

Stop, Drop, Enroll!

Executive Summary

DATE: June 26, 2019

TO: The Executive Leadership of North Hennepin Community College, Hennepin Technical College, and the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth

FROM: Elena Favela – Dean of Student Development
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Background

Stop Drop Enroll! is the first local research study on persistence conducted in partnership with North Hennepin Community College (NHCC), Hennepin Technical College (HTC), and the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth (Alliance). The purpose of this study was: 1) to understand the individual and institutional reasons students do not persist one year after they begin college, and 2) to propose actions that would increase student persistence.

We began this study for several reasons:

- We are experiencing a regional workforce shortage
- Our college partners lose roughly **\$6.8M in tuition annually**
- For our cities and county to be vibrant we must do all we can to support students to complete their educational goals

The following terms are defined by Minnesota State System of Colleges and Universities:
Dropout: Student left college within the 1st year before transferring or completing a degree and did not return by the 3rd semester. Stopout: Student left college after the 1st semester before transferring or completing a degree, did not enroll the 2nd semester, and re-enrolled the 3rd semester.

Our collaborative intent is to increase college and career success of students in the cities of Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. We seek to promote systemic change to dramatically increase students' completion of higher education. This may include addressing policy, practices, and underlying mindsets that are barriers to student success.

Our research team included students to ensure student perspectives and insights were integrated into the survey design and research process. Through four methods we answered the following research questions:

1. Who are the students who dropout or stopout?
2. Why do students dropout or stopout? (personal, institutional, and systemic reasons)
3. What changes would prevent dropping out?
4. For students that remain enrolled after the first year, what assets and strengths do these students have that help them persist that we could foster systemically?

Methods

1. *Student Enrollment Data.* Information on 1st year students from the 2014-2017 school years (N=23,234) at both colleges was analyzed.
2. *Surveys.* One hundred four (104) students who had dropped out and 168 faculty and staff were surveyed to gather data on reasons why students dropout and stopout, and institutional barriers and assets to student success.
3. *Interviews.* In-depth interviews were conducted of current students (N=19), and faculty and staff (N=17) to further explore reasons and assets why students persist or not.
4. *Photovoice.* Students on our research team captured visual images that represent the data collected in methods 1, 2, and 3.

Overall Findings

We learned more about students who enroll at HTC and NHCC, especially those who dropout or stopout of college.

- Data analysis from 4 years starting in Fall 2013 through Spring 2017 (N=23,234) showed that:
 - 38% of 1st year students dropped out 1st or 2nd semester
 - 2% of 1st year students stopped-out (dropped out and then re-enrolled)
- Students with the following academic experiences had the highest probability of dropping out of college:
 - 61% Unsuccessful Course (less than a C grade) in the 1st term
 - Holds on a student account (61% - *data only available from NHCC*)
 - 57% Withdrawn from a Course 1st term
- In some cases, disparities related to student racial or ethnic groups increased their probabilities of an unsuccessful course, a hold, or a withdrawn course.

We learned more about the reasons why students dropout or stopout of college.

- Multiple factors add up to create the conditions where students dropout of college.
- Students dropout of college for many different personal and life event, academic, and financial reasons. In our survey of students who had dropped-out (or stopped-out), the top reasons why they left college early were:
 - Financial challenges (could not afford tuition or to take on more debt, or did not receive enough financial aid)
 - Difficulty balancing school with work schedule
 - Too difficult to schedule the classes they needed

We learned more about the institutional cultures, expectations, or processes that may contribute to students dropping out or stopping out of college.

- There is a lack of coordination of services college-wide to ensure that no students slip through the cracks. Accurate data is not available to all faculty and staff (especially administration) to track students at risk or those who have dropped out.
- Students are not always able to find classes that fit their transportation or work schedule.
- Only about half of students receive the assistance and information needed to apply and pay for college. Students had difficulty navigating the financial aid process and it can be challenging to access guidance from academic advisors and counselors.
- Some faculty and staff are perceived as not understanding, representing, or accommodating students and their needs.

We learned more about the assets and supports (both personal and institutional) that may contribute to persistence in college.

- Institutional supports are vital to students persisting in college, including:
 - Faculty and staff
 - Family and peers
 - Access to student support services (Student Life, FYE, TRiO, etc.)
- Student mindsets, assets and strengths that contribute to success in college, include:
 - Help-seeking
 - Motivation/focus
 - Time management
- Many students rely on themselves for resources and guidance through college.
- Wrap-around supports (TRiO & Disability Services) were identified as the most effective.

Summary of Final Results

METHOD 1 – Student Enrollment Data Analysis

The purpose of analyzing student enrollment data was to answer the question: Who are the students who dropout or stopout?

Challenges with the Data. During the Method 1 process, there were several challenges that may affect the validity of the results.

