like that. people bind together and I really like that. That's the main reason why I come here and because you can get History from a Black perspective on this campus. This is home."

"I actually live closer to Crestview, but I wanted to take Mr. James' Black History class. I did take a class at Oceana, but its too much trouble getting over there. I claim Cypress Hill as my home campus. It's more like a community. Like family. Kind of funny because I'm in class with people my children's age. And you always know somebody or they know you or your kids. Just feels like family. People speak to you, recognize you, and they remember you."

"My favorite teachers and tutors are here at Cypress Hill. Me being a returning student, I started out at Laurel Creek. I have been to Lakeside and this is my first semester here at Cypress Hill and this place seems down to earth. It's just a whole different attitude. Now, I live over here on the south side and the first campus I went to was Laurel Creek and then to Oceana and I always wondered why and then I found out was because of what I picked. I figured out it was because the counselor picked my schedule. I didn't know why she picked classes that sent me way up there. And then I learned she can't do that. I need to pick my own classes and I picked Cypress Hill 'cause it is closer to my house. Being at three different campuses, Cypress Hill has been the better for me personally. Oceana is so far and you really don't have a lot of people who try to be friendly with you. I mean Oceana's classes are on the same level, but I really didn't feel comfortable there. I feel more comfortable over here."

I love the Cypress Hill Campus because I just have to be in school with Black people. *The visibility of Black people on the campus is comforting and encouraging.* "I don't mind driving over here. I went to school here at Allison High School at the Science Academy. The school is on the south side and they put the Academy there so it could be integrated so there wouldn't be so many minorities there. I didn't know what their plan was and they bussed us in to go to the Academy. I thought I was going to be in class with a lot of Black people. I

always had classes where I was the only Black person. I am for diversity, but people like to be around people they are like. I went to Oceana campus thinking I was going to be around a lot Black people and it was just like high school—the only Black person in class again. So I come all the way over to Cypress Hill. It's cool."

"I ain't gone lie, I like being with my people. It's just good to see us getting in the books and progressing academically. I'm loving this here campus. I wanted to take an African American History class and when I came for class was the first time I had ever been here. I was surprised and I was more comfortable here than anywhere."

"After high school, I was around all White people and over here I've got Black teachers and I am learning Black History and finding out more about who I am. This campus has been very good for me over the last year. I mean I go to other campuses, but this campus? This is the only place to be cause we're here. I have taken classes on four campuses. Basically, Cypress Hill is the heart of UCC. And you have more diverse students around here. It's more centralized and not too many people want to make that trip out to Jacksonville. I think more students prefer classes over here."

"Seeing a lot of Black people in class gives you a powerful feeling. Seeing so many African American people trying to get an education is great. It squashes stereotypes. You can look in the mirror and know you are a part of that group that's trying to get an education."

"Like when I took this class last semester, I felt comfortable because there is a large majority of minorities on the campus. It's just a different feel when you can be amongst yourselves. On Oceana, you see all the yuppies with their BMW's and it just seem like I'm out of my element. Over here, even White students have a different attitude. I can relate to them and the few White students I do see over here seem to be comfortable too. They seem to be on my level. We seem to have the same background. You can speak more freely with White students who are over here."

"If I can't get to Cypress Hill, I have to get to Lakeside. UCC is like a bunch of different schools, but Lakeside is like a university campus campus. I go over there on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I like it because I can go over there and kick it in my sweats and tennis shoes. But it's very diverse and I fit right in. The people are pretty friendly. The teachers are great. The parking is bad but I do like the environment."

"It's one of my favorite campuses. Lakside just has the feel of a real college. Different kinds of people. They're not like overly friendly, but they're not hostile either, so it's cool. The professors over there are all right. I mean I really like them. They treat you like an adult. I like Cypress Hill, but Lakeside is next best."

"Now, it's not a whole lot of Black teachers that I've ever seen over there, but the environment is good. You can be yourself over there. No problem. I like the diversity."

"UCC is a good school. I go to Lakeside and I love Cypress Hill. Lakeside has more real college students. Over there, people ask you what school you go to, and I'm like 'What?' I go to UCC and they're like, 'I go to HT or UT.' You know that's kind of weird, but I enjoy the atmosphere of being with different kinds of people."

The family atmosphere and visibility of African Americans are perceived as important aspects of the climate. Day students across academic status and age groups feel that the campus is welcoming and suited to their expectations and needs. Younger beginning students, more so than older students express the need to remain on the Cypress Hill Campus exclusively. Critical Mass appears to provide the comfort and familiarity students perceive as important in creating a relaxing environment. Older beginning and intermediate level students and younger completers enjoy the Lakeside Campus. While it

is described as crowded, those students appreciate the professors, student diversity, and their university peers.

<div align="center">*Support Services*</div>

Support services include individuals in the enrollment, advising, counseling process, and individuals in the tutoring lab and Veterans Administration.

You have to find the right person. *Identifying responsive individuals makes the biggest difference.* "You really can't depend on any of the services at UCC. You have to find the right person. It's not departments. It's not services. It really ain't but a couple of good counselors. You could count them on one hand**.** I mean we need more people like Mr. Willis. Mr. Willis go hard for students. He will come out here and talk to you and let you know what the deal is. He gets things straight for you."

"I tried to figure out how to get into UCC for almost two years. Every time I tried to fill out the paperwork I got confused. Nobody at my house has been to college. I swear I didn't know what I was doing. And then I just put it off-- for two years. I know that's bad, but it's true. The whole thing was so confusing. I didn't know what to bring or who to talk to. Then a couple of months ago my mother met one of the main counselors somewhere and she told me to go and talk to him at Cypress Hill. I finally went to see him and I got everything done in just a few

minutes. I was really, really shocked at how easy it was. I wasted two years being scared. Mr. Willis was the hook-up."

"That's how I got here-- Mr. Willis is here to help you out in counseling. I learned more about my GPA, my registration, what I need to do for my classes by talking to Mr. Willis, instead of waiting at Oceana for a hour."

"I wanted to come to school, but I was kind of scared. My uncle know Mr. Willis. Anyway my uncle was the one said, 'Boy, if you going to school, go see John Willis. He a counselor. He know how to get you in.' So I came over here and Mr. Willis showed me all the stuff. He always cracking jokes when you see him around here, but he can get you in school and tell you what to take. He know what he's doing."

"He helped as far as which path to go. He told me what courses don't transfer to a Bachelors. I have classes that I can't use for transfer because I had got bad information before, but Mr. Wills put me on the right track to where I need to be. He explains everything to you. If you've got problems you can go talk to him. He'll lead you in the right direction. He'll help you and he'll help you pick good teachers too. He know the good teachers and he help you get out the bad ones and switch when he can. He don't down the bad ones. He just make sure you get good ones. It's best to talk with him first."

"Financial aid was pretty easy. Nicole, the financial aid lady over here has always helped me over here. When I first came she got me into work-study. I was trying to get my daughter in daycare, so she helped me get a job at the daycare. She helped me get my money and really get ready so I could concentrate on school. And she updates you a lot. If there is new money or something you don't know about, she tells you. Nicole will also tell you about web sites and places online where you can go to get more information. You can call or go see her."

"You get help with financial aid and everything I know all the rules about financial aid. I could work in there. She helps you over there. I go talk to Nicole about all kinds of stuff even if it's not financial aid."

"The VA (Veteran's Administration) is pretty good, but it's Terry that does it all. I mean they don't get any better than Terry Hererra. I just think the VA is top notch, but it wouldn't be that way without Terry--She's the best thing on any campus."

"She'll help you find money, computers, and whatever will help you succeed in school. They will go the extra mile for you. They return your calls too. Terry Hererra is the lady. You can go in there and she will tell you exactly what to do. And you can't forget about Matt. Now, Matt is a White guy, he's a sharp guy—

ex-military too. He gets back with you quick. I mean the guy always calls me back immediately."

This woman talked to me like she been knowing me fifty years. *Personalized service promotes comfort and appreciation for individual staff.* "I'm prior military, I had to through Veterans Affairs to get my GI Bill. The VA staff over at Laurel Creek were extremely helpful. It helped that they have a young lady over there by the name Terry Hererra. She's prior military. She helps you go through the ends and the outs of what military expects of you for the funds. I had no problems. What's good about the VA is they will pay for a note taker and they really care. They're very helpful. Terry will sit down and talk directly to you. This woman talked to me like she been knowing me fifty years."

It makes a difference when you hear that from a Black man. *Help from Black staff is valued.* "Mr. Jerome Jones on Oceana is my counselor. I spoke with him when I first came. He's the only the person I'm a talk with when I have a problem. He's helped me to understand that I am going to have to go through a great deal and going to have to deal with a lot of things that I, myself would think is uncalled for. The way that he put it made it more acceptable. It makes a difference when you hear that from a Black man. You know that's just how it is."

"I like talking to Lea Baker over on Lakeside. She listens to me and I know as a Black woman she ain't going to steer me wrong. I just know that. She knows too much about what I been through to get here. Talking to a Black person makes a big difference. People don't understand. We need more on other campuses. You know, somebody you can connect with."

"No lie, Mr. Willis and them Black ladies on the computers up front? They have taken care of me a lot in the last two years—from day one. They helped me get my classes and everything. They really treat me like I'm their little brother or something. They tell you what you need to do. They don't order you to do anything. He has been the biggest help. If you don't have time to do something right away, they'll tell you what the deadlines are and they can give you web site stuff."

"She's a Black woman and she shows she cares. She tells you what's available. Terry will bend over backwards for you. She helps you to get the maximum amount of funding She want students to succeed and she get you what you need."

"In the Provost Office, there's an African American woman in there. She's real good with everybody. If you're having a problem with anything you can go talk to her. One time when I wanted the course schedule and the woman in admissions said I had to wait until they came in the mail, Gayle went ahead and

gave me a copy. She also helped me with my financial aid. She asked me how my money was and I told her not too good because my financial aid hadn't come in. Then she gave me a list of things that I could look into online. Nobody in financial aid told me about that. She said, ' If you ever have any problem with anything, come and talk to me.' And I do and she has also met my mom and my daughter. She's real nice. If anybody has a problem, they really should go talk to her."

Participants view the commitment and personalized services from individual staff as the most important components of students support services. Students do not see specific departments as particularly helpful, but identified individual as supportive. Younger students find Black staff in particular to be approachable and helpful. Completers and older students pointed out helpful individuals across ethnic lines. However, ex-military personnel believe the Black woman in VA has their best interest in mind because of the common ethnicity and military background.

Faculty

Yeah, he handle his business *Competence increases student confidence, motivation, and learning.* "I had him from the middle of the semester and I did a good job in that class. The Math department head is a great teacher. He jokes around with you. There are so many different ways to work a problem in Math and he teaches us different ways. That's how I learn. He teaches you different

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ways that other teachers don't teach. Not only that, he can teach you short cuts. The man can teach. And also, Jerry Aguirre is a very excellent teacher. He's cool. He knows what he's doing. He will work you hard and keep teaching and teaching until you know it. The man is something else."

"I also had Mr. Gonzalez. He's good. Everybody needs that man. He makes you feel confident in Math. If he can help me, he can help anybody. Yeah, he handle his business I won't take Math from anybody else."

"Mr. Brooks—now there's a real teacher. He can break it all the way down. That's my Math teacher because he helps me out a lot. He knows different ways to explain everything. We can tell you who the best Math teachers are; it ain't but a few: Lena Raven, Mr. Gonzalez, Mr. Brooks and Mr. Cecil. If you have to start with the basics, Lena Raven is really the best. She can show you how to do the Math and understand it."

"He is more of a facts-based instructor to me. And he also doesn't cram anything down your throat. He is a walking textbook Now, my English Comp I teacher was great. She was a lot like my English teacher in high school. She helped me learn how to write papers and essays".

"She make sure you get it. "She's old school, now. She teach you about finishing stuff and sticking with things and having confidence. She tell you the real deal like, 'We ain't here to play, we here to learn.' When she teach, she stick it to you. She love helping students. Got a smile on her face every day."

"Mr. Brooks is not Black—but he could be because he is so down to earth. He is good at what he does and he has passion. He has a passion to help those who don't understand regardless of how long you've been out of school. People like me. You can see he cares. It's in his work. It is so comfortable in his class. I needed him after all the bad classes I been through."

"College Algebra worked out fine. Why? Cause of the way he explained everything made it a good class. My teacher didn't run away and leave people like a lot of teachers do. He'll take his time and help you understand the problems. We would get a lot done in different segments, and then he would stop and make sure everybody knew what was going on before he went on."

"Mr. Brooks and Ms. Taylor, now they are excellent teachers. If you heard them on the radio or the phone you would think they are Black because they are trying to help you and not push you through this course in my opinion. And they there to answer your questions. Both of them put a lot of time into answering your questions and making sure you understand."

"His techniques for teaching Math are really different. Mr. Brooks—hey what can you say? He is good. No mystery with him. The way he breaks things down makes it easy for me to get. I never had a Math teacher like that before."

He keep it real. *Providing relevant and applicable information makes learning memorable*. "We get sidetracked in that class and start talking about life issues. Even though we're in Government, he talks about real life issues. Politics and current events. He covers it all. The man talks about empowerment and getting involved. He tells you to get out there and meet people like government officials. He keeps us involved in the community. We get extra points for meeting people like representatives and board members and going to outside meetings an forums and things like that."

"He always hit you with some nice facts and keep you up on the times and what's going on in the world. He keep it real. He answer my questions without giving me the whole 360 story behind it. He also make it relevant to what's going on right now."

"Shelia Strickland and Mr. James know how to make the material relevant. The way they teach makes you remember things. They both make it applicable to your life now. Helps you remember to keep it in focus. Shelia teaches English and she

helps you to think and write and use it to help you in your everyday life. That's the kind of stuff you remember."

"My Government class was good. That's when we learned about slavery and we had a White teacher too. But he was like into equal opportunity and everything. A lot of people would be talking about how they [White people] couldn't anything because of quotas and saying that was reverse discrimination. And he would just put them in their place. We learned a lot about voting rights and how to be informed about voting."

"I've had his History I and II class and it's like, this is what on went on then. And history is like if you don't know what's gone on, then you don't know where you going and you don't know why things are going on the way they're going on now. And he explains that and makes you understand and makes you want to learn more."

Even though she teaches Psychology, she makes you pay attention to the news and current events and she makes us think about stuff inside and outside the class. *Broadening horizons beyond the classroom is an added value from selected faculty.* "He just instill something in your brain that stay fresh in your mind. And you go home and say, 'Dang, I am still thinking about what he said in class this morning.' I have a good time in that class. She makes us think

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about everything inside and outside the class. She is preparing us for the world

when we leave UCC. Even though she teaches Psychology, she makes you pay

attention to the news and current events and she makes us think about stuff inside

and outside the class. She is preparing us for the world when we leave UCC."

"Sometimes it's hard to identify with professors from different cultures, but I am

taking a literature class with a teacher—he's a Hispanic male. So the literature

seemed to take on a tone of a Latino flavor, which is good because you need

different perspectives. I like the way these teachers teach—you know from

different perspectives. I have had Black, White, and Hispanic teachers for history

and I love it. All of them have their way of dealing with the subject and then I get

to think about it from my perspective."

"You know we are learning right across the street from a big housing project.

Over here, we are eating and talking and learning and then what's going on across

the street? I never would have thought about the community and what we need to

do for other Black people if it wasn't for Mr. James' class."

"What I learned from other professors has been good, but I've learned that you

can think from your own perspective in his class. From his class I have learned so

much. I am paying attention to things that I never would have noticed. There's not

just one way to think about anything. He taught me you can get knowledge, but

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you got to look at it for yourself. Lord, after taking his class you can't help but analyze everything."

Mr. James makes you interested in the subject and he got a little flavor on him too. *Engaging and interesting professors promote learning*. "He knows how to make students get into the subject. The man knows how to hold your attention and teach you stuff that used to seem boring. Mr. James makes you interested in the subject and got a little flavor on him too. This is my first time taking him, and pretty much almost everybody in the class has already had him one or two times already. He is always talking about the mind—about thinking. He doesn't always go by the book and I like that."

"The thing about him is he connects the dots. He doesn't stay back there in the past. He shows you what was happening then and this is still what's happening now. I enjoy his lectures. He is not much for following the textbook, but he knows how to link the past with what's current and that's what it's really all about."

"I mean this White man is an old—about 55, but he can relate. He uses slang and humor, but he knows how to make you understand the Math. He connects with you."

"Mr. Price is probably one of the most entertaining teachers you'll ever meet. He made his class entertaining. I mean He was very interactive with the class. He keeps you awake and he makes you aware. The way he did his notes and the retention exercises that he gave us were pretty self-explanatory. Basically, if you did good on the retention exercise, you did good on the test. He just makes learning fun."

"All of the people in the class enjoyed her class. Her class just gives you that college feeling. I mean we discussed important issues and everybody was involved. She came highly recommended. There were a lot of UT students in her class. She had been recommended to them. That class was over on Lakeside, but it was worth going for."

A lot of my teachers are available to help you. *Accessibility communicates a genuine interest in student learning.* "My aunties and my friend told me some of the teachers will help you much more here than at the big universities. At least here UCC some of the teachers do care and they're available to guide you. I met a professor last semester, Dr. Lisa Levin. Now, I felt like I could go to her and ask her about instructors. She knew the Sociology teachers and she would guide me on how they structured their classes. If I had a problem in her class, I could not only go to her during her office hours, which her office was over at Oceana, but she would hang around after class and talk to you and give you information."

"Even though I'm not in her class any more, I've emailed her on a couple of articles this semester and she emailed me back. We just kind of talk back and forth about stuff I learned in her class. She is really approachable. Now I had a unique experience with my Psychology teacher. We met at the HEB over on Lamar and we just had a little get-together. Anybody who wanted to come could come. We just sat over there talked and chilled out with the teacher. No studying or notes; she just talked about her observations. That's the first time I've ever just hung out with the teacher. I wish more teachers did that. Just hanging out. It was so cool."

"He was a very good teacher and he was always available for help. Mr. Price is always around. You know what I mean. It's almost like he didn't have a life. He's always up here at UCC. I'm finished this semester and I will transfer, so I've had a lot of teachers at UCC and all of them put their phone number on the syllabus. Mr. Price was about the only one that if you left a message would call you back. In class, he would go ahead and say, 'Call me at home. Don't think it's a problem to call me at home.' He did that to let it be known that we could contact him. A lot of my teachers are available to help you**.**"

"I have a faculty member I just love to death! She's an adjunct. If she says call me at home, she means it. She will stick around and be flexible enough to help you before or after class.

"Mr. Mason is it—I know people probably think he's hard, but he was always there to work with you to help you learn to write. I learned to write from him. He was right there."

Just encouraging things and feedback like that makes you want to do your best. *Encouragement motivates students.* "In my speech class, my teacher helped me get up the nerve to do public speaking. I have a stuttering problem, so it took a lot out of me to get up. I'm a lot better with my public speaking now."

"I started getting my essays in and she said they were good. I haven't been in school in a long time and for a professor to sit there and say, 'This is really good and thoughtful' or write on the paper that "This is really good' or 'I never thought about that.' I mean she was really reading my paper and letting me know my skills and my content were on target. Just encouraging things and feedback like that makes you want to do your best. I will keep those papers and go back and look them."