- Accessing the Student Information System to retrieve the data to understand student persistence was more time-consuming than expected.
- Data on holds from one of the colleges was not accurate; enrollment data collected by the colleges does not report persistence accurately; and Pell Grant Eligibility Status is not an accurate proxy for low-income status.
- Students' motivations for attending college are not understood. They include more than graduating with a degree or certificate or transferring to another institute of higher education.

Results

Analysis of the student data from the 4 years starting in Fall 2013 through Spring 2017 showed that after students' first 2 semesters:

- 23,234 students from HTC and NHCC
- 38% dropped out 1st or 2nd semester
- 37% progressed to a 3rd semester
- 16% transferred to another institution
- 7% graduated (e.g. transfers into the college who then finished their degree)
- 2% stopped-out (dropped out the 1st semester, not enrolled the 2nd semester, and re-enrolled the 3rd semester)

Student Data also showed that students with the following experiences had the highest probability of dropping out of college:

- Unsuccessful Course (less than a C grade) 1st term (61%)
- Holds* (61%)
- Withdrawn from a Course 1st term (57%)
- Academic Development or Developmental Course 1st term (44%)

- Part-time Load (44%)

We also found that when broken down by race or ethnicity, students who identified as Black or African American students, and students who identified as Two or More Races, were disproportionately more likely to:

- Have an unsuccessful course
- Have a hold
- Withdraw from a course

METHOD 2 – Surveys to Students Who Dropped Out, Faculty and Staff

The purpose of these surveys was to answer: Why do students who dropout or stopout?

Reasons Students Dropout

Students, faculty and staff offered similar reasons why students dropout of college.

Student Insight

Students who dropped out responded that their top reasons for leaving college early were:

- 74% of students who previously dropped out responded that personal and life events influenced their leaving college (inability to balance school with work, and mental health challenges)
- 65% cited academic reasons (inability to enroll in the classes they needed because they were not offered at times that worked with their schedule)
- 61% cited financial reasons (inter-related challenges such as the cost of tuition and fees, the amount of financial aid available, and willingness to take on loans)

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff surveyed responded that the biggest institutional reasons that students dropped out were:

- A student failing one or more classes
- Students aren't prepared for the academic rigor of college, or that their personal lives intruded with their studies
- Colleges do not prepare students with academic skills to be successful

Difficulty balancing work and school was a top reason offered by students who dropped out from college, which aligns with the faculty and staff's reason of student's personal lives affecting their academic performance (e.g. failing a class).

Multiple factors add up to create the conditions where students dropout of college. There is no one "smoking gun" variable, but rather a confluence or overlapping of multiple variables that describe the "typical" dropout or stopout student. We met many students that are resilient enough to overcome numerous barriers, but there were many who faced blocks (such as classes that conflict with work schedules) that the student alone cannot overcome.

Institutional Supports That Help Students Succeed

Students, faculty, and staff agree on what students need to succeed.

Student Insight

Students surveyed identified the following factors that would have helped them stay in college:

- Financial supports
- Guidance and support from school

- Academic supports
- Classes that better fit their work and family obligation schedule

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff surveyed responded that the top academic, health, and basic needs supports that helped students succeed were:

- Tutors, Writing Center, CSA, Math Resource Center
- Academic advising services
- Counseling services

Student Assets or Strengths

Students, faculty and staff do not agree on which assets help students succeed.

Student Insight

Students said assets and strengths that help them succeed are:

- Motivation: they have the desire to succeed
- Self-awareness: they can judge their performance and behavior
- Persistence: they are willing to keep trying in the face of challenge

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff responded that the following assets or strengths help students succeed:

- Caring faculty and staff
- Academic supports offered by the college
- Advising / guidance offered by the college

Faculty and staff responded to the question on **student** assets and strengths with **institutional** assets. Faculty and staff may have misunderstood the question and reported institutional assets rather than student assets.

Also, an important question to consider is: If these assets are key to student success, where do they learn them? And, how do we develop these assets in college students?

Process for Identifying and Supporting Students at Risk

Almost all students and a quarter of faculty and staff were not aware of a process for identifying and supporting students at risk for dropout or stopout.

Student Insight

Students were asked how struggling students were addressed by their colleges;

- 53% responded that the college did nothing

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff were asked a similar question;

- 54% of NHCC faculty and staff identified the Early Alert Referral System
- 36% of HTC faculty and staff identified the Student of Concern Process
- 25% of faculty and staff at both colleges were not aware of any process

Readiness for College

Students, faculty and staff do not agree about students' readiness (academic knowledge, academic skills, social and emotional skills) for college.

- 68% of students Completely Agreed or Agreed that they were either “Very Well” or “Well” prepared for college
- Only 17% of faculty and staff believed that students were “Very Well” or “Well” prepared for success in college

Motivations for Enrolling in College

Colleges tend to measure success as earning a degree or certificate or transferring to another institution of higher education. However, students shared many other motivations for enrolling in college, and may require different guidance and supports than standard outcomes.