"My Sociology teacher—dude from New York. He's at Lakeside. And he really works hard for Black students. He is a White dude, but he is there for the students. He just takes a special interest in us. I don't really know why, but you can tell he is interested in Black students. He makes every effort to give you what you need. He encourages you to talk about your grades. He encourages you to challenge the grades he awards and he tells you to come to him to talk. He says, 'I am here to help you. I don't get anything if you fail.' He blew me out the water because he showed so much concern. for the class. He even admitted some mistakes he made on a test and went back and looked at it."

"He is one of us and brings things to our level. He gets on our level to help us see stuff. He acts like we are smart. He doesn't act like because he's older that he knows more. His conversation and his pattern of interaction is different from other teachers. He feels what you're talking about. He looks at you as a person— not as a student. See when people are looking at you as a student they feel they know more than you and what you think doesn't matter. He's listening. He's expecting to learn something *from* you."

Basically he just went out his way to make sure all the students in his class succeeded. *Flexibility communicates care and an understanding of the whole student—inside and outside the classroom.* " If there was something she didn't understand on your paper, she would let you explain what you meant verbally.

When a professor goes out of their way like that and tries to understand it means something. She could have given you a grade and given it back to you. Taking that extra time shows she cares."

"Nobody goes the extra mile like she does. I had a teacher that made sure you got everything you needed when you had to miss class. She uses the email and the testing center and everything to get the work to us. You know she didn't have to do all that. Going all out her way. It makes you want to work harder for a teacher like that."

"From my own aspect, I don't hand in my homework till it's time to take a test. But I need to do that to give myself a good review, but he ain't going to say nothing. He know what I be doing and he let me turn in my homework like that so I learn more."

"She gave you assignments that were about a week a part. If you didn't have time to do it, she would give you an extension. She understood that I had a life outside of class."

" Like the funny thing was, if we had to miss a test or a worksheet, he would say, 'I'm going to put the test down there in the Testing Center and you got to take it before so and so date.' He gave us extended deadlines because I had other

circumstances outside of class that I had to handle. That's another thing I did

appreciate Mr. Price for. Basically, he just went out his way to make sure all the

students in his class succeeded. So I'm very thankful for Mr. Price 'cause he

could a just said, 'Son, I'm sorry. You do this on test day or you can get a zero.'

But he didn't do that. Like I say, he wanted students to succeed."

"I have to say, I've got one teacher—and she doesn't look like us--yeah, she's

White, but she is there for her students. She makes Psychology fun. I mean

Psychology is really fun because she cares and you know it. She is a very down-

to-earth lady. She'll work with you. She knows a lot of us work and have

families and if you have to miss, just let her know. Even if something comes up

that's unexpected, you talk to her. She'll let you catch your test on an alternate

date. She doesn't have to do that. She could just say, 'Too bad.' but she chooses

to help."

They don't hold your hand like they did in high school. *Challenging*

professors promote intellectual independence." They'll set the path for you to

work your way through to pass the class. And he also is a informative person. He

does not just tell you, he gives you the instruments to go research the information

Teachers won't hold your hand like they did in high school. You got to do stuff

on your own. I don't like handholding because you come up looking inadequate.

I am lucky because the teachers I have had treat you like adults and expect you to do a good job.”

“It's not just you have to do this paper. She wants you to understand what you're doing and actually learn. She asked me to write a paper and I turned it in and it wasn't what she expected and she gave it back to me and told me, 'Re-do it' and showed me what I had to do. She gave me a chance to turn it in and get it right.”

“She talks to me one- on- one and she really understands how I feel being a young, single mother. I feel like she's really understanding with me with my class work. When I can't be there because I have two children. She expects a lot, but she gives up a lot to make sure you understand the work. Ms. Rita Mae Hill is tough, but she cares. We call her 'Grandmother.' She takes care of Cypress Hill students whether she's teaching Psychology or she's helping us in the tutoring lab.”

“She's tough in a way because she wants you to learn the information and she has high standards also. But she also will go through whatever she has to do help you She understands and is really patient, but she doesn't accept excuses. She's willing to give me a chance to make up work when I am struggling. She is pretty tough with pretty high standards. As long as you work, she will stay on you and stay with you.”

"When you talk to him, you got to be thinking. He expects you to think. He expects a lot and the work is difficult sometimes. He gives you the opportunity to think. You have to think when you're talking to him. His tests are hard. He makes you really think. Mr. James takes teaching to a high level—he really wants you to think outside the box. College students want to think and he lets that happen, even when he doesn't agree with you."

"She gave you a whole lot of work. I mean she will bog you up in the work, but she is very understanding. And is she there for your? Oh yeah, you better know it. She is going to be there and help you, but she's not going to cut out the work."

"Now Ms Reynolds is kind of young and I think she is kind of new. I tell you what-- she makes you work. Ms. Reynolds is hard. She's very hard, but she's fair. She makes you want to learn and she's not an easy teacher, but she encourages you. She know how to bring that work ethic on out of you."

In my experience with our African American teachers, they are not here to baby sit you and they will tell you that too, but on some level you know they got your back. *Black faculty are seen as challenging and supportive.* "The African American students didn't do well in Ms. Dyson's class—none of us. And she pulled us aside after class and told us that she was willing to go to any means

necessary to work with us and help us to pass the class. She told us, 'I do not want my African-American students to fail.' She actually told us that and she did help us. We had to do so much work in that class, but we learned. She gave us a lot of work and she said she wanted to make sure we were successful in the next class after we had her."

"There's a Black teacher over at Oceana that everybody should know. I was having a hard time adjusting and I was sitting out in the student lounge trying to write and she came up and helped me. She introduced herself and told me who she was and was a big help. She wasn't even my teacher, but she gave me some pointers on how to be successful with my writing. I went back and applied the principles and my writing improved. She wasn't even my teacher. She told me 'I'll be here for you.' Man, that made me know I could get to like this place. Man, she wasn't even my teacher and she just talked to me as an individual there in the cafeteria. In my experience with our African American teachers, they are not here to baby sit you and they will tell you that too, but on some level you know they got your back. But you know you got to produce. "

"I guess it really doesn't matter who your teacher is, but when I have a Black teacher I push myself harder. Black teachers want to earn their place and all because some people might think they're here because of affirmative action or whatever. And I want to be a good student for them because I know some of

them have it tough. When your teacher's Black you want to show off a little more

and let them know you're smart and that they are helping you. Now, I'm not

saying Black teachers are easy. As a matter of fact, some of them come down on

you real hard, but they're trying to help. They want you to learn as much as you

can."

"I have also taken a class with Dr. Randolph. Now, a lot of people I know people

might not think too much of him cause he is tough. He really holds you to very,

very high standards. That just pushed me to do that much better."

"When you come over here with Black male professors it's easier for me to kind

of identify things from their perspective. He is the best teacher I have had."

"Black teachers can relate to you and the process is much easier. Mr. James

makes you proud to be a Black man. He talks about how minorities need to

change things they don't like. He talks about changing things for the better for our

people."

Faculty, in general, are perceived as a crucial part of student success. Students identified

attributes of faculty who facilitate success: competent, provide relevant information,

enlightening, engaging, accessible, encouraging, flexible, and challenging. Younger

participants see Black faculty as motivating advocates and agents in their success. Black

faculty are believed to increase understanding with relevant information. Older students and completers appreciate the presence of Black faculty and report an increase in understanding topics taught by them. Twelve teachers of different cultural backgrounds were identified as exemplary in the narratives. Both younger and traditional students consistently cited four exemplary Math teachers.

Academic Experiences

Participants identified content learning, classroom interactions and tutoring as key parts of their academic experiences.

Learning

That class—it was like magic and it gave you the courage and inspiration to continue college. *A learning strategies class provides skills and encouragement.* "I took the most powerful class on this campus over on the Lakeside campus. Dr. Randy Chavis taught the best college course I have ever had. I told the professor that too. I think *Strategies for Effective Learning* should be mandatory or a prerequisite for every college student. It was amazing. Man, you do so many inventories and tests and it helps you understand how you study best, do you study best with a group, where your strengths lie. I mean all kinds of stuff I am constantly re-looking over all that stuff I still use it."

"Yeah, everybody, I mean everybody should take that class. I got so many ideas how I could study and when I run into trouble trying to study in a class, I go back

and look at some of those different ways to learn. After I took that class I didn't

make below a B in any class and I am transferring next semester. That class will

help you. I had a remedial and so that was an option—and once I took that—I

was on my way. I've got all A's and B's because of that one class. I really

believe that. I still get that little book out and look at those comments and

different ways to learn."

"I had that class and it was very important to my success. I've been out of school

for a long time and once I took that learning strategies class, I was on my way. I

think they should just flat make everybody take that class. You wouldn't believe

how much you learn about yourself. You think you have a problem learning, but

then you start to find out how you learn. It really is a great class and the professor

was great too."

Black History is the most important class I've ever had. *Learning Black*

History is affirming and inspiring. "We haven't had the access to our history. And

learning that your race has a positive about it makes you want to good work. This

class makes a whole difference in your psyche and how you address life. I look at

whole lot of things a whole lot different. It's inspiring that my people went

through so much just for me to have this opportunity. That's motivation enough

for me. And it would affect a majority of people who might have thought we are

inferior.   It's just so much that we don't know about what we contributed to the country."

"Good to know oppressed Blacks did what they had to. To understand your history motivates you to do what you have to do to get an education. Black History is the most important class I've ever had.   Looking at how others have broken down color barriers is encouraging. Why don't people encourage White people to learn about Black people? That would help all of us. What we learn in there, we should have learned in high school. It would definitely change people's ideas about what they can accomplish. A lot of stuff I learned in high school now has more value. This is the first time I am learning about how much we have done."

"The reason I'm here is the history course. The Black History course drew me here. I've had two semesters of history here and I'm not sure if any other campus has history from the African American perspective. I know what I can do now because of all the problems Blacks in the past have overcome. What we have to deal with is different, but not nearly as hard as our people had in the 1930's and 40's. We got to step up because people have been through too much for us to be here."

"Criminal Justice was the class that was most important to me. I learned things about the Black aspect of the law. We have talked about racial profiling and how you can get pulled over for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. We have also learned about our rights when we have run-ins with the law. But just learning how the law works when you're talking about our people has been just so important for me understand and know. Criminal Justice lets you see how the law works and also how it's supposed to work."

Classroom Interaction

It's so open and at any time you can express your view. *Interactive classes stimulate learning.* "If I'm in his class its all good. We like family up in there. Those White kids learn Black history too. He gets everybody talking and you learn that Black people have done some stuff. We all get to talk and debate."

"African American History keeps my focus and in that environment I can actually relax and learn. It's so open and at any time you can express your view. It's wide open. We don't even raise our hands, we just talk. I really like being with people like me. And his class was very encouraging. I mean it's everybody who wants to talk saying what they think about what we reading or discussing."

"When we're going into the classroom in his class for instance, we usually get there a few minutes before he comes in and we'll sit and talk about whatever.

There'll be just off in conversation-- not necessarily about class. We'll talk about high school. The younger people will talk about things going on in the community and when he gets there we're all ready to talk about the subject. But you feel comfortable joining the discussion after that time before class started."

"Young White students can be very helpful. Several students have taken time to help me out. These young White students will talk with you. I don't see a lot of prejudice among them, especially on Lakeside. You can learn from young people. I haven't got a negative response. They have helped me a lot on Lakeside. This one guy and this girl, they helped me understand some stuff better than the teacher. They stayed in there and talked to me. I kept talking about what I didn't understand and they just kept explaining. I got it."

Tutoring
"Jill is a nice lady to work with. Her wanting to help just comes across She gives me pointers about writing. Whenever I need help I just go directly to her. I came here straight out of high school and I had to take lots of Math and writing classes. I quit. And after nine years I came back. When I came back, Jill was still here. She's doing a tremendous job helping me learn how to change the errors in my writing."

"If you are going to tutor someone, you should have a passion to help. More people need to be like Mr. Brooks."

"Miss Rita Mae, she do it all. Teach Psych. Help you with whatever you need in the tutoring lab. You need it? You want to know? And she on it. Nothing she won't do to help you. I mean we up in the lab and she talking about not cheating. This one dude she got on to him and told him that cheating was cheating himself. He was copying something from my paper. Yeah, Miss Rita Mae is going to give you life lessons while she work with you."

Learning that facilitates success is seen as applicable, relevant, and interactive. Older students view Learning Strategies, Black History, and Criminal Justice classes as particularly applicable, motivating, and inspiring. Younger beginners and those at the intermediate level appear to view interactivity as more valuable

Participation in the Black Student Organization

We found out that a few of us can do a whole lot of work if we put our mind to it. *Working with a small group has promoted social growth.* "No matter what, we've done a lot of growing in the African American Student Association. We have done a lot of stuff with community service and been involved in all the student life and government stuff. And even though we're small we have raised more money than all the groups and we really only have a few active members.

We found out that a few of us can do a whole lot of work if we put our mind to it. I never been a part of a organization outside of sports until I came here."

"Man, one of the best experiences I ever had was when the African American Student Association did the 'Do's and Don'ts of College.' The way everything was laid out and all the representatives from the area colleges and everything came to our forum. I mean we had everything together cause we really wanted 'prospectives' to hear what college was about and everything. We got a lot of current students who didn't know about financial aid and advising and all that. They passed out everything and we were totally informed. The president of TABPHE [Texas Association for Blacks in Higher Education] came and it was just a great turn out. We got the evaluations done and everything."

"…**we deserve some props for what we done that night**." *Recognition for a job well done is anticipated.* "We are going to have 'A Night in the Life' award program soon. That's where they recognize people for good effort and contributions and stuff like that in Student Life. I just wonder if we going to get any recognition for raising the most money out of all the clubs. I think we deserve some props for what we done that night [sponsoring the 'Do's and Don'ts' of College' Forum]. Some clubs got 70 and 80 people—truth is we really only got a few people doing it all. We're really active and go to everything. I mean we go to all the meetings. We get all the points we supposed to from Student Life. I know

we might get dissed, but hey, we know what we done. People who used to have a attitude problem with us are changing, but they still don't always recognize us as a real group. That's all right cause we getting ready for next year real soon and things will only be getting better. You better know it."

Membership in the African American Student Organization is seen as a facilitating factor and provides students with opportunities for accomplishment and is viewed as a vehicle for recognition. Only a few younger intermediate level and completers are participants in the organization.

Technology

Computer access and online services are key aspects of this factor.

> **You've got computer labs all over this campus.** *Computers are plentiful on campus.* "You can get almost anything you need from the computer. I use computers daily and lots of teachers are emailing us more often. All of the technology is really important part of communicating. UCC has done an exceptional job. Even if you don't have one at home they're all over the library and just about everywhere. I really like having them. When my computer broke down, I came right over here and worked till I got all my papers and everything done. I even checked my email. Didn't have to worry about waiting in line for one

either. Stayed at one computer the whole time You've got computer labs all over this campus."

Seriously, computers and online services make our lives easier. *On-line services are an appreciated convenience.* "It's nothing like having online services. You can really do everything from home almost. Registration and check on financial aid and all kinds of stuff. Most of the things are online now. You can pretty much pull up the degree plan you want and take the classes. As far as applying, I don't think it's hard at all online."

"Oh yeah, now that's a big plus. Having computers just makes doing everything easier. You don't really have to go home after class. You can stay up the library or you can come early and do stuff. That's what I do. I really get good use out of the computers up here. Seriously, computers and online services make our lives easier"

"Man, who can't go to school now with all this? Since the VA helped me get my computer, I am able to really get things done and take care of business in a big way."

We can talk over the email and plan for our study session. *Email enhances communication between students, peers, and faculty.* "We're all kind of nervous

about how hard its going be—the test We have midterm test coming up that we're

kind of scared about and then she assigned a group project, so that's kind of

forcing us to work together. Then one of her ways of communicating is through

email and so there's this email list she sends to everybody and we all know each

other's email address. We can talk over the email and plan for our study session.

It's going to make the test a lot easier cause we talked so much out of class. The

email really helps."

"I don't see how people can make it without the computers. Man, I mean a real

salute to the college. Cause what they done is opened it up so we can really talk

with the professor and our classmates if you want. All the teachers give you their

email these days. Some of them get right back with you."

Students perceive technology as accessible and convenient on UCC's campuses.

Older and traditional students and completers report using technology more than other

students do. Participants of all age groups express appreciation and moderate to heavy

use of the available technology. The technology facilitates registration and access to

campus services, as well as promotes communication between faculty and class

members.

Summary of Research Question #1

 Most students find the Cypress Hill Campus climate conducive for interaction with both faculty and peers. Older and traditional beginners and completers noted the Lakeside Campus as an alternative, but prefer Cypress Hill for its family atmosphere and critical mass. With regard to support services, younger male and female beginners and younger intermediate level students rely on individuals they have identified as supportive. They find those individuals provide responsive and personalized service. Younger beginners perceive Black staff to be particularly helpful.

Faculty are seen as the most important factor across age levels and academic status. The attributes of faculty who facilitate success indicate that students recognize and appreciate effective teaching.

 Day students more than evening students expressed positive views about the climate. Younger students expressed the importance of the climate and staff; influence from faculty; support from Black faculty; and membership in the Black student organization. Older and traditional students perceive enlightening faculty; Black History class, and access to technology as key factors in their success. Older evening and traditional students view Black History and Technology as most important to their success.

Research Question #2

What are student perceptions of institutional factors that impede persistence?

Students report specific barriers that include Climate (mono-cultural, crowded, Security

Personnel); Support Services (Counseling, orientation, scheduling, tutoring and testing);

Faculty (faculty-student interaction, instruction); Academic Experiences (Math

Department, Classroom Interactions, Instructional Design, Tutoring Labs, Testing

Centers); and Student Life (Inactivity and Leadership).

Climate

"**Some of these kids are scared to leave Cypress Hill Campus because there**

ain't no support for them on other campuses. *Supportive elements for Black*

students are isolated to one campus. Nothing but one or two Black teachers. Can't

even find Black art on the walls at the other campuses. You can see they always

pushing this to be the Black campus—then they don't have to be responsible for

having anything Black on the other campuses. They can always point over here.

All of the Black people don't live over here. Hell, most of the Black people that

go here don't live here. I bet you most of the Black people that come over here

don't even live close to here. Some of these kids are scared to leave Cypress Hill

Campus because there ain't no support for them on other campuses. "

"I know the campuses reflect the segregation in the city and the neighborhoods, so

I don't think it's deliberate or on purpose, but I do think the college could do

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better about making the facilities at least look diverse. The college could take the lead on trying to make the campuses diverse."

"You can find out about diversity by going to different campuses. Different campuses are different and you will have the wrong idea about the college if you only stay on one campus. On the other hand if you want that experience, you have to schedule your classes carefully because if you schedule them too close together, you could wind up sitting in traffic and missing a class. You just can't find real diversity except on one campus and that's over on Lakeside. If you don't have a class over there you don't know."

It's just too crowded on most campuses. "You stand in line forever at Laurel Creek. It's just discouraging. I can't hardly stand to go over there. That's where I live though. It's too many people."

"The lines are long everywhere but here. The parking situation at Lakeside almost makes you not want to go to class. I mean for real. It's just out of control how many people are at Laurel Creek and Lakeside. It's just too crowded on most campuses"

"I just don't go over there [Laurel Creek]. Too many people. I do my best to stay off the crowded campuses, but a lot of times that's the only place you can get classes."

"There are lots of Black folks at Laurel Creek, but what good is it if you don't know anybody? I mean there's not even a way to get to know anybody over there. And then I swear I never end up in class with any of them. What's the point in going over there?"

"I can't take the pressure at Laurel Creek. Top notch. The instructors are on your back over there. University material only—do you hear me? You got to come correct. You got to be competitive.. You have to strive for that if you want to be on that campus. I just don't like the atmosphere."

"You feel like nobody knows you on Oceana. People coming and going. You might see your teacher or tutor and they don't even speak cause there so many people and they probably aren't expecting to see you anyway. But it just feels weird when everybody is just going and not speaking to each other. Just trying to hurry cause there are so many people everywhere."

"I don't bother to go to Oceana or Lakeside because I know that you can't park, can't walk, just can't get anything you need because it's just students everywhere especially during registration and the first day."

We need to do something about the police on Cypress Hill Campus. *Security officers are seen as problematic.* "You know they can't tell the difference between a student and a thief? Y'all know that's right? I get hassled every other day by security around here. They should know me by now. Asking me what I'm doing and where I'm going. They kind of hostile. I got used to it. They don't see a student—they see a suspect. I'm tired of it. Every time he see me he looking upside my head. Looking at me like I'm doing something wrong. Every day. Every day. They see me with books. What is the problem? They have to ask me questions. Everything is relatively cool here, but just a few people stuck in sixties. I just wish security could see we just trying to go to class."

"I mean a couple of weeks ago I was walking down that hill [Cypress Hill Campus] and the police stopped me asking me a bunch of questions. I know my rights. I didn't have to answer him, but I did. He start telling me they had had some break-ins in some of the cars. Do I look like a car jacker? I got all these books and I'm trying to get to class and trying to get there on time and he hassling me because what? I had a test that day. That man messed me up asking all those questions. I never seen anybody trying to rob anything with all the books I had.

Yeah, I don't like it at all. Guilt by association. I know it sounds crazy, but I try

to avoid even seeing these security guards. I'm not used to it."

"You don't see security on other campuses. Just over here. Like they expecting

trouble from us or somebody in the community. I just never notice anybody

policing those other campuses. They so hard on people about everything—

especially about parking and little stuff. They a nuisance more than anything. No

crime around here, but we got all this security. Don't make me feel any safer."

Older beginners, traditional intermediate female students, and some military personnel

perceive segregation of campuses and crowds as impediments. Crowded larger campuses

were considered problematic for day students across age groups and academic status.

Questioning by security is viewed as a negative factor by younger male beginners and

completers.

Support Services

Participants identified Counseling, Office of Student Disabilities, Orientation and

Scheduling as key departments within Support Services.

Counseling

You get the run-around. *Students are misdirected and encounter services and*

resources that are poorly organized. "At Laurel Creek, I went to Admissions;

they sent me to Advising. Then they sent me to a counselor and then they sent me back to advising. I didn't know what the difference was and I still don't. Anyway I was just trying to get my classes picked out. The counseling woman was so rude. She was on the phone -- she didn't say, 'I'll be with you in a minute' or anything. I stood up there almost 10 minutes. She sent me back to Advising. When I came back, cause they sent me, she said, 'They're lying over there. I know what I'm doing over here.' You get the run around. I just left. I went to another campus. I had to stand in line, but at least I got registered. The woman told me on the phone that they can help you get started. How do you know where to start?"

"I saw a counselor a couple of times when I first came to make sure I was taking the right classes, but I never really felt welcome. I had to start off with financial aid. It seemed easy. I did everything I had to do and somehow it wasn't right and I wind up missing a whole semester. I was doing good. I got my GED a while back and I decided to go to school. I was on a roll and I finished the admissions stuff and I thought I was in and I found out I wasn't because they didn't tell me about some other stuff I needed. I applied for financial aid for the fall in like June and I think I did everything I had to do. I kept checking back with them every week and they kept saying everything was fine. I had came to this campus to talk to this White woman and she said, 'If they haven't helped you by the end of the week, come back and see me because you already supposed to have your aid.'

Nobody could seem to help me even though they said they would. Yeah, but I still didn't get in till the next semester."

"One thing is my biggest complaint--no one will give you an answer that will gratify you. They are afraid to be definitive. In Counseling no one wants to be accountable. You can't get the real deal. Everything is about accountability. They want students to be accountable, but nobody around here can be accountable. If you can't tell me what I need to know, just say, 'I don't know.' It's not that hard and it's better than causing problems for us."

"Every semester, I go to one counselor and they tell me one thing, I go to another and they tell me something else over on Laurel Creek. These counselors put me in two different classes at the same time. Counseling just screwed me over."

"What makes me mad is when one counselor tell you one thing and another one tell you something else. And then you can go to Laurel Creek and they'll tell you one thing and then somebody on Lakeside will tell you something else. And then, don' t talk to one of your friends, cause they been told two different things too. They just mess you up."

The counselors over on Laurel Creek act like robots. *Counselors provide impersonal service on several campuses.*" Over at Oceana, you ask them

whatever you came to ask and then you just go. They're just kind of busy at those big campuses. You go in there and you get to talk to the counselor and that's it. Nobody really paying attention to you as a individual."

"Ain't nobody really listening. That's why you get bad information half the time. VA people are good people, but they are over worked for a campus this size. What I run into are overworked people all the time. They don't have enough time. I ask them a question it's like they have to listen to you and they got other things on their mind. They have to listen to you and you can tell they're being pulled. They need more staff."

"We can't all go to the same people. The counselors over on Laurel Creek act like robots. Going to school is a big step for me and I wanted to see somebody and make sure I had everything right and was taking the right classes and so forth. Well, when I finally did get to see somebody she didn't even look at me. I bet she wouldn't remember me if she saw me again. They get you in and get you out and that's it."

"There's one counselor here that I totally don't like. For one thing she doesn't listen. She looked at my transcripts, but she didn't want to answer my questions. I asked her about transferring in hours and about career stuff. I was asking her for advice on courses and career stuff and she wouldn't answer the question. I kept

asking what would transfer, but she kept talking about the classes I already had. She just kept going round and round. She never did answer my questions. I wanted to say, ' Just answer the question.' Some of what they put you through is totally unnecessary."

"Who knows what them counselors be thinking about when you talk to them. Cause they sho' ain't listening. Can't answer a simple questions. That's my experience. They just want to do the talking. That's fine, but you got to listen first to know what I'm asking."

You go in there and ask a question and they make you feel stupid.

Condescending attitudes demonstrate a lack of respect for students' intelligence.

"Like the people at Oceana that work in the work-study program, they are always rude. Sometimes I just don't want to go in there and deal with their attitude. You go in there and ask a question and they make you feel stupid. To them, they know the answer. But for the people who never been to UCC and people who don't know the structure, it's a question that they need answered. The people in financial aid over there are rude too. I hate going over there."

"It's two counselors that I would never go to. This woman was so negative when I first got here. She said, 'If you don't study, you're not going to pass and you won't be here.' I didn't ask for all that. I just went up to her ask a question about

my classes and she went off like I had a problem. I didn't go back to her. I just

went to Mr. Willis. She needs to be replaced. Wasn't no sense in the way she

talked to me. She shouldn't be on Cypress Hill's campus or anybody's campus."

"Because of all my trouble with Math—you know, the foreign teacher thing,

falling behind, and then getting into the computer class, I wound up on academic

probation. When I tried to talk to my counselor and the financial aid people at

Lakeside about what happened, they didn't listen. The woman in financial aid

said, 'The Math class you were in was a lecture class not a computer class. And I

had to debate with her because she wasn't believing me. Because she was going

by the fact that I was on probation she said,' You're either going to learn it or

not.' You're going to have to do an appeal because you've taken it three times.

And I was like, I could pass it if I had a decent class and a decent instructor. Any

way I got this piece of paper that said that this woman had talked to me and I was

going to pass the next Math class I got in. That woman that signed my appeal? I

had never even talked to her or seen her."

"One counselor, over on Oceana, she talks too much. She always wants to tell you

what to take. I don't want her suggestions. Only reason I talked to her is because

they require it. And then I'll never talk to her again. She is recommending stuff

that is of no interest to me. I've been to school. I don't need that kind of help. She

acts like you need her to read the schedule. The woman talks too much."

"Counseling is two-sided. It is a matter of who you meet. It comes down to individuals. You take your chances depending on the campus. Some of the counselors try to tell you what to do. As a returning student you know what you've come to do."

"This one counselor gets too familiar with me and called me to the side and made little wise crack and nudging me. His joke was that I spend so much time in financial aid and he said, 'They gone start charging you rent here. Are you going to get a room here?' I just ignored him. He was trying to be funny when I was trying to get answers to questions about my money."

"Support Services people are not helpful. They ask questions about things that have nothing to do with the your classes. They try to give you counseling for your life when that's not what you ask for. I'm grown. I got kids and grandkids been to school. I don't need them asking about my life. Tell me if the classes I want to take will work. Period."

"Assertive people are not treated well here. You can be polite and vocal, but these counselors will let you know— 'I talk and you listen.' I speak up, so I am always fighting with them, but who wants to do that all the time?"

"I get tired of arguing with these counselors. This is my first and my last semester at UCC. I am too old for this mess. I already have a degree. These people treat you like you're crazy here. How many times have they talked to me like I had a problem and then when they see my transcript they act different? I'm here trying to re-tool and move to a different field. I already got my paperwork. I'm going on to St. Ed's next semester."

"One of the OSD (Office of Student Disabilities) counselors actually wanted to write up that he had given me early registration, when they hadn't. I told him I was already registered, and he said I was eligible for it and he was writing it up as if the OSD had given me something that they hadn't. The OSD counselor asked me—'What kind of assistance are you on?' That's not the first time I've been asked that. I'm not on any assistance. I pay my way. Why do they assume that all the students are getting aid? What does that have to do with service offered by OSD?"

"I had a run-in with a counselor in OSD over there at Laurel Creek. I was interested in going into Radiology and she was trying to discourage me. Like I said, I already have an Associates of Applied Science and I'm old enough to know what I can do. I'm returning and she was just discouraging. I think she was trying to get rid of me. She was trying to hurry me, but I am very persistent. I will keep coming back. That's how I've gotten where I am. I am very old school and

I know a lot about what's going on. So, she was telling me I couldn't get into

Radiology. She was telling me there's a lot of lifting and going on in that field.

Don't tell me I can't do something and don't explain with some depth and detail.

She was trying to put up a roadblock. I saw clean through her."

Experiences with Counseling include inconsistent information, impersonal service and

condescending attitudes. Many day students report frustrating experiences with the

counseling staff. Beginning female students across age groups and older female and male

beginners discussed problems with condescending behavior from counselors and OSD.

Orientation

I ain't had no orientation. *Students do not receive an effective introduction to*

campus services and procedures. "When I first came, I had no idea where to go. I

came in the wrong door and wandered around till I saw a desk where it looked

like somebody might know something. You know I still haven't met but four staff

people in two semesters. Anyway, the lady I talked to when I came seemed to be

irritated the whole time she was talking to me. Later on I found out that the office

was supposed to be closing and she didn't work in that department."

"This is my second semester here. When I walked in I found no help and

absolutely no direction. I didn't know where to start. Instinct-wise I found the

front. I just blundered through and asked questions. I just felt by instinct and felt by where the crowd was going for registration."

"Orientation? Somebody said it was mandatory, but I never knew where to go. Most people don't. The counselor registered me and never said a word about orientation. Nobody to this point has told me about parking or anything. I really didn't know where the counselor was— but I got no orientation.   We didn't get it at Laurel Creek or Cypress Hill. The counselor didn't say one thing about it. Maybe it's just not required for evening students, but it should be."

"If orientation was so valuable, they would make sure everybody gets to it, but they don't. When I went to sign up for orientation, I had to ask somebody where it was and when it was. They're not stressing the importance of getting the information."

I went. I don't remember one single thing from orientation. Students don't retain much of the information disseminated at the orientation sessions. "They give you this little blue calendar, but I really didn't read it. They gave us a lot of paper."

"My orientation was on a computer asking questions; it wasn't too helpful. I'm telling y'all-- all they gave us was a lot of booklets and papers. The only thing

that helped was they gave us a book on what you were going to major in. My orientation was on a computer asking questions. It wasn't too helpful. If these people would answer questions and give you information one-one- one, orientation wouldn't even be necessary. How the same people who don't give you one-on-one help going to do orientation? It won't help."

"As far as orientation is concerned, I basically didn't understand the purpose of it. They tell you here's the course schedule, here's where the buildings are. It just wasn't something that should have been required. You can actually open the course schedule yourself or go on the web site and know everything you need to know. It was just basic and unnecessary. I mean they were saying stuff like, 'T' and 'Th' means Tuesdays and Thursdays and 'OC' means Oceana Campus. I guess it was to hand-hold people who couldn't understand it."

"UCC could do a whole lot better job of giving people information. I went. I don't remember one single thing from orientation. All they do is give you paper to read. When you first come here, they don't tell you about any services they offer. I didn't know anything about the outreach program, the work-study, scholarships, different type of funds. They don't tell you that."

"You can't get any information around here. People need to hand out information and talk to you. Why would that be the problem? They always hand you a bunch

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of brochures and tell you to read it. How do you know what's important? If you

take a night class you sho' can't get much information at this school. When you

first come here they don't tell you nothing about the service."

Students perceive UCC as inefficient in the dissemination of information and in preparing

students for participating in college. Younger students view orientation methods as

ineffective. Older male and female beginners report completing the online orientation

option. A mix of students reported being unaware of mandatory orientation sessions.

Evening students report having the greatest difficulty receiving adequate and consistent

information.

Scheduling

If you a evening student, you just ain't going to get too much service from

any one of these campuses. *Evening students are restricted by the course*

schedule. "There's too much going on at one time. This college doesn't think

about working people. We have to take night classes, but you don't have any

services in the evening."

"Some professors have office hours during the day. We don't get office hours in

the evening.   They cater to the younger population. I work two jobs and they

only offer certain classes on certain campuses.   The majority of these people are

working class people and you have all these classes in the morning and not much

after five. I live close to Red River Campus and there is nothing I can take out there, so I drive to Cypress Hill. Everything's offered during the day. I have 18 hour days, so UCC doesn't make it easy."

"I wanted to take Black History and I wanted to take another class with a Black instructor. I got to drive way over here for that to happen. I don't know who they're catering to out where I am. Nobody is taking care of the evening student."

"We don't have any upper level Math courses here. That doesn't make sense. When we want Calculus we have to go to another campus because nobody puts those classes over here. Man, you just can't get upper level classes here. The last couple of semesters you realize this campus is not well thought of by the teachers. I tried to find some good Science classes, but you can't get them here. It really says something when you see what's offered to us and what they give to the other campuses. You figure out what they really think about this campus. See, they don't think other students should be inconvenienced to come over here, but they don't mind us having to go other places for our classes. That's not right. Just look at the schedule."

Female evening students who work full time report problems with the lack of choices within the schedule. They note the necessity of the College to become aware of their needs as evening students. Older male graduates and some ex-military personnel are

concerned about the lack of offerings on the Cypress Hill Campus. They feel the schedule reflects low expectations for Cypress Hill students and provides convenience for students on other campuses.

Faculty

Participants identified Faculty-Student Interaction and Instruction as two important impeding dimensions of this factor.

Faculty-Student Interactions

When it comes to a White teacher you don't always know where they're coming from till you get to know them, and till they show who they are. *White teachers are not always seen a sensitive.* Man, with White teachers in the classroom you just don't know what their perception of you really is. They might think you're lazy so you have to be on top of your game."

"A lot of times teachers just don't even think about cultural insensitivity. We were in a Cultural Anthropology class and we had a teacher who kept calling 'Asians' 'Orientals.' And we had to explain to her that 'orientals' are rugs, 'Asians' are people. Now here she was a teacher and didn't know any better than that—after all her years teaching."

"One professor says a relative teaches in an east side elementary and the kids can't even walk in a straight line to the cafeteria— but then she said, 'But-- the school is on the east side and that probably has something to do with it."

"There was one student on Lakeside campus who said she'd never been to Cypress Hill, and told another student if you go, you better take a gun and a knife. I asked the professor, who happened to teach at Cypress Hill if he ever took a gun and knife when he went, and he said, 'No.' I had to force the man to address and correct what the student had said. When it comes to a White teacher you don't always know where they're coming from till you get to know them, and till they show who they are."

"I don't have a mentor up here. I talk to the Lord. The administrators and teachers, most of them aren't from our background. Why am I going to talk to these folks? I talk to Mr. James, but I just have him for one class."

"I dropped a class because the teacher hollered at me. I mean literally. I missed a day in the reading class and when I came back I had asked her what I needed to do and she just started hollering and fussing saying.' I told you in the beginning of class to get the names and numbers of your classmates because if you're not here it's not my place to give you the work you missed.' I didn't know any of the people in that class because they were all White. I just didn't connect with those

people on that campus. I was the only Black person in the class and I got hollered at. I couldn't take it. Just embarrassing. Got out. Felt like I was in high school all over again and I been out high school for a long time now."

"Mr. Vance was my English II teacher-- Boy, he would get real mad at people if people turned in their papers and they weren't quite what he thought they should be. I mean he would get really mad. I didn't have time for all of that because I was working 30 hours a week already. I just went on dropped that class. I mean I just didn't have time for all that."

"My last Government teacher, I can't remember his name, but if people didn't do what he expect-- like their grades and stuff, he would get really upset. He'd hit the podium and be yelling and saying stuff that I didn't think you could say in class, like 'shit and what the hell were you thinking.' Yes he did. I didn't expect to hear that in class. He was just kind of crazy."

Just because they Black don't mean they going hard for Black students.

Black faculty are not all seen as supportive. "I said it before, but I think it depends on the instructor and what their objective is at UCC… whether they're Black or White are they here to actually teach or collect a check?

"You right. A lot of us don't have too much good to say about him. He does present high standards. And he is so much harder on his color than on other students. He will make wise cracks about you in his class."

"I know two people who got out of his class because of that. He tries to be funny. They dropped his class because he was always teasing them about being girlfriend and boyfriend—which they weren't. He would ask one where the other was. When the girl was absent, he'd say where ya girl? where ya friend? With this little grin. They didn't like it. They used to complain, but not to him. And he did this over a period of time and then they just got tired of it."

"Don't like the man at all. I don't care if he is Black. It's his way of treating you. Just because they Black don't mean they going hard for Black students. That's the lesson I got from him."

"I really can't say anything about his class because he was hard on me. I did learn a lot because he was so hard. And I'm used to people being hard on me because, well, I'm old. I know how to take constructive criticism. So him being hard wasn't going to make me get out the class. But then he wasn't like some of the other Black teachers that's hard on you. You didn't have any kind of relationship with him. I mean he was just Black."

"I know some young people don't know how to take him and they'll just drop the class because of that. I had another friend who had his class and she had problems with her work schedule, but he would always make wise cracks about her not being there. I mean he didn't seem to understand that. She got out his class. He didn't understand she was trying to work and go to school. He didn't show much concern for her problem. Young people can't take as much as we can."

"The other thing is you don't really get the feeling he's trying to help you. It's almost like he don't like you. You know, like you ain't up to standard and he going to whup you into shape. You just don't feel he's like with you."

"I think old people bother some of these teachers. *Teachers appear oblivious of older student needs.* **"**Sometimes in class they don't want to answer your questions or they just blow you off. I don't appreciate the way some of the teachers act like they don't have to teach or respect you as well as they do younger people. We are here to learn. We are paying to learn—not to be embarrassed in the class because we are trying to understand. A lot of young people won't ask the teachers stuff. We do. But I for one don't like being made fun of because I did the assignment. Something is wrong with that. I am old school and sometimes I don't like the way teachers will get smart with you or try to make fun because you are seeking information. Something's just not right about that."

"We get our work done and do all the extra credit and then they kind of make fun if you work hard. We're stigmatized for doing work early and working hard. I mean this teacher just called me out in front of everybody the other day. He told people I had turned my paper in early. People were mad because I change the standard in the class. I do what I'm supposed to do and I become a damn joke. This is school. I thought I was supposed to do all the assignments. There is bias in some classes against older students. No question about it."

"I've been out of school a while I didn't learn as fast. I got so far behind. If you weren't straight out of high school, it was difficult to catch on. You just kind of get left behind because they just assume you are up on everything."

"At Oceana, my Math instructor didn't explain anything. Because the majority of students were way younger. He was on the assumption he didn't have to explain. He thought everybody should know. He didn't take time to explain because most of the people were right from high school."

"How long I been out of how high school? You can tell. Now, why do they treat you like you fresh out of high school? They teach too fast and then don't want to answer your questions*."*

Instruction

Just fly through it. *Indifference to student learning styles discourages academic success.* "That's my math teacher she just continue to go. If you don't get it, then you don't. She just there for the check. She don't stop and ask do you understand it. She just fly through it. That's Ms. Walker. She do like three or four chapters a day in that hour and a half. Just fly through it. You wouldn't believe."

"They just want to throw it at you. This guy used to throw stuff on the board and then he would say 'Did you get that?' as he was erasing the board. They don't want to teach; they don't want to instruct. Some of these teachers do not know how to relate information. The biggest problem we face is teachers who are looking at how people are going to fail instead of giving us the information we need."

"For my reading class we just go to lab right after class and I have another class right after lab. She stick it on you. We do one of each problem and then you got to go with it. And then you have a test on three chapters and you really don't have time to really study because she going through them. You got cards, you got word parts, you got everything."

"In my Sociology class, it was just lecture. There was nothing you could really read up on. Everything came from him. It was boring. When it came test time it was really hard. He just talked. Just purely lecture. If you missed a day, it was a

problem. I like to go back and read and think about things, but he just kept going

with the lecture. I just felt like I couldn't learn anything from that class. It was

just a mismatch. Let's face it, Black people like to talk. I think most people do. It

don't matter your color and when you go up in a class and all they're doing is

talking and they don't even hear you, that's going to be a problem for Black

students."

"Lecture and more lecture. I had to drop a class cause that's all the man did and it

wasn't going to get any better. I had one course where the teacher was lecturing

and people just steady raising their hand and he would continue lecturing. I

thought that was really sad. It might be because it was his first semester teaching

over here. He used to teach at another university. Maybe it's just that he's not

familiar with the culture here. He didn't seem to know we expected to be able to

talk for a little part of the class anyway."

"They will talk you to death. I swear they will. This one teacher he just go on and

on. It's like we not there at all."

Younger and older female beginners and older male beginners report instruction

dominated by hurried delivery and lecture. Themes that emerged from narratives with

regard to ineffective faculty are indifferent, insensitive, unreliable, and inflexible. Several

older women feel that that they are sometimes dismissed or targeted because of their age

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and work ethic. The "lecture only" format is perceived to discourage interaction and intellectual stimulation for students across age groups and academic status.

Academic Experiences

The Math Department, Classroom Interactions, Instructional Design, Tutoring Lab, and Testing Center were articulated as key aspects of this factor.

Math Department

You got to pay attention to whose Math class you get in. *Selecting Math instructors is extremely important.* "The counselors sometimes act like it's you not applying yourself, but there are some real problems in this Math department. You really got to choose your classes and your teacher."

"Math is the most critical subject we take in school. You're going to have to use Math sooner or later in life. Nobody's ever going to ask me about adjectives and adverbs and all that in English. But Math, we have to use it everyday. Me catching on to Math is pretty easy. It don't take too much for me to learn how to do it. It just means going in there everyday trying to get help and assistance when I need it. And that just ain't happening."

"You got to get a perfect match for Math—you know, like the right teacher and a real good tutor. Later on when they start talking about taking your financial aid,

nobody really wants to hear the real reasons. You got to pay attention to whose Math class you get in. You really need to talk to some people who know."

The way the computer class is set up?—it's set up for us to fail. *Students don't trust the Math Department's computer mediated developmental course.* "The third time I took Math they put me in a computer Math class. Now why would they do that? That's where you sit in front of a computer and its supposed to teach you. And the teacher talks for a little bit and then you have to deal with the machine. And I said, 'Oh, no. I can't do this. I just couldn't do it. Math is hard and the computer made it worse. I dropped and then I had big problems with financial aid."

"People are dropping like flies in that computer-mediated class. We have computer going on, we have lecture going on, and homework in that class. It's too much. Everybody just keeps disappearing. I haven't learned much. I am not ready to move to another level—even if I pass the class. The computer makes some simple Math processes harder than they have to be. And you can't watch the computer do the steps. The answer just shows up on the screen. And the teacher has to talk too. I can't do it. I'm kind of lost and I don't know what to do, but there are no tutors or counselors to talk to because I get here after everything closes. I will probably fail and that's going to really mess up my financial aid."

"Somebody needs to answer this right here—why on earth would you put someone in Developmental Math in front of a computer? We need people to help us. That's the only way I learn. The only way I could get this class was with the computer. If I wanted to work on a computer I would have taken an online course. This tricking you into taking this computer stuff is just wrong."

"I am always preaching education to my kids and I really feel bad because they have seen me so frustrated this semester with this crazy Math class. This class is killing me and whole lot of other people. I didn't get much information. I don't know how I signed up for this. I'm stressed out because I didn't know what to do. I still don't. The class I took was supposed to be a lecture class and I found that it was a computer class. Be careful when you read the schedule, sometimes the fact that it's a computer class is in little print. And if you're in a hurry, like registering late you miss it altogether. What a lot of us did was just got into the first class that wasn't full because we were so late registering. The way the computer class is set up?-- its set up for us to fail. I, at no point, knew it was a computer class. I'm telling you it was in small print. Nobody in their right mind would do this to their self. How did they do this?"

The man didn't have the social skills to teach. *Faculty who fail to relate to students are seen as inept.* "Let me tell you about this crazy Math teacher I had last year. He was not the kind of guy you could go up and talk to. If you miss a

test, too bad. If you to go the hospital, you better have proof. He used to try to

crack jokes, trying to make us like him, but it really made us hate him. I think it

was his first year teaching. The man didn't have the social skills to teach. He was

so strict about the fact that if you didn't do every single homework assignment

and if you didn't take the test in the testing center, you were going to flunk. Me

and another student got in a shouting match with him and he jut told me to leave.

So I left and went to the Math department. I went to complain. After we talked,

the Math department head at Oceana just threw us in his own class. I'm glad he

did cause he could really teach."

"I dropped College Algebra. That was my first week. Had this old guy and he

just went straight to doing all this hard Math. I felt like I was coming to the class

in the middle instead of the beginning. His teaching methods didn't really help

me out. I'm not sure he knew we were there. He just went to talking about the

Math and you couldn't really ask any questions. He would assign a lot of

homework. He expected you to know all this stuff from a past class. I didn't

know what I was doing. I was more confused everyday, so I just dropped."

"He and I signed up for a Math class with Mr. Gonzalez and we get there to the

class and surprise! Somebody who works in the learning labs is teaching the

class. And he's not even a good tutor. And this person has no teaching ability

whatsoever. I comprehended very, very little. This is my third semester having

different Math teachers. John was just awful. He would just face the board and mumble. And then he would turn around and say, 'Did you get that?' And then we couldn't go any further because once you're lost-- you're lost. Math is like that. I don't know about you, but I went home everyday thinking what the…? "

"If I had known he was the one teaching the class I would never have signed up for that class. My money was wasted last semester. I rank a teacher high when they can relate the material to me. I ask, 'Does he really want to be there to teach me or he's just there for a check?' I can tell you John used to come in mumbling and guzzling down coffee. He won't say too much and didn't connect with anybody. You can't teach Math like that."

"The teacher came to class 10 minutes late the first day. I find that very unacceptable. Then one day she came in 10 minutes before class was over with. Most people was gone when she got there. That's another unacceptable. Then she comes in another day---sleep in the back of the classroom. She just wasn't adequate enough for me to be in her class. I transferred out that class. And then I wind up with another bad teacher."

" I mean he was just a stale Math teacher. Speaks in monotone all the time. He knew what he was doing. No enthusiasm in the class. None. I swear. I'll never take him again. Even though I made an A in the class and I'm good in Math, it

was still a bad experience. Most of the material I had to learn on my own. A lot of it I already knew.”

“Financial Aid messed with my Math, but I think the teacher could have helped more than he did. I was on a 30-day delay with my financial aid and I couldn’t get my Math book. That was messed up. So I didn’t have a book for a long time. And he told me was the only way he could help me is if I had the book. Now, if I’m needing help, we could sit down with his teacher edition and work through the problems. He could show me how, say do this, this, this and etceteras, etceteras he doesn’t do that. I feel as if I’m not seeing things the way he is. Basically, I’m not getting good instruction. And I don’t think he’s a bad guy. On a personal level, I like him. As far as teaching Math, I think he goes a little too fast and he’s not trying to help. He kind of cares, I think, but I am trying to figure him out. I just need his help. I mean, my Math teacher is even approachable, but I get the same answers every time. I don’t even know what to say to him any more. I work two jobs and it’s hard to trying to deal with getting to tutoring. My weekends are free, but the learning labs aren’t open during the right times, so I have to try to get as much from my Math teacher as I can, but he’s just not bringing it. I get some people I know away from school to tutor me sometimes, but that’s the only way I know to make it. I’ve been getting by like that.”

How are we supposed to learn from people who can't speak English?

International teachers' communication and instructional styles are problematic.

"I couldn't understand the teacher. I tried to tell my counselor that. I placed into Elementary Algebra. So the first Math Class I went to there at Laurel Creek I had an Asian instructor. And I really didn't understand him at all. I got switched out. I was already behind in that class. So I couldn't catch up. I was so far behind I had to drop."

"I had a teacher with such a heavy accent in my developmental Math class, I couldn't understand a word this lady was saying. I lost a lot. If you ask her to repeat what she said she acted like it was an insult. How are we supposed to learn from people who can't speak English? I wind up not passing the class because I could not understand the teacher and she sent me to a tutor who was from the same culture and I didn't understand her either. Now, y'all know what that did to my financial aid. I'm paying for that computer class now."

"I end up having to pay a tutor to get through a Math class at Lakeside. The culture and language barrier was too much. I couldn't understand her and whenever you asked questions she would get defensive. You asked her a question and she thought you were making fun of her. We simply couldn't understand her."

"You can't ask staff people questions and you especially can't ask Math teachers questions. The teachers can't even give you any information about your progress. This foreign instructor told me I was doing well and I think it was because she didn't want me to drop and then I failed that class. There were just a few people left. I should have dropped."

'H**alf of y'all will fail before spring break.'** *Negative attitudes and judgements impact student confidence and behavior.* "I had been out of school almost 20 years when I came to UCC**.** The first day in my Algebra class, the professor came in and said, 'Half of y'all will fail before spring break. Half the rest of you going to drop. He said that the very first day of class. Every class period he would announce how many people had already dropped. He would say, 'Look around. See, I told you.' I did real bad on that first test. Another Black woman did just as bad as me. There was only two of us and we figured we made the worst grades. And he came in that day and said some of y'all probably need to go ahead and drop. I didn't want drop. I wanted help. When I asked him for help— no, when anybody asked for help-- he always said, 'You already know this. If you don't know, go to the lab.' When can I get to the lab? I work. I just needed him to help me. I stayed until the last day before you could drop and so did the other woman. We both dropped. If that man hadn't started off the class so negative I think I might a felt like I could do that class. It was just a bad way to start us off."

"My instructor for Developmental Math is just terrible. We started with lots of

African Americans in that class, but most everybody is gone. Most people got out

the class .You can not ask any questions. He can make you feel like the dumbest

person on this earth. That is one class I do not want to go to. If there is something

I don't understand, I have to go to the book or ask somebody. When you ask a

question, he says' Did you read the book?' If you say, 'Yes', he's says 'Why

didn't you understand?' The man is very good at the math, but he doesn't know

how to communicate with anyone. He shouldn't be instructing at all. To maintain

my learning, I read the book pretty well. I understand the book a lot better than I

can him. With my classmates, I'll go ahead and get together with them and we'll

work out the problems. But I will not ask him anything."

Instructors and instructional delivery in the Math Department are perceived as

problematic for younger and traditional beginning students and younger intermediate

level students. Some instructors are seen as discouraging and others failing to relate to

students. International instructors with heavy accents are reported particularly

problematic. Younger students and those in the intermediate age group report the most

difficulties with computer-mediated classes and discouraging instructors.

Classroom Interactions

I try to keep my mouth shut. *Culturally different students sometimes feel

silenced.* "It depends on who's in your class. If you're the only Black in class

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you ain't going to feel all that comfortable. You won't have any body to relate to.

It makes you be careful what you say. I try to keep my mouth shut. I watch how

people act. It was very uncomfortable at Oceana. In all the classes I took over

there, I was the only African American and I don't think I ever saw a Black

teacher over there. Maybe they all left in the evening. You don't feel like

speaking when you're the only Black person in a class. You feel like you've got

to explain everything you say."

"The class that made me change over to Cypress Hill was one where the teacher

was talking about how she ran the class democratically. I was the only Black

person in there too. It seemed like people were doing what they wanted and

turning in stuff when they wanted. She wanted the class to have a lot of say,

which was good, but then the class just didn't have a lot of structure."

"In my Writing class there's this White girl who chops up my sentences. When

we work in small groups she reads my writing out loud and she rearranges my

words. She makes it sound like ebonics. I don't write like that. I don't even talk

like that. I don't like working with the girl at all. I ask her about why she does

that and she just looks at me. It just makes the class messed up for me. If I tell the

teacher I don't want to work with her, somebody will probably think I'm

prejudice--which I'm not."

"People say that Laurel Creek has a lot of Blacks, but I always wind up in class by myself. And you can just feel that those White students don't want to be bothered. I really don't have anybody to talk to in there. I just go in and come out. I mean nobody has asked me to be in their study group or anything. You can't hardly get with people who don't want to be bothered with you."

"At Laurel Creek, instructors were basing everything on a four-year program. It had this university feeling. They thought everybody wanted to go to the university. Me being the only Black person in my class, I didn't want tell anybody that I was just up here for a two-year degree. They basically were focused on everybody going to a four-year school. Now, here I was the only Black person in the class and I wasn't about to let anybody know that I haven't planned to go to nobody's university."

"Don't you hate it when you are the only Black person and every time somebody says something about anything Black they looking at you? You can feel everybody in the room just looking. They want to know what you think about anything when you're the only one, but then they're scared to really come out and say anything."

"I feel proud when I'm the only Black in class. I'm in there holding it down for my race. They can't tell me nothing. As far as me going through my classes in

school and me being Black, sometimes I guess White folks and Hispanic people

feel I'm inferior to them already. You get that feel. Sometimes when I answer a

question they ask me how I got the answer. It's right ain't it? Don't ask me how I

got the answer. They don't ask anybody else how they got the answer. I'm good

with Math and I know it. But they act like I ain't supposed to know."

" I don't like being the only one and it has nothing to do with anything the White

people have done or not done. I don't mind being in class with White people, but

I don't like being the only Black person. I just don't like being in class with

people and none of them look like me."

Cultural differences sometimes silence or make classroom interactions uncomfortable for

younger and traditional beginners. Both younger male and female students report feeling

alienated in classes where they are the "only one" at the larger campuses. Younger

beginners express concern about cultural isolation.

Instructional Design

That class made me crazy. You looking at them, they not looking at you.

Students are dismayed by instructional delivery that fails to provide interaction.

"Do not take a distance learning class-- straight up. Cause in my biology class it's

a hybrid of a regular class and a distance class. For several weeks they kept doing

the introduction part of the class, which was pretty cool. Then once we went to

the videotapes, I thought it would easy. You go home watch the videotapes, take

the test and that was it. Well, to my surprise it was hard and man I couldn't crack

it. Like I explained earlier, you got to watch the video and then take the test. See

the dude on the tapes is the dude off the Discovery channel, which y'all probably

heard him. He don't give you enough information to answer the questions and

you got to go back and keep rewinding and get basic information. You having to

watch that tape for three or four more hours trying to get basic material. Then

once you take the test, the questions are different from the video, so you be like,

what the hell is going on? I think if you complain about the material not matching

the video she just tell you in order to pass the class, just do the workbook and the

concept exercises. I have to keep rewinding the tape just trying to understand the

man's accent in that biology class. It's not the biology—it's how he say stuff.

And who has time to keep running the tape back. In class, she had to keep

stopping the tape because he would say something, like fifteen, but it didn't sound

like 'fifteen,' it sounded like 'fifty.' And if you were watching that at home and

you put in the wrong number—you got that wrong. You don't really know what

he's saying. You can go to that class and watch that videotape, but they can't

rewind it for just your own benefit. They can't stop the video just for you. Then

if you do it at home you not in the classroom, …you can't ask the teacher

anything, so you basically on your own. Keep rewinding and rewinding and then

you can't be late turning it in because it's like $2.00 for that. I got an $8.00 fine

trying to catch up. And I got to go to work too, so you don't have all day to sit

and rewind a tape. I mean that's sad. I got stuck in that hybrid Biology class

because I waited until after my grades came before I registered and then all the

regular classes filled up. I couldn't believe how early people were registering and

they didn't know if they had passed their class or not. Anyway, I passed

everything, but by the time I registered all the good classes were gone. I had heard

people complain about that class, but that was all that was left. All the biology

classes were full. I'm dropping this class and I'm going to lose my money."

"You have to stay out that damn Biology class. Those tapes don't match them

tests. And you know what? The teacher knows it too. I been up here two years

and people always talking about that class. Same story every semester. I mean I

took that class. Now they can fool them young people, but old as I am—I ain't

crazy. They right-- the videos don't match the test. And the teacher try to act like

it's the first time she hearing it. Don't nobody care. It's that simple."

"The Principles of Microeconomics! That was one messed up class. The teacher

was at Lakeside and we sit over here at Cypress Hill and watch him on the TV

and stuff. You got to press a button to answer questions and stuff. He just went

too fast. First day of the class he covered two sections of the book. That class—

I'm going to have to take it over. I got to get a new teacher. I didn't like the way

they had that set up. I'm watching him on TV. When the signal was messed up, he

come on the phone and teach the class over the phone. He was giving his lesson

over the speakerphone now. He was on the phone with us and in the real class

with some other people. That class made me crazy. You looking at them, they not

looking at you. You got to push a button to ask a question. Then he said he was

going to come over here once a month and it was going on November and he still

ain't come to the class. He was teaching like four different classes at one time. It

was four people in our class and they told us the class where he really was full. I

knew I had to get out that class."

"They know those classes are messed up. I mean the only people who take that

class is people who can't get the regular class. That can happen pretty easy too if

you register late. Those are like trick classes. You know they not popular classes

and you get stuck with them if you late."

Hybrid and Distance Learning classes were perceived as frustrating by younger male

beginning and intermediate level participants.

Tutoring

Tutors are just not very helpful. *Tutors are ineffective.* "I tried to use the

tutoring on campus, but it wasn't very beneficial. "There would be a lab full of

students needing services and a few tutors. You got to wait so long sometimes. I

just wasn't getting the help I needed. I had to pay for tutoring. Tutors are just not

very helpful. Some of them be trying—but they don't really feel what you're trying to get to."

"I swear this one woman—girl whatever she was, was laughing when she saw what Math class I was in. I'm in the lowest Math you can take. Okay, I know that. I was over at Laurel Creek. I was just looking for some help. And she was just kind of doing this little laugh and holding back her smile when she saw the paper with my Math level. I haven't been back since. I may have to do like these other people and pay for a tutor."

"It was just too crowded. They put you on the computer. I sat there for about 30 minutes just looking at people. Nobody ever came. The tutors were just talking and having their own little conversations. I finally asked the lady for a book, so I could start doing something for myself. She said they were out of books. I couldn't get any tutoring, so I left."

"You have to choose your tutors in the labs. I ask this one man to help me and I end up dropping this class because I got a bad tutor. All three times I talked to him he wrote more on my paper than I did and said, 'This needs work.' What was I supposed to do?"

"At Laurel Creek, the tutoring room is small and crowded. I'd rather sit down and figure it out myself than put up with somebody acting like I should already know the material. They really make you feel like you're bothering them. I'm telling you they do have a way of making you feel dumb."

They need to offer tutoring at different times. *Tutoring lab hours do not help evening students.* "If you work, you can't get the help you need. UCC needs to work for us. They need to find the time frame that works for working class people. There's no tutoring labs open at night and if they are, we're in class. After we get out of class there's nothing. The hours for tutoring are so bad for evening classes. They need to offer tutoring at different times. There just aren't enough tutors at Laurel Creek."

"I mean I haven't gotten a lot of help here. As an evening student I do a lot of things on my own. Most of what you need to get in and register is just common sense. I just read the schedule and talked to Mr. Jones over at Oceana. Now, he did tell me about this Black History class. I really didn't talk to too many people. When I come in the evening, there's not a whole lot open. So I'm basically on my own as far as getting extra help with my work. I can't use the labs cause they're not open after I get out of class."

The testing center is a scary place. *The Testing Center environment creates apprehension.* "I hate the testing center. Oh, I can't stand going in the testing center. It's so far away from the class where you learned all the stuff. Some of the people don't know how to treat you. I mean this woman in there just do as little as she can."

"That place bothers me. It makes you feel like you are taking the SAT or something. It's just high pressure. The rooms are bad because it just ain't the same as the classroom. I just don't like the staff people in there. What good do they do? Cause they can't answer your questions about your test or nothing. Then your teacher's not there. You might as well be by yourself."

"I just think it's too crowded. The testing center is a scary place for me. What's the point? The people in there don't even help you when they can. They just want to have somebody watch over you. I can't take going in there and my teacher is always sending us down there. I wish we could just take the test in the class where we learnt the stuff to begin with."

Younger male beginners and intermediate level participants report hybrid classes create disjointed learning experiences. They believe the classes to be punitive (for failing to register early), ineffective, and a misuse of time and money. Students believe "they" (schedulers) are aware of the problematic nature of hybrid classes.

Both the tutoring labs and testing centers are perceived as negative environments by younger female beginning and intermediate level students. The tutoring lab services are viewed as less than beneficial and unavailable for many evening students. Younger students report more difficulty identifying effective tutors. The Testing Center is perceived as a particularly negative environment by younger female beginners.

Student Life

Participants identified Activities and Leadership as key impeding aspects of Student Life

Activities

… **more like student death over here.** *Inactivity and inequity in Student Life activities have a negative impact on Cypress Hill students.* "What do we do for fun? We just look at each other over here at Cypress Hill—that's our student life. It ain't no student life over here. We have to pay the same fee as people at the big campuses, but we don't get many events. You have to go to other campuses to get your money's worth. In the UCC newspaper you see what's going on all the other campuses. And it might be two out of ten of them at Cypress Hill."

"They put most programs at Laurel Creek and Lakeside. At Cypress Hill as compared to other campuses, there's not a lot activities. Student Life is more like student death over here. There is no student life. You don't have all the activities

like big campuses. We don't even have a basketball court. When you're not in the books there's nothing to do. People get used to nothing going on. Just go on home."

"When I go to events on other campuses, I count and sometimes. I'll be the only Black person there. Why can't we have stuff on this campus? If I go to stuff at Lakeside, it's just me most of the time. When stuff is going on on other campuses they don't put it out there enough. They don't advertise events the ways they could. If you don't know about things, how can you involve yourself? They have stuff at Oceana, but mostly people just watch TV over there. We need something. Some of us go over to the university for their events."

"I want to know why the Honor Society doesn't meet over here. They got a bulletin board, but that's basically it. You get the feeling they don't expect anybody over here to qualify for the group. None of the meetings are ever held over here. You have to go somewhere else to participate in Phi Theta Kappa. I'd just like to ask somebody about that."

"They throw us a bone every now and then. They just do something to say they did something over here. It's ridiculous. It really is. They got the African Culture Center sitting over here. It's just a token thing, just like Student Life. They just throw it over here. They just want to say it's over here."

Leadership

You can't expect a whole lot at the campus level when they're so messed up at the top. *Student Life is disorganized.* "They have so many problems going on in Student Life at the campus level; they aren't really organized. Most people don't know what a mess student life is. It's like a bunch of high schoolers. Student Life is just really not too good. You can't expect a whole lot at the campus level when they're so messed up at the top. I'm involved in a lot of their activities. I have to be on other campuses to do that. You can't do anything with Student Life on Cypress Hill's campus."

Man, they're just like Big Brother. *Student Life is restrictive.* "If you want to do something here, there's all these boundaries we can't go over. Let me tell you how cut-throat Student Life is. We [African American Student Organization] were trying to throw a dance and they wouldn't let us. First they said someone had the lounge reserved at that time and so then we changed the date, and then they said if we did, it could only be for a few hours. We had some kind of really early curfew even though everybody up here is obviously grown at this college. If we wanted to do something outside and have it as the African American Student Organization, we can't do anything off campus. But if we do it outside of school we can't use our organization name. Man, they're just like Big Brother"

"It's hard to get other people to join the African American Student Organization. People are interested, but it's hard for people to commit and we know it's cause of the time we meet. I mean we have sat out here and gave away candy and stuff and asked people to sign up. Now, they will eat whatever we have, but as soon as they find out we meet at 8:30 on Wednesdays, they just leave. We never see them again. I mean, I know that's early and some people work, but if you serious you be there. The main reason we meet so early is cause our advisor has class and she teaches over at Oceana too. So we do what we got to do. It's just hard getting people involved when that's the only time you can meet."

"We can't really advertise anything. You have to make up your flyers for like a White community. Make a certain type of flyer. We're Black and we want to draw a Black crowd we want to use words we know like, 'Let's get krunk.' You can't really use that because they don't know what that means. So we have to say, ' Let's have a good time.' And that's not really going to draw people."

"We attend all the Student Life functions. To me, there are too many chiefs and not enough Indians. They think they're top dogs and you can't believe anything they say they're going to do. They're bogus. Always watching over what you do."

"I tried to get involved in Student Life and I was volunteering for this event they were having over at Lakeside. I figured the only way I was going to get involved was to go over to that campus. Anyway, me and this other guy was helping out. You know we were volunteering our time. And we took a break and then here come Joanne around the corner saying, 'Let's stop goofing off guys, get to work.' Like we were on the clock. I been out of high school almost ten years and she talking to me like I'm a kid. Kind of made me mad. I don't understand why they have to talk down to you. That's the kind of stuff that makes you not want to be bothered with Student Life at all."

Student Life activities are viewed as disorganized, inequitable, and restricted by younger beginners, intermediate level, male completers and graduates. Members of the African American Student Organization view the organization as unaware of cultural differences. They also express little trust in the program as a whole. Younger and intermediate age students see the campus Student Life leadership as inflexible.

Summary of Research Question #2

Themes that emerge from the narratives are impersonal service, disorganization, inflexibility, discouragement, cultural isolation, apathy, condescension, inequitable, and restrictive.

Students report the Counseling Department, Math Department, and Faculty appear to create the greatest obstacles. The perception of a crowded, segregated climate, lack of personal service in the other support services, hybrid courses, and Student Life are also seen as problematic. Young male beginners and completers report problems with security personnel on Cypress Hill.

Impersonal and condescending service is perceived in the Counseling Department, Tutoring Lab, Math Department, in the classroom and Student Life by younger students and beginning students of both age groups. Ineffective orientation programs, tutoring services, hybrid courses, Math classes, and instruction are also cited by younger students as ineffective and frustrating. Older and evening students report difficulty with receiving consistent and accurate information.

Research Question #3

<u>Which institutional factors do students use to overcome perceived institutional barriers?</u>

Students have reported barriers that include: crowded campuses, harassment by security; misinformation; rude inattentive staff; limited class schedules and services; under prepared faculty; crowded tutoring labs; lack of information; cultural isolation; age bias; lectures; poorly delivered distance learning; Math instruction; computer mediated courses; international faculty communication styles; and the lack of student life.

Some students have been able to overcome perceived barriers by using campus resources and services, while others use resources outside the institution. Participants did not express the ability to use institutional factors to mitigate harassment by security, limited schedules and services, age bias, and the lack of Student Life.

Three themes emerged in the narratives with regard to overcoming barriers: withdrawal, transferring, and engagement. Students often choose to withdraw when faced with barriers. In effect, they 'escape' an uncomfortable situation or seemingly insurmountable odds. Transferring from one class section to another after the start of the term or selecting a new tutor after initial contact is a second means of overcoming barriers. The third strategy students use is engagement. Engagement involves one or more of the following activities: relying on Cypress Hill personnel; addressing authority, networking with peers, and engaging technology to gather information and make reasoned choices about courses and instructors.

Withdrawal

I just went on dropped that class. I mean I just didn't have time for all that.

"Math is hard and the computer made it worse. I dropped and then I had big problems with financial aid."

"I dropped College Algebra. That was my first week. Had this old guy and he just went straight to doing all this hard Math. I didn't know what I was doing. I was more confused everyday, so I just dropped."

"When can I get to the lab? I work. I just needed him to help me. I stayed until the last day before you could drop and so did the other woman. We both dropped. If that man hadn't started off the class so negative I think I might a felt like I could do that class. It was just a bad way to start us off."

"All the biology classes were full. I'm dropping this class [hybrid Biology] and I'm going to lose my money."

"I mean he would get really mad. I didn't have time for all of that because I was working 30 hours a week already. I just went on dropped that class. I mean I just didn't have time for all that".

"The tutors were just talking and having their own little conversations. I finally asked the lady for a book, so I could start doing something for myself. She said they were out of books. I couldn't get any tutoring, so I left."

"That class made me crazy. You looking at them, they not looking at you. You got to push a button to ask a question. Then he said he was going to come over

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here once a month and it was going on November and he still ain't come to the class. He was teaching like four different classes at one time. It was four people in our class and they told us the class where he really was full. I knew I had to get out that class."

[Advising and Registration] "You get the run-around. I just left."

"There is no student life. You don't have all the activities like big campuses. We don't even have a basketball court. When you're not in the books there's nothing to do. People get used to nothing going on. Just go on home."

When faced with barriers and impediments, many students, particularly younger students withdraw from classes and the college. With regard to Student Life, participants choose to leave the campus. Younger students of both genders, more than older students perceive withdrawal as the primary means to overcome negative classroom experiences.

Transferring

 If I go to one and he ain't getting it to me—I don't need him. "And I really didn't understand him at all. I got switched out. I was already behind in that class. So I couldn't catch up. I was so far behind I had to drop."

"If I go off in there [a new class] and find it's some crap, I'm a switch out. If

there's a problem with me getting out I'm going to raise hell. I learned that you

need to go on ahead and register and then if things don't work out then you can

drop and try to add something later."

"I found the best tutors through trial and error. If I go to one and he ain't getting it

to me—I don't need him. He's blocking my road to success. I can't have that, so

I go to the good ones. You have to look"

"Be careful of who you work with Everyone is not helpful. Right now, we need

to be careful of who we choose to help us. I mean you got to find a good tutor. If

you find you a good tutor you can make it."

"You have to choose your tutors in the labs. I ask this one man to help me and I

end up dropping this class because I got a bad tutor. All three times I talked to

him he wrote more on my paper than I did and said, 'this needs work.'

Younger students report "switching" (transferring from one course or tutor to another)

classes or tutors when they find the teachers and tutors less than helpful. This trial and

error requires time and a flexible schedule, which most students do not seem to have.

Some report being at a disadvantage when they "switch" into a new class.

Engagement

Cypress Hill Personnel

At Cypress Hill, they're here for services. " I was over at Oceana. That's closer to my house, but the lines was too long. Somebody told me to go on over to Cypress Hill. I came to see Mr. Willis and he worked it all out. Now, I know how to do it myself, so no problem. If you can get around those long lines, it's no problem to get registered for classes"

"I just take as many classes as I can over here and with Mr. James. I came over here. I knew some people and they have helped me."

"I didn't know what to bring or who to talk to. Then a couple of months ago my mother met Mr. Willis somewhere and she told me to go and talk to him on the Cypress Hill Campus. I finally went to see him and I got everything done in just a few minutes. I was really, really shocked at easy it was. I wasted two years being scared. Mr. Willis was the hook-up."

"Over there at Oceana, I have to say, "Excuse me, Miss, can you help me out— over here? I say, 'What's up Mr. Willis? Got a little situation that I need some help with.' Big difference in the way I operate on the campuses. The people around here speak to you when you first come in. It's an open forum over here

and over there at Oceana they're like they're caged. At Cypress Hill they're here for services."

"He told me what courses don't transfer to a Bachelors. I have classes that I can't use for transfer because I had got bad information before, but Mr. Wills put me on the right track to where I need to be. He explains everything to you. If you've got problems you can go talk to him. He'll lead you in the right direction. He'll help you and he'll help you pick good teachers too. He know the good teachers and he help you get out the bad ones and switch when he can. He don't down the bad ones. He just make sure you get good ones. It's best to talk with him first."

"Nicole will also tell you about web sites and places online where you can go to get more information. You can call or go see her."

"If you're having a problem with anything you can go talk to her. One time when I wanted the course schedule and the woman in admissions said I had to wait until they came in the mail, Nicole went ahead and gave me a copy. She also helped me with my financial aid. She asked me how my money was and I told her not too good because my financial aid hadn't come in. Then she gave me a list of things that I could look into online. Nobody in financial aid told me about that. She said, ' If you ever have any problem with anything, come and talk to me.'

And I do and she has also met my mom and my daughter. She's real nice. If

anybody has a problem, they really should go talk to her."

"That's how I got here-- Mr. Willis is here to help you out in counseling. I learned

more about my GPA, my registration, what I need to do for my classes by talking

to Mr. Willis, instead of waiting at Oceana for a hour."

"You get help with financial aid and everything I know all the rules about

financial aid. I could work in there. Nicole helps you over there. I go talk to

Regina about all kinds of stuff even if it's not financial aid."

 "We always get our classes and do all our stuff at Cypress Hill. You get real good

service here. On most other campuses, you might sit and wait for hours, but here

at Cypress Hill we get help pretty quick."

Younger completers report using the Cypress Hill personnel to overcome confusion about

enrollment, crowded campuses, and impersonal service.

Address Authority

…closed mouths don't get fed. *Students must make demands to have their needs*

met. "I interact with my peers and my teachers. I have to because there are a

couple of things I do understand about college—you can not go it alone and

closed mouths don't get fed. My grandfather always said that. I believe it. You've

got to ask questions and make sure you get answers. You can make people

respond. You got to ask."

"There was one student on Lakeside campus who said she'd never been to

Cypress Hill, and told another student if you go, you better take a gun and a knife.

I asked the professor, who happened to teach at Cypress Hill if he ever took a gun

and knife when he went, and he said, 'No.' I had to force the man to address and

correct what the student had said."

"So I left and went to the Math department. I went to complain."

"We gone catch hell either way. Whether you passive or outspoken. Nobody's

going to like it. You might as well go on speak up and get what you want. You

got to be persistent. But if you don't speak up, don't expect much."

"We were in a Cultural Anthropology class and we had a teacher who kept calling

'Asians' 'Orientals.' And we had to explain to her that 'orientals' are rugs and

'Asians' are people."

"I just went in there and told them the class didn't make any sense and neither did

the teacher. I'm telling you they listened and they moved me out."

Addressing authority is a means that is employed by graduates and older ex-military personnel. Students perceive this as an effective method to have their needs met.

Peer Networks

Be careful of trying to do anything all on your own at UCC. *Students need to communicate with peers to avoid the pitfalls of the College.* "Be careful because you may need to know who the good Math teachers are. We older people talk to people, we ask questions and we get answers and help when we need it. You can't talk to the same people all the time. I think we network more, sit in different in places in classes. Be careful of trying to do anything all on your own at UCC**."**

"I don't get bad teachers. You know why? Because I do my research. I talk to people in my class and anybody who knows."

"I've learned over time that I must hand-pick my instructors each semester. I inquire. If I hear good things about the instructor, I tend to go in the class. I sometimes go talk to the professor beforehand to get a feel for them and let them know who I am The only way I go in a class without knowing the teacher is if I really need that class and it's the only one."

"With my classmates. I'll go ahead and get together with them and we'll work out the problems."

"You definitely got to manage your time and make time to work with other people. I study with him a lot. When I do that, I can remember the material much easier. Basically, whatever work you got to do, you got to do it on your own. You have to know how you learn and ask for help when you need it. Nobody's going to walk you through it."

"I tell all my friends about the good teachers and they tell me. A lot of young people don't pay attention and they get stuck with some real bad teachers."

"The counselors sometimes act like it's you not applying yourself, but there are some real problems in this Math department. You really got to choose your classes and your teacher. You got to get a perfect match for Math. Later when they start talking about taking your financial aid, nobody really wants to hear the real reasons. You've got to pay attention to whose Math class you get in. You really need to talk to some people who know."

"Now, I'll actually go meet with the teacher before I get in the class. I sure will. I go look them in the eye, tell them who I am and everything. I want them to know I'm serious. I want to know they're serious too. A couple of times, I decided not

to get in people's class because they didn't find time to talk or you could just tell when you met them it wasn't going work. This one woman couldn't even look at me. It was supposed to be her office hours. But I just talked to her anyway. You have to check them out before you get in there."

Both older beginners and completers, younger completers and graduates report networking with peers and faculty more often to avoid negative classroom experiences.

Technology

Online is the only way for us old people—I'm all about convenience. "I got to do my research. Nobody has money and time to waste. It's worth it for me to get a good teacher, so I don't have to switch and drop and do all this stuff. I use Pick a Prof.com. That keeps you from getting into the wrong person's class. That's how a lot of us make it. You can sit in the library upstairs, get on the web site and check out what other people say happened in their class."

 "I didn't have a hard time getting in. I did everything online. I always do everything online. I don't know how I would get anything done without it I really like that about this school. I work and I have five kids. I have a daughter in college and I had to help her, so I'm not afraid of the computer. No way I could stand in line waiting to get in classes. I did the FASFA and everything."

"Now, you can't do much by phone. I mean trying to talk to people on the phone on any campus is real hard. You get all those recorded messages. That's why I like doing things on the computer. Online is the only way for us old people—I'm all about convenience."

"Online just saves time and red tape. It puts you in control. Not a bunch of red tape. I wouldn't do it any other way. No way. I like being able to take care of things like this. I don'' need to see anybody to get registration done."

Summary Research Question #3

Students' strategies and use of institutional factors to overcome perceived barriers involve withdrawal, transferring sections, using trusted Cypress Hill personnel, addressing authority, networking with peers, and using technology. Younger students view withdrawal and relying on the Cypress Hill Campus as effective methods for coping with impediments.

Graduates, completers and older students report overcoming barriers using engagement. Many of these student engage or address authority when insensitive remarks are made. Older students connect with peers and engage technology to avoid negative academic experiences. Older students, graduates, and completers report fewer impediments with regard to negative classroom experiences.

Research Question #4

What are participants' recommendations to improve services to Black students?

Recommendations to administrators are categorized under the themes of Diversity,

Equity, Visibility, Faculty and Personnel, Support Services, Communication,

Assessment, and Community Outreach.

Diversity

Why can't there be a Black presence and a Mexican presence on all the

campuses? *An integrated environment demonstrates an acceptance and value of*

different cultures. "UCC is definitely segregated and it's a shame. I've never seen

anything so segregated. You can see that Cypress Hill is the Black campus,

Oceana is the Mexican campus and Lakeside is the diverse campus. The rest of

them are White. It's easy to see. In the military we had diversity. UCC should be

trying to diversify these campuses. I mean I like Cypress Hill, but they need to

look at the military for some examples of how to diversify."

"They need to show that all races are welcome at all campuses. Some of these

kids are scared to leave Cypress Hill Campus because there ain't no support for

them on other campuses. Crowded-- nothing but one or two Black teachers.

Can't even find Black art on the walls at the other campuses. You can see they

always pushing this to be the Black campus—then they don't have to be

responsible for having anything Black on the other campuses. They can always

point over here. All of the Black people don't live over here. Hell, most of the

Black people that go here don't live here. I bet you most of the Black people that

come over here don't even live close to here."

"I know the campuses reflect the segregation in the city and the neighborhood, so

I don't think it's deliberate or on purpose, but I do think the college could do

better about making the facilities at least look diverse with their art and with some

classes and things like that. Why can't there be a Black presence and a Mexican

presence on all the campuses?"

"UCC needs to be diverse. UCC doesn't push for diversity. They need to look at

diversity in the classroom Sure you see Black staff working in admissions and in

clerical positions, but not many faculty. We need to see Black people in charge

and involved at high levels everywhere—not just as staff and faculty at one or two

campuses."

"Why aren't there any Black men in the high administration? They can't find

any? What's the problem? I'm just asking. It just seems like there's a Black man

somewhere who could be here. Just one? I mean that's not diversity. That needs to

be cleared up."

Equity

What you do at one campus—do at the others. *Equity across campuses*

exemplifies fairness. "Basically, if that is a hassle, why not elect a leader at each

campus and every so often those leaders at all the campuses get together and talk

about the problem that the students on their campus site are talking about and then

relay that to whoever that needs to be relayed to? I'm up here thinking, this is just

basic stuff—what you do at one campus-- do at all the others."

"Don't charge us the same fee if we ain't going to have the same amount of

activities. Nobody ever ask us what we want over here, and I sho' can't be

running around to other campuses to get my money's worth. You know what I

mean? That's not fair. I barely get to class then I got to run to other campuses for

activities. That ain't right. Nobody can do all that and work too."

"Point is, if you have stuff alike at every site you won't have problems going on.

Just get every body involved. This is not a one-man thing. This should be

teamwork UCC should be a team thing and we have all these sites and we have to

have everybody involved and in the know. What you do at one campus—do at the

others"

"The schedule of the spring class actually came out first at Lakeside before it

came out at Cypress Hill. Don't know if that was on purpose, but that can have a

great impact on students because some of the courses that you need fill up pretty fast. I mean quickly. And if you're on another campus and they have that information before we get it here that could put you kind of behind for graduating a whole semester. I blame myself because I didn't really bring it to anybody's attention. I should have told an administrator or a staff person. It kind of perplexed me. It was whole weekend that I had that schedule and it still wasn't over here. It came out on a Thursday or Friday and didn't show up at Cypress Hill until that Monday. So that gave students on another campus an advantage. Even though the schedule is online, everybody doesn't have Internet access. It might be that the mail got delivered at different times. Even so, they just need to make sure everybody gets the publication on the same day."

"They need to think about how different the campuses look to us. You can tell there's more effort to make Oceana and Laurel Creek look good because people in the neighborhood expect it to look good. I think some of these campuses have the facilities they have because of where they're located. Like Laurel Creek, I never took classes there, but I been by there. And I think it has to look that way because of the neighborhood it's in. The facilities look like the neighborhood. Now, Cypress Hill looks better than the outside neighborhood, but Cypress Hill doesn't look as good as Laurel Creek because it doesn't have to look as good."

"We need some kind of physical recreation**.** We don't have anything on Cypress Hill. We need a gym with some weights and be able to play basketball.   I can't work out over here. You have to leave here and go to Oceana. They could have a treadmill or basketball. You know, Cypress Hill had a gym when it was on the hill. When everything came down here, they didn't get one. I've taken classes at Laurel Creek, Oceana, Lakeside, and Cypress Hill. And the funny thing is Cypress Hill is very nice and everything but like this campus right here, doesn't have a weight room."

"It just shouldn't be that big a difference between campuses. The things they have in the classroom at Laurel Creek are kind of high tech and like more modern than over here. Like, they have the TV's on the wall and stuff like that. Over here, Mr. James' TV was on cart for a long while. We had to go down as students and address it. We shouldn't have to go ask. It's just a whole different look and arrangement as far as the classrooms go."

Visibility

They need to get with students and take pictures and make it clear that Black students are up here. *The college should acknowledge the presence of Black students.* "On the commercials and stuff and the spring course schedules you don't see Black people on the cover of those—at least not Black men. 'The Faces of UCC' doesn't include me."

"I was looking on the web site. You look on there and its about four people, maybe one Asian and some White people. And all the White people were sitting around in front of the computer. The Black girl was standing behind the computer. I picked up on that small thing. I don't know—it's like they grouped together and she's on the outside looking in."

"We need to see us on the course schedule and stuff that goes out. You wouldn't know there are Black folks up in here looking at the schedule. In air conditioning classes we had a lot of Blacks in the manuals and in the books. On UCC's web site, you see us in the background. No Black males on the front of the Spring 2004 schedule. None—but those supposed to be 'the faces of ACC.' One on the web site or two, with a fireman' hat or some kind of helmet and another one cooking What does that say? They don't look like they going to Texas State. That's where I'm going."

"They need to put up some billboards in the community. This is our neighborhood and there are no UCC posters. They have all those little bitty posters out there on the table that say 'Start here. Get there' Ain't no Black men on any of those posters What? 'Brothers ain't starting here or getting there?' I guess that's what they're saying."

"That's something [African American Cultural Center] that should be featured in the schedule. You know like a highlight. We got Black History class at UCC, but you don't see it heavily advertised. Don't seem like UCC is proud of the Black stuff it has. Some people don't even know the Cultural Center is here if they don't have classes on Cypress Hill."

Faculty & Staff

If the college just hired good people and really checked on the ones that don't help anybody we would be better off. *UCC needs to hire good faculty and staff.* "UCC has some pretty good teachers; you just have to look for them."

"Don't just throw anybody in there. Biggest problem students have to face is teachers that are looking at how many people are going to fail instead of looking at how to get the info that you need to get through the class. That seems to happen way too much. Make sure they can relate information to students."

"Black, White, Brown, who cares as long as the teachers know what they're doing. Good teachers are hard to find sometimes."

"On the whole, I wish UCC would get the professors out there so we can meet them on a different level. I didn't know about the professor web site before, but now I don't worry about getting in the wrong class. You've got to get someone

who can relate to students. Some of these developmental teachers don't have a clue—they don't know what's up."

"Faculty have got to be more responsive. They need some training in different areas. "They become complacent. Some of these people been in the classroom for so many years they have probably lost touch with why they're in the classroom in the first place. Same thing with them tutors. Make sure they can teach before you put them in a class. Don't think he or she is nice or they are smart and they can teach. Cause let me tell y'all there a whole lot of smart people with degrees but can't get it across to nobody. We got a lot of that going on."

 "If UCC doesn't get some more teachers that can relate to us, we're all going to have problems. We got to get some new Math teachers in here. A lot of people don't have a background in working with minorities. That needs to change. "We've got to have more people who just know how to treat students of all colors—not just Black students. We just need more tutors—and better tutors. Counselors need to be more patient and if they don't know something, they need to get on our level and try to help us find answers."

"Some of these teachers are up here for a check. Find some teachers that want to be here for the student. Get rid of people who don't want to be here. Some of

these people don't want to be here and everybody know it. Let them go, and then get more good teachers."

"Counseling and Advising have people who aren't here for us. They have some people who want to help and others who are just collecting a paycheck. They need to get counselors that really care."

"Tutors, tutors, tutors... Please get some more and get good ones. I can't keep paying for tutors. I thought my tuition was supposed to pay for tutoring. When I go it's too crowded. When I do get one they ain't no good. It's just easier for me to pay somebody on the outside. It would better if they got more and better people trying to teach. We need good tutors. There are not enough tutors at Laurel Creek."

Support Services

Scheduling and Daycare are the perceived needs of several participants.

UCC needs to work for us too. *Part-time students need support with regard to course schedules and support services.* "If you work or you got kids you can't get the help you need. Whoever does the schedule should look at offering some different classes in different locations and tutoring at different times. We need tutoring at other times**.** They need to find the time frame that works for working

class people. There's no tutoring labs open at night and if they are, we're in class. The hours for tutoring are so bad for evening classes. They need to offer tutoring at different times."

"Working people need some considerations about where and what they have at different campuses especially at night. I like Cypress Hill and all, but in the evening I can't get any help with my Math or anything in the labs."

"It's a lot of Black people at Laurel Creek. Why can't they offer Black History over there? It's a very important class for Black people and other races too. Some of us can't keep driving way over here. We got jobs and kids and other classes. UCC needs to work for us too."

"How about they stop offering lame classes? Man, if you late registering you get stuck with lame classes like that hybrid stuff and that computer Math. You don't have no choice. Man, them classes suck and I know they know about it. Why do they keep offering them?"

"Where is the daycare? It ain't easy going to school and having to work and finding a babysitter. And when the sitter get sick or something it messes you up. A lot of us need some daycare but we can't get in that place across the way. I wish there was some help for when you have kids. If you up here in the evening

you ain't got many choices. I'm going to work with Capitol Idea cause I hear they take care of the day care thing. A bunch of us need day care. Bad thing it's only over here. You know how far I'd have to come with my daughter to get here and then take classes over at Lakeside? And it's expensive."

"Somebody needs to work on changing up the daycare so we can take advantage of it. The prices are just crazy. Who can afford to pay the fees? That daycare can't be for us. Daycare cost too much. If you work or you got kids you can't get the help you need."

"The faculty and other people should be able to see the need for daycare for some of these young mothers. Some of these kids miss a lot of school because the babysitting situation is not together. "

"They need to expand the service so more people can get their kids here and keep going to school. Daycare needs to be dealt with. If you have some place to leave your kids, then you can really focus."

Communication

Communication is just basic—we need a whole lot of it. *Students are seeking information to be successful.* "If they going to make somebody do orientation it should be about something. Make it live. Get people interested. You know-- meet

and greet. Don't be reading off the screen and out the book. We can read. They need some students out there talking to the students telling them what it's gonna be like here. Teachers can come and meet people and let them know what's going on too. If they ain't going to do that then they shouldn't be bothering people with it."

"They need to think about giving people some kind of formal invitation. A welcome or something. If people talk directly to you, you tend to listen—but don't just shove paper in their hand. Tell me why it's important, what part of it is real important. Nobody at the big campuses makes eye contact with you. 'Just fill this out, read this. It's self-explanatory. Why do we have to come way over here to get good service? Why can't everybody learn how to welcome people?"

"Reach out more about the services they provide. A lot of people don't know what's going on unless they over hear somebody talking. It's like they have these services, but they don't want you to find out. It really is like they don't want to tell you. Having information in more than one place would help. Have financial aid information everywhere—in the classroom in the student lounge on the bulletin boards. Communication is just basic—we need a whole lot of it"

"Get on our level. Everybody was a teenager. As a older person, don't come to a younger person with some jazz and some blues. If we talking about young Black

students today, we have problems in childcare. Again, fundamental, help us get

information. We have problems getting information about college; we have

problems in knowing where we want to go; just we don't know where we going,

but we here."

"We need some regular communication through email or something. Some people

don't even know enough to be able to survive around here. You need to

communicate. I mean you learn that in relationships, you learn that through

growing up and you learn that through college. I mean its just basic stuff. We still

have students who don't know about work-study or daycare. Where is this

communication supposed to happen?"

"I think one thing people around here can do is answer our questions**.** It is one of

the biggest problems. Education-wise we have had problems. The only way light

can be turned on with people is to answer questions."

"Hook Cypress Hill up. We need to be in the know. We don't always know

what's going on. We didn't know a bond package was going on until Mr. James

told the Black people at Cypress Hill.   If stuff like this is going on and is this is

important and all then Student Life people which is at Lakeside knew about this

and they was already having rallies and stuff—why didn't we know? So he told

us about it, so I was involved and a couple of other students was involved in

getting the bond package passed. We learned about the bond issue so late though. They had been knowing on other campuses. We didn't know till Mr. James told us and then we were all over it."

"Talking to students is the best way to find out what's going on. Everybody hates paperwork! I think I speak for a whole lot of people when I say we don't half fill out those surveys. Maybe take a class period to come in and actually hold a conversation with students. Once a semester someone come in and talk and take out any fear. Some people are scared to voice their opinion. Whoever wants to know about Black students should take over a class and talk to them."

"Target the group and go into class and talk to them. Ask them students yourself. Go to the source. I told you that Black people love to talk.   Some people don't have the drive to go up and complain about what is wrong. You have target them you know. Use successful Black students who have the drive to help give information to other students. Those surveys don't do no good and I'll tell you why—first nobody believes anybody who reads them is really going to do anything about it. And number two—who's to say they can't track who wrote what, especially on those faculty deals. I just don't trust any of these things. If UCC wants to know what I think—then they need to come talk to me."

"Them surveys is just another way of not listening. They act like they care. You never hear back about the survey said. Do you? They need to talk to the students if they want the real deal. They need to talk to the Mexican students too."

"You need to get a copy of all the teachers' schedules. I tried to get in touch with a teacher and no one knew where he was or when he taught. It caused a big mess all across the campus. Why is it than no one knows a teacher's schedule on Cypress Hill? I got such a run around trying to get in touch with a teacher. Come to find out he was on vacation. Then they tried to make out like the professor was at fault for not contacting me."

Many of the younger and traditional students expressed the need for enhanced communication via face-to-face dialogue with administration. Email has been mentioned as a means to provide consistent communication to students by younger and older completers. Older male students, female students across ages and ex-military personnel view Communication as one of the most important elements for success. Younger male and female students express a desire to engage in meetings with the administration.

Assessment

People in charge need to look around. The problems and the answers ain't hard to find. *Administrators need to conduct an environmental scan to assess*

institutional needs. "The Math Department got to check itself. We have to work hard enough to find the good teachers. Then the computer stuff. That's crazy and whose idea was it to start this computer class? A bunch of us are failing that class. I mean I got a good teacher, but the computer is messing all of us up. I bet home boy [the teacher] could teach without all the computer stuff. I mean I ain't scared of computers, but it's just useless in that class. And people that's scared of Math AND computers— now they in real trouble. Believe me, we all struggling."

"This college better look at why people who trying so hard are stuck. I know I am not by myself.   Other people are stuck in Developmental Math. We are not dumb. We're all going to be gone—Black and White and the Hispanics too. Cause you know what? That computer up in that Math class is messing with everybody's financial aid."

"Check out what is really needed on all the campuses. We need more classes that include Black people and how things affect us. White people can learn about Black people if they put Black History on other campuses."

 "People in charge need to look around. The problems and the answers ain't hard to find. Look around at all the students who need jobs. Student Life needs workers. You know they're always saying there's not enough staff in Student

Life. We have students who need jobs—why not hire the students to work in Student Life?"

Assessment is seen as critical by older students and ex-military personnel. Older intermediate students believe the College should identify problems and solutions by talking with students.

Community Outreach

We need to do this outreach work while we're here. *Students feel compelled to conduct community outreach.* "UCC doesn't get the word out about itself. There are opportunities to lift up some young people. Not sure if there is a recruiting team to go to the high schools on the eastside. We can start mentoring them. We got a lot of kids out here—18 to 21 and up to 25 that ain't doing nothing out there but walking them streets. UCC doesn't go out to the community. Our group [African American Student Organization] does. I'm not downing them or nothing but, everybody, not just Black people got to reach out to the Black community."

"We need to get out and let them know they are welcomed over here. I just feel that this school could empower the community as a whole. One thing about UCC is you got a campus near about every neighborhood. Now, there is a UCC in every neighborhood. I'm excited that there are projects across the street. Having this school on this side of town can really inspire some young Black and Hispanic

kids. They can see Black and brown people going to school and trying to better themselves. They can stop people and ask them what they are doing and they could literally talk to somebody who is going to college, when some of them never saw a college or college student before this school was here. They know there is an alternate route they can take."

"Help us reach out to other students not just depending on students to volunteer. Maybe reach out and saying would you be interested in helping other students,' Hey you've gotten good grades and you successfully gotten through this class and we have students who are having some trouble, would you like to help out and stuff."

"Having students help other students and having more teachers being proactive in helping other students and just getting people information would help everybody."

"They need to get them in high school or before so they can make a difference. UCC needs to go to the middle school and use their students as a recruiting team all over the south side."

"Saw in the paper where they going up to San Marcos—how come we ain't up in

LBJ? 'I mean UCC could send us over there and we could get students up here. That's my school. That's right down the street. I'll go over there and tell them about the College. Lots of people need to hear from us. Bunch of us can go over there and get them ready to be here next year."

"We got to reach out to the community and help some of the people get in here. "They really got to promote UCC in the community using Black students. Now, we can do that, but we're not organized."

African American Cultural Center

The African American Cultural Center needs to get this place going. *The Center has the potential to stimulate activity.* "They need somebody to meet people and let them know what's going on. I want to get involved, but there is nothing to get involved in. It's like a museum. That's not helping us."

"I want to know that everybody in here is here to help you whether you losing your house or can't find parking. We got to have some place that's going to help us. Not just trophies & hats. I mean that's cool, but we need information that's going to help us make it now. You know scholarships, finances, money, babysitting, good teachers. All that could happen up in here."

"UCC could push or African American students to get more involved in activities around here. They don't do a good enough job. They do have a little bit of mixers. Like here, you can barely do anything. It's real strict. You can't throw parties or anything. Everything's all closed up around here. You really can't do much but go to school and go home. One time financial aid did a Mardi Gras thing. The job fair was good. That was a perfect example of the kind of thing that draws people out and starts some activity. Last year we had this African fashion show and they had all these businesses come and set up tables. That was last year."

"We need some activity up in here. We just can have a video going all time with stuff from CSPAN. Lots of people crowded around the TV learning about current events is what should be happening in this Center. And we need to be talking about getting involved in the community."

"They could have the Black newspapers and some speakers from the community. This could be the place for us to hook up with the community. Like go out to the schools or the old folks home and do some stuff. We cold hook up with HT and PV. Go on some trips out of state if we want to."

"If we had computers and more information sitting out here, we could find out how to help ourself without putting up with all this ya ya some of these people put

out in the different places at UCC. I mean help us find scholarships and have

some financial aid stuff in here. The African American Cultural Center needs to

get this place going."

"The Center could get us a gospel choir or a mentor program. "I'm thinking a step

team or debates. I mean it's just so much they could do. I think we need some

step shows, and fashion shows. Now, we do like the arts. We need some poetry

and some singing up in here. We need a gospel program. We need some spiritual

kinds of things, events that bring people out like at the big colleges."

The African American Cultural Center is seen as valuable by most students. Participants

express the importance of the Center as a means to organize Student Life activities.

Younger and traditional beginners and intermediate level students of both genders

indicated the importance of using the center as a tool for organization and activity.

Summary Research Question #4

Student recommendations indicate what they feel is needed on campus to support their

success. Themes emerging from the recommendations included Diversity, Equity,

Visibility, Faculty and Staff, Support Services, Communication, Assessment, Community

Outreach, and the African American Cultural Center.

The need for diversity across campuses was expressed by older completers, ex-military personnel, and graduates. Perceived campus inequities were noted across age groups, however, younger male and female students observed the lack of recreational facilities as problematic. Both younger beginners and older completers expressed concern about the need for equity in the appearances of the campuses. Younger men believe they are absent from the overall campus image. They recommend a greater presence in publications and on web sites.

Younger and older beginners, older completers, and graduates perceive the need for better prepared faculty and staff. Well-prepared faculty and tutors are recommended by students across age groups and academic status. Flexible scheduling and daycare were recommended by younger female beginners and older female and male intermediate participants, and evening students.

Students across levels want more communication with faculty and peers. From orientation to campus email, participants express an interest in developing communication with others on campus. Older male beginners, older male completers and female and male graduates articulate the need for an assessment of specific problems and identifying solutions by the administration.

Community Outreach was considered critical to younger male beginners and intermediate age males, younger females and older beginning males. Support and use of the African

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American Cultural Center as an organizing center was expressed by most students, particularly younger and intermediate age beginners, older male and female completers, and female and male ex-military personnel.

Overall Equity, Faculty and Staff, Communication, and the African American Cultural Center are areas that are perceived as somewhat deficient. With the exception of evening students, most participants see the African American Cultural Center as a possible organizing center for activity. Student recommendations for the Center indicate they perceive a lack of organization, communication, and activity at the College and on the Cypress Hill Campus.

ANALYSIS

Question #1- Facilitating Factors

A review of Rendon's (1994) Validation Model reveals the elements critical for minority student retention: validation, social involvement, and academic integration. The researchers involved in the *Transition to College Project* indicate that validation may be a prerequisite for some non-traditional post secondary students. The process of "validation is an enabling, confirming, supportive and developmental process that promotes feelings of self-worth and includes experiences that affirm what non traditional students bring to college experience are accepted and recognized as valuable" (p.44)

Categorization of supportive factors and attributes identified by UCC students indicates a number of the factors can be defined as validating. See Table 4.1. Overall, participant

PERCEPTIONS OF FACILITATING FACTORS & ATTRIBUTES

THEMES

FACTORS	Validation	Social Interaction	Academic Integration
Climate	Cypress Hill Family Critical Mass	Cypress Hill Family Critical Mass	
Individuals in Support Services	Black Staff Personalized Service	Responsive Individuals, Personalized Service	
Faculty	Accessible, Encouraging, Flexible, Black Faculty	Accessible Encouraging,	Accessible, Competent, Enlightening, Engaging, Encouraging, Challenging, Enhance Understanding, Motivating
Academic Experiences	Interactive, Culturally relevant	Interactive	Applicable, Relevant
Participation in the African American Student Organization	Accomplishment Recognition	Accomplishment Recognition	
Technology		Convenient, Enhances Communication	Accessible, Enhances Communication

Table 4.1

responses indicate their success is facilitated by a form of validation received from

faculty and support services personnel on a few campuses. Critical mass, supportive

Black faculty and staff, Black History classes, and the recognition and sense of accomplishment derived from participation in the African American Student Organization indicate that culturally validating experiences are present on at least one of the campuses.

Additional validating attributes include accessible, encouraging, and flexible faculty and interactive academic experiences. Student perceptions indicate faculty have the potential to provide and reinforce many of the validating experiences for UCC students. Across age levels and academic status, contact with informative counselors and exemplary faculty appear to make the greatest impact on student persistence.

Questions #2- Institutional Impediments and Invalidation

Impediments articulated by participants indicate that social and academic integration are limited on several campuses, however, many emergent themes suggest students have had a number of invalidating experiences at the College. Categorization of participant perceptions of institutional factors impeding persistence indicates that many of the attributes are invalidating. See Table 4.2.

Invalidating factor attributes that emerged from impediment narratives include crowded, mono-cultural, culturally isolating campuses; impersonal, disorganized, ineffective Counseling Services; untrustworthy, inflexible, Math Department; insensitive, discouraging, condescending Faculty and Staff; restrictive, and apathetic services and personnel.

PERCEPTIONS OF IMPEDING FACTORS & ATTRIBUTES

THEMES

FACTORS	Invalidates	Impedes Social Interaction	Prevents Academic Integration
Climate	Mono-cultural, Cultural Isolation, Lack of Affirming Images	Segregated, Mono-cultural, Cultural Isolation, Lack of Affirming Images	Crowded Tutoring Labs
Support Services	Impersonal Service, Condescending Counseling Staff	Ineffective Orientation, Impersonal Service	Lack of Information, Limited courses, Limited evening services
Faculty	Inflexible, Discouraging, Under prepared, Insensitive	Inaccessible, Discouraging	Inaccessible, inflexible, Under prepared, Discouraging, Under prepared
Academic Experiences	Cultural Isolation	Lecture-only formats, Under Prepared Tutors	Computer Mediated Classes Hybrid Courses Lecture only formats Crowded Tutoring Centers Testing Center
Student Life	Lack of activities, Restrictions, Inequitable, Lack of Trust	Lack of Trust, Culturally Unconscious	

Table 4.2

Transition to College Project researchers articulate the components of an Interpersonal

Invalidating Model (p.50):

1. Students expected to get involved in institutional life on their own.

2. Cliques/exclusive groups are allowed to form.

3. The college climate is perceived as sexist, racist, and/or intolerant of certain students.

4. The college climate is cold and insensitive.

5. Students are expected to shed their culture.

6. Few opportunities are available for out-of-class involvement.

7. Students feel stressed, unable to make decisions.

8. Students feel isolated.

9. Students feel unloved and unsupported.

1. *Students are expected to get involved in institutional life on their own.* This perception by students was articulated in the inconsistency of orientation programs and the lack of Student Life activities on the Cypress Hill Campus. Involvement for many participants requires a concerted effort to obtain information via peers, trusted personnel, and online services. Involvement in Student Life takes place when students leave their home campus. Those without flexible schedule and transportation can not easily integrate themselves into the social fabric of any campus.

2. *Cliques/Exclusive groups are allowed to form.* Members of the African American Student Organization report cliques and exclusive groups dominate the governance structure of Student Life. Participants in the group feel they have little or no voice in the overall decisions of the campus-wide groups.

3. *The college climate is perceived as sexist, racist, and /or intolerant of certain students.* Students at the Red River campus note the lack of Black faculty and students, as well as course offerings. Many choose to drive across town to take classes with Black faculty and with other Black students. Older students and evening students report bias in the operation of the classroom and the College. Older students report insensitive treatment in classrooms, while evening student feel that schedules are not designed to meet their needs. Reports by younger male beginners and completers indicate security personnel and the lack of Black images communicate negative messages about their value at the College.

4. *The college climate is cold and insensitive.* While the Cypress Hill Campus was described as welcoming, most other campuses, including one with a critical mass of Black students are perceived as impersonal and crowded by most younger participants and some older ex-military personnel. Older participants noted the lack of Black art and other signals that often welcome Black students. Some counselors are perceived as robotic in the rendering of services.

5. *Students are expected to shed their culture.* While students do not report any overt feelings of having to shed their culture, African American Students Organization members believe the campus Student Life Organization is culturally insensitive. Students report that other campuses in the system do not have cultural centers or dedicated space for students of any ethnicity. With the exception of Black History and two Government

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classes, students did not indicate the curriculum includes African American culture or contributions in other fields of study.

6. *Few opportunities are available for out-of-class involvement.* The lack of Student Life was reported as pervasive at the Cypress Hill Campus. Day and evening students report few opportunities for involvement. Students also note their lack of information about the bond referendum as evidence that the Cypress Hill students have not had opportunities for involvement.

7. *Students feel stressed, unable to make decisions.* Student perceptions indicate that Counseling contributes to the consternation beginning students of all ages feel about decision-making. The perception of the lack of consistent and accurate information, as well as computer-mediated Developmental Math classes and under prepared faculty complicate students' ability to make constructive decisions about learning.

8. *Students feel isolated.* While students report the positive nature of the camaraderie provided by the "family" atmosphere at Cypress Hill, other campuses are seen as culturally isolating. Reports of "being the only one' in classrooms on Oceana and Laurel Creek indicate cultural isolation is a problem on the majority of campuses. Isolation is also articulated by older students who feel they are singled-out for their work ethic and for seeking information in the classroom.

9. Students feel unloved and unsupported. Support from a limited number of individuals

 on the Cypress Hill, Lakeside, and Oceana campuses has been articulated, however,

students do not report similar support from individuals on most of the other campuses.

Students in the African American Student Organization report that their faculty sponsor

does not have the latitude to provide support for meetings during optimum times. The

African American Cultural Center is perceived as being neglected by the administration.

A lack of consistent activity on campus is also perceived as a lack of support by the

institution. Withdrawal as a means of coping with classroom stress demonstrates that

students do not know how to use the institutional services or they choose not to engage

support service personnel.

 Question #3-Overcoming Perceived Barriers

Students overwhelmed by impeding factors often choose to depart the College. Younger

students see withdrawal from courses and the college as the most viable option.

Withdrawal for non-academic reasons is prevalent among young beginners and those at

the intermediate phase of their programs. Escaping the system is preferred over

engagement with any other factors by younger students. Coping strategies by this group

suggest a number of college factors place them in a crisis situation.

Older students' almost exclusive reliance on peers and technology and young beginner

and young intermediate level students' reliance on personnel on one campus also indicate

the college as a whole is not viewed as a trustworthy system. The lack of academic

support services due to crowding and scheduling restricts student opportunities for academic success for evening students and some day students.

Question #4-Recommendations

Participant recommendations indicate social involvement means ethnic group *and* individual integration into the classroom, campus, and community. Student perceptions of the importance of culturally relevant curricula, participation in campus activities, and the need for community outreach support this concept. Student recommendations emphasize a need for competent, caring individuals; reliable information; more academic support resources and opportunities for social integration on campus and in the community. The propensity to "give-back" to the community through outreach is articulated by younger male beginners and traditional males, younger females and older beginning males. Involvement for younger and traditional age students is holistic, as evidenced by the recommendations that articulate the need for campus and community outreach.

Chapter Summary

Student perceptions of factors that facilitate persistence indicate that Urban Community College possesses, in some measure, the elements necessary for Black student persistence. Throughout the narratives, the appreciation of a validating climate, personnel, faculty, and learning experiences are evident. The need for increased social

and academic engagement, as well as cultural validity resonates in responses to impediments and recommendations.

While students share numerous vantage points about many facilitating factor attributes and impeding factor attributes, major differences emerged with regard to older and traditional and younger students and between day and evening students. Older and traditional participants perceive Faculty and Technology as key factors to success. Younger students see Faculty and Personnel as well as campus climate as important facilitating elements. While the majority of participants view the Counseling Department and the lack of information as problematic, older students perceive the Counseling Department as particularly problematic, as well as perceived age bias in the classroom. Younger and traditional students perceive the Math Department, under prepared Faculty, and the lack of Student Life as most debilitating to their success. Evening students identified course schedule inflexibility and limited academic support services as barriers.

Student perceptions of impediments and student recommendations suggest social integration involves campus *and* community involvement. Social integration for many students appears to include both individual and ethnic group integration and validation. Students repeatedly note the value of culturally validating social and academic experiences with regard to the climate, support services, faculty interactions. Younger students in particular perceive that the college needs to acknowledge and demonstrate that it values African Americans inside and outside of the college.

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The method of instructional delivery by some faculty is seen as a barrier to success for a number of students. Articulated concerns about the Math Department, particularly with regard to computer mediated courses and faculty communication styles, indicate apprehension about being "drained out" out of the College. Academic probation and suspension, as well as financial aid regulations are applied to students who repeatedly fail to achieve in developmental Math courses.

While students identified four exemplary instructors within the Math department, many students are unaware of the most effective instructors as identified by participants. It appears that younger students, in particular, will continue to identify exemplary teachers by some method of "trial and error." A number will be "drained out" before they discover appropriate guidance and help. Student recommendations suggest that younger and traditional participants are in dire need of college and community outreach opportunities. Older students and evening student perceptions indicate the College needs to provide opportunities to build the social networks that facilitate social integration and academic support.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSION

Overview

This study confirms the idea that African American students are not monolithic in their perceptions of postsecondary institutional factors. Guiffrida (2002) conducted a study of four-year students involved in the Black student organizations and concluded, "To effectively support these students, it is important for student affairs professionals to recognize and understand the differences among African American students."

Participant experiences vary, however, their, articulation of a small number of exemplary faculty and the Cypress Hill and Lakeside environments as facilitating factors was pervasive throughout the narratives. The lack of consistent and reliable information, negative interactions with faculty and counselors, as well as discouraging campus climates and less-than-optimal learning environments (classrooms) were consistently identified as barriers to success. In general, a number of participants do not see the College as active in their social and academic integration into the College community.

Mono-cultural institutional practices designed to meet the needs of traditional White, four-year students are sometimes difficult for diverse students to adapt to and often difficult for community college leaders to acknowledge and re-consider. These practices and policies have become a part of the organizational culture of postsecondary

institutions, however, they may inadvertently create barriers for growing numbers of ethnic minority students of varying economic levels and backgrounds. Orientation processes that rely exclusively on student initiative; counselors who reflect mono-cultural vantage points; extensive reliance on written materials; restricted course schedules and services; limited daycare; and teachers who rely exclusively on lecture are only a few factors that create obstacles for students.

Urban Community College, like many two-year institutions, continues to make small changes within the system to meet the needs of students as perceived by administrators. Over the years, Black History classes, the African American Cultural Center, and the African American Student Organization have been 'added' to the College structures. However, students do not perceive these entities as authentically integrated into the College's multi-campus system. The perceived lack of visible systemic support for these programs create the perception that the programs are a means to placate Black students. This is further demonstrated by the perception that the College's publications do not represent the presence of Black students and the "added-on" programs. While many participants articulated the value of support received from faculty and personnel, they also appear to be in pursuit of a kind of 'systemic' validation.

Systemic validation (the perception by participants that Black students are accepted, valued and integrated throughout the system) appears to be further obfuscated by negative institutional factors that impact individual validation: crowded campuses;

impersonal and condescending services from personnel; lack of consistent information; restricted services and schedules; ineffective learning experiences; and cultural isolation. Without the consistent experience of individual validation, few students will experience systemic validation.

Tinto (1993, p. 113) notes, "Negative or malintegrative experiences serve to weaken intentions and commitments, especially commitment to the institution and thereby enhances the likelihood of leaving." UCC must consider methods and practices to reduce and alleviate Black students' negative encounters. Considering the size of the institution, increasing positive experiences for Blacks students is challenging. The College does, however, have the potential to provide the support and validation students need through the invocation of existing policies.

Urban Community College leadership and stakeholders have agreed upon guiding principles for the operation of the College. Core values include communication, access, responsiveness, excellence and stewardship (College Master Plan 2004-2006). Among the twenty descriptors agreed upon by the College are the following key principles:

> ... respecting all … achieving goals… fostering diversity… balancing programs and services… seeking information and ideas…recruiting under-served populations… empowering students, faculty and staff to be self-directed toward excellence…emphasizing training, development and lifelong learning… establishing and measuring outcomes linked to

continuous improvement… providing safe and challenging learning

environment.

These selected eleven principles are relevant to this study and provide a framework for

recommendations to increase the College's ability to support Black student persistence.

The researcher's recommendations have been organized under those key principles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Respecting All and Seeking Information and Ideas

Promote community and College dialogue. As an organization seeking to meet the needs

of all students, UCC may consider creating opportunities for regular dialogue between all

students, faculty, the community, and the administration. Increased social interaction

among college community members and the surrounding communities demonstrates

genuine concern for students and the community. Students' expressed interest in

community outreach indicates that all parties would benefit from community partnerships

as well. Through consistent outreach and interaction with community entities and

students, the College and community have the potential to develop a positive relationship

with the schools and entities that will promote college attendance and UCC enrollment.

Activities should be documented and publicized throughout the college and community.

In order to understand the needs of diverse students and the common needs among

groups, the College can engage in regular dialogue with all students. Increased

opportunities for face-to-face encounters with administrators and decision-makers allow

students to share their perceptions and experiences. Dialogue can emphasize the respect

the organization has for learners.

While dialogue may include focus groups and other informal sessions, it may also include

student involvement in task force committees, the availability of feedback forms, point of

service surveys, and student complaint forms.

Achieving Goals

Hire and educate Counseling staff who provide information and encouragement.

UCC's learners must meet with the most qualified and receptive counseling and advising

staff possible. Counselors, regardless of ethnicity should demonstrate a commitment to

student success. Counselors are among the first to interact with students. Stikes (1984,

p.141) asserts,

> If counselors are to facilitate the development of black student, they need
>
> to understand and be able to relate to relate to the students' developmental
>
> backgrounds and potentials. They need to know if and how cultural
>
> expectations, models, and reinforcements have influenced the
>
> intellectually, emotional, social, moral, and physical development of the
>
> students. They particularly need to know how frustration is defined and
>
> dealt with by student…Counselors need to know that the students, despite
>
> the view which others hold of them, are most likely to view themselves as

persons with both strengths and weaknesses. A successful counselor will

identify and relate positively to those strengths and help the students use

them as sources of pride and energy in dealing with problems and

frustrations.

Clearly counselors' attitudes and modes of communication can foster the confidence

many students seek upon entering the community college. Students should receive clear

and consistent information, counseling, and encouragement from this department.

Crowded facilities prevent this needed interaction. Measures should be taken to alleviate

crowded conditions

Create interactive and mandatory orientation programs. Student goal achievement is

difficult without accurate information. Mandatory orientation sessions should be

enforced and monitored for their effectiveness (Roueche and Roueche 1993, p.56).

Students should be provided with opportunities to meet other students and faculty

advisors during the orientation. Orientation is an opportunity for meaningful social

interaction.

Implement faculty advising. Programs that allow faculty to become a part of the process

to integrate students into the college will allow faculty to better understand the students

with whom they work. Kramer (1989) notes, "Quality advising supports student learning

and fosters student involvement in the institution, both keys to the persistence of students".

Prepare first-contact personnel to inform and encourage learners. Students often come in contact with the assessment and testing center staff for placement testing. Personnel should be prepared to help students understand the process and rationale for assessment. Students should also be screened for their potential to be successful in computer-mediated instruction and distance learning.

Foster Diversity

Diverse students may have different needs and the college should demonstrate an appreciation for the differences in experiences, culture, age, sexual orientation, and ideology through the recruitment and hiring of faculty and staff, curriculum development, marketing, facilities, and in the structure of Student Life activities.

Hire diverse faculty. Diverse faculty, administrators and staff supports student growth and development. Diversity enlightens and supports all students. Community college students of all backgrounds benefit from exposure to faculty of all backgrounds. Just as faculty and personnel of different backgrounds and ideologies serve as mentors and resources for UCC's African American students, Black administrators, faculty, staff enrich the lives of all students.

Create a diverse Student Life Council. A council of multicultural students and staff should help to plan culturally relevant and meaningful activities for all campuses. Full engagement of diverse students will allow students to invest their energy and effort in developing programs that promote a sense of ownership and belonging in the College.

Fund and Staff the African American Cultural Center. Providing necessary support will allow the Center to organize activities that promote both social and academic integration on the Cypress Hill Campus. Overt support for the Center demonstrates the College's pride and support for Black students and the Cypress Hill Campus.

Promote diversity on all campuses. Through course offerings, faculty assignments, and Student Life programs, encourage students on all campuses to participate in multicultural activities. Effective advertising and invitations to participation promote social integration.

Encourage the development of academic support programs that specifically meet the needs of older evening students. Supplemental Instruction (SI) as implemented at New York's LaGuardia College (Zaritsky 1994) could provide the format needed by this group. SI allows students to meet as a community of learners who discuss concepts from the classroom and are typically led by a trained peer. This cost-effective method of support has allowed many postsecondary students to meet with success (Maxwell 1998). This is one of many means to create an "intentional intellectual community" as outlined by Perry (2003).

Recruit Under-Served Populations

Include African American males on the college recruitment team. The recruitment of

under served populations begins with genuine and consistent outreach. Currently UCC is

not attracting and enrolling African Americans in proportion to their representation in the

service area population (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board 2003).

Administrators are seeking methods to improve recruitment. Employing African

American males as ambassadors will allow UCC's to engage potential students to a much

higher degree. Students can become mentors and facilitators for first-year students.

"Recruitment begins with retention; retention begins with recruitment." (Seidman 1989).

Theorists and researchers indicate the two initiatives are inextricable and engaging

current students in the effort to recruit and retain students will serve all constituents.

Employ the African American Cultural Center as a vehicle to increase recruitment and

retention. Efforts to improve retention and recruitment include using the African

American Culture Center as a vehicle to organize students for community outreach.

Funding and staffing the Center will allow personnel and students to organize effective

activities to both recruit and retain African American students. Activities should be

documented and effectiveness measures developed to capture the influence and efficacy

of the initiatives.

Provide equitable and appropriate Student Life activities. Regardless of their identified

home campuses, students should be provided with opportunities to join organizations that

allow them to become integrated into the campus and community. Rendon (1994) suggests "ethnic minority students perceive social integration at the college as initiative on the part of the college." UCC student perceptions indicate they see outreach from the institution as an indication of affirmation for their presence and their potential to succeed.

College sponsored activities through Student Life or the African American Cultural Center are imperative. Students need as many opportunities as possible to develop relationships on campus as articulated in the retention literature (Astin 1984; Forest 1982). Activities and events increase the social interaction needed for relationship development. Traditional and older students perceive a need to be connected with their peers, as well as younger students.

Follow-up with students who withdraw. Contact students who withdraw from classes and the College. Interviews with students can provide additional insight into institutional factors that influence departure. Initiating conversation with these students demonstrates that the College values and supports individual students. These one-on-one conversations provide opportunities for College personnel to encourage both dropouts and stop-outs to re-enter.

Empower Students, Faculty and to Staff to be Self-Directed Toward Excellence

Establish consistent and reliable means for disseminating information across campuses. Students need information in order to be self-directed toward excellence. Providing information via classroom announcements, course syllabi, and electronic mail may increase student access to information about support services and Student Life.

Provide 'survival' training sessions for new students. Allow current students to share information that will facilitate success for new students. These sessions can provide opportunities for social interaction that leads to increase opportunities for successful academic integration.

Strengthen academic support service personnel, programs, and schedule. UCC should ensure that students receive mandatory counseling, orientation, and learning opportunities needed to be successful. First-time college students should be engaged in orientation without exception. Counselors must ascertain that students have participated in orientation sessions before course registration. Orientation sessions designed specifically for older and evening students will more actively support their social and academic integration.

Establish formal and visible mentoring programs across campuses. Currently, older male and female students identify their own mentors, however, younger students do not always initiate relationships that support their success. Given the expressed appreciation for the limited Black male counseling staff by young African American males and

research about the efficacy of mentoring programs, a mentoring program can provide individuals with the advocates and facilitators to navigate the College.

Emphasize Training and Development and Lifelong Learning

Educate faculty so that they can support student success. Faculty are clearly the most important factor in the academic experience of this study's participants. They should be prepared for the diverse students who are admitted to the College. Continuous faculty development in both content areas, student-centered approaches, and teaching strategies should be mandated by the administration. Excellence in teaching should be recognized and rewarded.

Provide leadership opportunities for Black students. Black students should be openly recruited to participate in Student Life leadership training on their home campuses. Information about leadership training and other development programs can be disseminated in classrooms throughout the campus. Sessions should be consistently conducted across all campuses. Dissemination of information in classes assures that students whose schedules prevent them from frequenting areas where information is posted will be invited to participate in activities.

*Create appropriate faculty development and staff development opportunities.-*Faculty training and development programs should be based on faculty needs. Evaluation should take into consideration the demonstrated learning that occurs in their classrooms. Beyond

analyzing evaluations and grades, student success after course completions should be considered. Part of support staff evaluations should be based on direct feedback from students. All academic staff (faculty, tutors, test proctors) should be engaged in on-going development and training in content areas, instruction, and diversity.

Cultural consciousness—not color-blind faculty foster an appreciation of diversity. This point is confirmed by Knott (1991):

> It is not necessarily possible for each instructor to be knowledgeable of the nuances of all of the cultural diversity present in each teaching situation. . However, it is possible and critical, for instructors to be sensitive to cultural differences and not impose their own cultural orientation as a yardstick by which to measure the learners. And it is critical that they understand their own cultural norms, values, and assumptions and how these affect and are central to their educational practice.

In addition to understanding their own cultural norms, faculty and staff should be provided with educational opportunities to learn methods and strategies for interacting and instructing students with diverse learning styles, values, and experiences. Exemplary faculty can be used to help facilitate faculty-mentoring programs. Gillett-Karam et al. (1991 p. 224) note, "…training programs [should] teach teachers to teach and exemplary teachers serve as models for teachers in these training experiences."

Change and training should be slowly implemented, as noted by researcher observations of reform at Miami-Dade in the 1970's, "Implementation for the reforms was gradual so that the college had time to train teachers, develop course materials, redesign support services, and revise the course after trial runs" (Roueche and Baker 1987).

Establish and Measure Outcomes Linked to Continuous Improvement

Assess the efficacy of first-contact services. Both quantitative and qualitative measures should be employed to determine how well students are served in the admissions, enrollment, advising, and registration processes. Both surveys and focus group interviews will reveal more information about students' actual experiences with these important service.

Review Math programs and courses. UCC should fully assess the efficacy of computer mediated developmental education courses, as well as hybrid and distance learning courses. Withdrawal rates as well as faculty evaluations should be considered in curriculum development and course offerings. Effectiveness measures of first-contact programs (admissions, recruitment, assessment, counseling, orientation, and advising) should be developed. These program staff have the potential to encourage or discourage persistence. Student feedback is needed to better understand how these programs are perceived.

Provide Safe and Challenging Learning Environments

Provide opportunities for students to voice concerns . Make information available to students so that concerns can be communicated about security personnel and or faculty and staff who are perceived as less than helpful. Course syllabi can include referral information for registering concerns. Challenging learning environments are promoted and supported by faculty and staff who are culturally sensitive, knowledgeable about content and diverse learning styles.

Provide supportive programs for older students. Older adults need social networks and peer interaction to enhance their social and academic integration in the College. Classes and organizations geared to meet the expressed needs of this group of students will provide them with the necessary support.

Balancing Programs and Services

 Expand courses schedule and academic support services. Evening students and older students need an expanded schedule, while day students at the Cypress Hill Campus expressed the need for upper level Math and Science classes. According to students, the course schedule communicates expectations for students on the various campuses. Campuses can also be diversified by balancing the schedule. Black History courses could be offered to diversify other campuses, as well as provide other ethnic groups an increased opportunity to enroll in the course. Offering more upper level courses on the

Cypress Hill Campus and fewer on nearby campuses may encourage more student

migration from other campuses and enhance diversity.

Offer more flexible schedules and expanded services. A recent study of community

college retention indicates that that "work schedule conflicts were the single most

important reason cited for withdrawal" (Zhai and Monzon 2004). UCC evening students

report many problems associated with the course offerings and the schedule for tutoring

in general. Affordable daycare services should also be expanded to meet the needs of

both day and evening students.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The qualitative methodology of this study does not allow generalization of these findings,

however, additional research could be conducted to gain a greater understanding of the

diversity and complexities of African American student experiences in Urban

Community College and other urban two-year institutions. Black students who articulate

other campuses as their "home" campuses should be interviewed and prompted to discuss

the facilitating and impeding factors on their campuses. Participant perceptions at other

campuses can be compared with those of the Cypress Hill participants.

Older, traditional, and younger students perceive the community college organization in

different ways. Systemic changes to the college should include input from Black students

of varying ages, academic preparation, and economic backgrounds. The specific needs of

older students and evening students should be examined in order to learn more about systemic changes needed for this group. This study indicates that older, evening students have no opportunities for social engagement and limited opportunities to take advantage of academic support services.

With regard, to older and traditional students, an investigation of the efficacy and use of technology and online services should be conducted. These students rely on technology and find it effective in overcoming barriers. Further research may indicate ways in which younger students can be encouraged to increase their employment of technology to facilitate their success.

Benchmarking and studying the practices of two-year institutions that provide exemplary service to African American students as evidenced by student outcomes data can provide a framework for exploration and the development of supportive programs. In-class validation is a concept that merits additional exploration with regard to first-generation and ethnic minority students. Developing an understanding of how to better support students' confidence and ways to demonstrate an appreciation of what they bring to the college environment is critical.

An exploration and comparison of male and female perceptions of institutional factors will provide valuable information about how to create supportive learning environments for males in particular. The growing Latino population should also be encouraged to

participate in dialogue to determine how they perceive the college. Diversity within this group would also merit studies of the perceptions of first-generation and second-generation students.

The perceptions of first-generation White and Asian students could be explored and analyzed to gain a greater understanding of how organizational factors are perceived to support or undermine their success.

Exemplary faculty were identified as a key factor in student persistence. An exploration of the attributes, habits, and preparation of exemplary faculty as identified by students would also provide insight into the professional development and hiring practices needed to attract supportive counselors and faculty of all ethnicities. Studies that explore the ways in which dominant culture and traditional faculty view and perceive their mission and students could yield data that could inform meaningful professional development and learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

Urban Community College's core values support the systemic changes needed to support the articulated needs of this study's participants. These students perceive the College as an institution capable of providing the support, information, and encouragement needed

for success. Several participants have experienced support and validation from exemplary faculty and personnel and their recommendations as articulated in this study indicate students believe the College has the capacity to support their success.

Some researchers argue that community colleges cannot support the many "subcultures" that comprise its population. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) believe that support for subcultures will be costly. Inherent in their warning is the assumption that ethnic minorities will require additional and costly resources. This study and others indicate that support for ethnic minorities does not always require additional funding and are not a drain on resources, however, African American students, like many others, require a welcoming environment and excellent instruction and services. Providing exemplary service and the respect that is the heart of community college mission and the crux of validating practices costs no more than hiring the best and most motivated and knowledgeable faculty and counseling staff.

As researchers have noted, validation appears to be a prerequisite for many younger and traditional first-generation male and female student social and academic integration. However, placing Blacks or other ethnic minorities in specific visible positions, creating separate history classes, and ethnic organizations are not a panacea for attrition. Validating experiences appear to facilitate social integration and ultimately academic integration. Validation supports academic integration, but in and of itself is not enough to support achievement. UCC students certainly perceive the supportive nature of culturally

affirming environments as important, however, they express an appreciation and need for exemplary counselors and faculty.

Without committed counselors and faculty, well-organized courses, and the necessary academic support, few students are well supported in meeting their goals. Appropriate academic support seems to enhance the likelihood that students will persist to academic goal achievement. Participants in this study indicate exemplary faculty and tutors of all ethnicities teaching classes that are culturally relevant and some that are not, make the difference in their willingness and motivation to persist.

Counselors are most often the first individuals with who students have contact. Their skill and ability in helping students to obtain critical information needed to make decisions are paramount. Based on guidance from counselors, students select courses and take advantage of resources that will help them to begin to become academically integrated into the college. The personalized service and "the go the extra mile" attitude that students point out and appreciate is critical on the part of counselors.

This study provides additional insight into the views of Black students, views that are critical in re-fashioning the system to meet their needs. Retention literature about Black students indicates that climate and faculty interaction are critical to Black student success and this study's participants confirm those findings. Faculty attitudes can foster confidence and their skills and patience can promote academic growth. Their flexibility

can provide opportunities for learning and their ability to both respect and challenge students promotes social and intellectual growth. Faculty willingness to engage students in interactive learning experiences provide an overt invitation that is sometimes needed for students to become integrated in the classroom, college, and the community.

Faculty are the institutional factor with which students have the most consistent contact Faculty provide much of the in-class validation and opportunities for social and academic integration posited by persistence theorists. When prepared and made conscious, they are capable of the institutional outreach first generation student often require for social involvement. Challenging, supportive, flexible, competent faculty who are conscious of the challenges of Black students and the mission of the community college have the potential to provide and create the greatest changes in student learning.

Urban Community College and other two-year institutions can support Black student persistence and achievement through continued exploration and analysis of student perceptions and the implementation of the appropriate supportive programs. Increased dialogue with Black students and other groups the College is committed to serving, provides administrators with a glimpse into student experiences. Data collected from qualitative studies must be collected consistently and analyzed. Both qualitative and quantitative data will ultimately provide the keys to meaningful policies and practices that guide the institution in its mission to support Black student success.

APPENDIX A.

PHASE II

UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Please make notes and be prepared to provide examples or stories to illustrate your

answers.

1. Which UCC services have been most helpful?

2. Which services have been the most problematic?

3. Which campus services do you use to overcome problems?

4. What are your recommendations for improving the college for Black students?

5. If you were to produce a commercial for UCC to recruit Black students, what would

    you say are its best features? What should potential students be careful of? How can

    they avoid this?

APPENDIX B.

PARTICIPANT PERCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

	Facilitating	Impeding	Overcoming Barriers	Recommendations
YOUNGER MALES	CH Climate, Exemplary Faculty & Staff, Interactive learning experiences	Security, Mono-cultural Climate, Under prepared Staff & Faculty	Withdrawal CH Staff	Effective Communication, Social Integration, Ethnic Validation
YOUNGER FEMALES	CH Climate, Exemplary Faculty & Staff	Academic Support Services, Mono-cultural Climate	Withdrawal CH Staff	Effective Communication, Social Integration
TRADITIONAL & OLDER FEMALES	Exemplary Faculty & Staff, Ethnically affirming curriculum	Limited Academic Support	Research, Technology	Effective Communication, Social Integration
TRADITIONAL & OLDER MALES	Exemplary Faculty & Staff Ethnically affirming curriculum	Climate	Research, Technology	Assessment Effective Communication, Social Integration

GLOSSARY

Academic Integration- Student involvement in academic studies inside and outside the classroom (Tinto 1993)

African-American and Black is used interchangeably throughout this report

Beginners- Students enrolled their first and/or second semester

Completers- Students enrolled in their last semester before academic goal achievement

Critical Mass- Significant numbers of a minority group needed for community identification, development, and social interaction

Cultural Congruence- a teacher or institution's relationship with the cultural background of students (Zeichner 1995)

Cypress Hill- case study site

Drain-outs- students forced out of the college because of institutional policies or administrative directives (Moore 1976, p.39)

Dropouts- Students who withdraw from the institution before reaching goal attainment

Exemplary Faculty-Teaching staff who possess and demonstrate the attributes identified by study participants: competence, flexibility, engagement, provide relevant experiences,

First Generation-Students who are the first in their families to participate in higher education

First-Contact Services- Departments that have initial contact with students. Departments include Admissions, Recruitment, Advising, Counseling, and Assessment

Graduates-Students who have matriculated from another institution with a certificate or degree

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's)

Institutional Effectiveness- is an internal strategy for planning and evaluating that generates data by which the college an determine if it is matching its performance to its purpose" (Roueche et al. 1997).

Institutional factors- recruitment, campus climate, faculty, learning experiences, peer interaction, academic support, counseling, classroom interactions, opportunities for community interactions, and programs that promote social and cultural integration.

Intermediate Students- Participants who have been enrolled for more than two consecutive semesters, but not in their last semester of goal completion

Involvement- "the time, energy, and effort students devote to learning and participating actively in student organizations and interacting frequently with faculty members and student peers" (Involvement in Learning 1984). Involvement and engagement are used interchangeably.

Member checks-"taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (Merriam 2001, p.204)

Non-traditional student- Those who not members of the dominant culture (ages 18-24) or are first generation dominant culture students

Older Students-Participants 35 years and older

Persistence- Continued enrollment and perseverance toward academic goal achievement

Programs-any mechanism designed to enhance or support social or academic integration

Predominantly White Institutions -(PWI's) Traditional higher education institutions with majority White student and staff populations

Social Integration- students relationships with peers, faculty, and staff within and outside the college (Tinto 1975)

Stop-outs-Students who have withdrawn from the institution for one or more semesters with the intention of returning

Student Life- Campus organization responsible for leadership, educational, and recreational activities

Traditional Students- Students ages 25-35

Under Prepared Faculty- Teachers who *do not* demonstrate exemplary attributes identified by study participants: competent, enlightening, engaging, accessible, encouraging, flexible, challenging, provide relevant learning experiences

Urban Community College (UCC) pseudonym for the college system under study, also referred to as 'the College'

Validation- "is a developmental process that is enabling, confirming, and supportive and initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that foster academic and interpersonal development (Rendon 1994, p.44).

Younger Students- students ages 18-24 year of age

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Vita

Stephanie Jones Hawley was born on Perrin Air Force Base in Denison, Texas on December 21, 1958 to Kathleen and Henry Jones. Her father was enlisted in the United States Air Force and she spent most of her early life on military installations in Texas, the Philippine Islands, Ohio, and Spain. She graduated from Del Rio High School in Del Rio, Texas in 1977. Stephanie earned a Bachelor of Arts in English Composition from the University of North Texas in 1981 and a Master of Science in Education from the University of Houston-Clear Lake in 1983. She holds teaching certifications from both Texas and South Carolina. Mrs. Hawley began teaching at the K-12 level in 1982. In 1989, she opened and directed an educational consulting firm for five years in Houston, Texas. Stephanie began working in teacher education in the mid 1990's at Winthrop University in South Carolina. During this time, she worked as a consultant and instructor for the National Writing Project at the university. She has also worked as a teacher-educator at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. Before beginning her doctoral studies, she was an English professor and director of professional development at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas. Her publications include *Increasing the Effectiveness of Hispanic Serving Institutions: Policies and Practices.* Blue Ribbon Panel Project, Morton College; "Measuring up: Do Tests Help Boost Education," *The Herald,* May 1999 Rock Hill SC; "Choosing a Major," *Career World*, (24):6; and "The SAT/ACT: Does Coaching Work?" *Career World* (23):2.

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