Students were surveyed about their original motivations for enrolling in college;

- **Earn a degree (43%)**
- To get a higher earning job (36%)
- Learn new skills (35%)
- New career (30%)
- **Transfer to a 4-year college or university (23%)**
- Try out college (21%)
- Advancing in my current job (18%)
- **Earn a certificate (16%)**

Information About Applying and Paying for College

- More than half of students did not receive assistance in applying and paying.
- More than half of students did not find the colleges’ information helpful.
- Based on an analysis of student responses, students of color reported they received less assistance on applying and paying for college than white students, and they rated the information they received as less helpful than the ratings provided by white students.

Less than 50% of students received the help they needed to apply and to pay for college. This data indicates that students of color and indigenous students received less information, and were less satisfied with the information they received, about applying and paying for college than white students. Suggesting a need to improve outreach and orientation efforts.

METHOD 3 – Interviews with Enrolled Students, Faculty and Staff

Barriers to Persistence

We asked students about barriers they had to overcome and faculty and staff about institutional barriers that students face.

Student Insight

Students identified the following as the top barriers that students have had to overcome:

- Transportation (37%)
- Work – School Balance (32%)
- Unclear Academic Requirements (16%)
- Online classes / Technology Issues (16%)

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff identified the following as the top institutional barriers students face:

- Faculty and institution do not understand, represent, or accommodate students and student needs (76%)
- Advising and counseling (not enough available, and uncoordinated services) (59%)
- Institution does not prepare students to understand the college culture, expectations or processes (59%)
- Financial aid process is too complex for students (53%)
- Students are required to navigate the maze of student services on their own, with no guidance or trusted advisor (41%)
- Difficulties in the relationship between administration, staff, and faculty can cause tension and create turnover (35%)

Assets That Lead to Persistence

We asked students about their top assets and strengths and faculty and staff about institutional assets that contribute to student success. The answers received in the interviews mirror the results of the survey.

Student Insight

Students identified the following as the top assets or strengths that help students succeed:

- Help-seeking (63%)
- Motivation / Focus (58%)
- Time Management (37%)

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff identified the following as the top institutional assets that contribute to student success:

- Faculty and Staff (71%)
- Student Support Services (FYE, TRiO, Disability Services, etc.) (53%)
- Facilities: location, technology, comfort, cleanliness (47%)

Measuring Faculty and Staff's Impact on Student Success

We asked faculty and staff how the colleges and/or interviewees were measuring the impact of their role on student success. Their responses follow:

- Anecdotal or informal evidence (47%)
- No measurement or evaluation (35%)
- Surveys and assessments created by individual or department (29%)

There was no consistent college-wide process used to gather and report data. Many of these faculty and staff mentioned that it would be valuable to have this information.

Faculty and Staff Training and Education

We asked faculty and staff interviewees what training or education they had received for their roles at their college. Faculty all had advanced degrees or certificates in their area of instruction as well as many years of experience working in the field. Most staff had college degrees related to their roles and half also had a degree in education.

Many of our interviewees mentioned that they did not receive any kind of coordinated departmental or college-wide training related to teaching or supporting students as they navigate the college academic programs or student support services.

Student Motivations

The interviews allowed a deeper understanding of why students enrolled in community college and why they decided to enroll full-time or part-time. Among the responses:

- Students reported that they decided to attend community college based on the college offering a degree program in their area of interest and the college's affordability.
- Some students reported that they were not ready for a four-year institution and they were still figuring out their interests while they completed their general education courses.
- Students who made the decision to enroll part-time did so to accommodate work.
- Students who made the decision to enroll full-time reported doing so mostly because they wanted to finish as fast as possible.

Suggestions from Students, Faculty, and Staff

Interviewees were asked what changes would improve student success.

Student Insight

- Advertise existing student support resources so that students are aware of them.
- Add new, increase or improve existing student support resources (increase mental health resources and health clinic hours, offer on-campus child-care, etc.).
- Make academic or enrollment improvements (more scheduling options for classes, tutorials on how to navigate D2L, etc.).

Faculty and Staff Insight

- Provide better access to student supports (revamp orientation process, expand TRiO-type wrap-around services, create student-centered face-to-face one-stop shop for student support services, active outreach and engagement from Financial Aid to students, etc.)
- More support for faculty and staff (more advisors and financial aid staff positions, efforts to decrease constant turnover, college-wide professional development opportunities for all faculty and staff, etc.)

Discussion

How do we build on existing student and institutional assets?

What conversations are needed right now that would advance this notion? Do people believe that developing assets can replace, shift, overtake, and change the conditions that are creating the persistence problem?

How could we use an equity lens advance our shared goals? By focusing on each student and exploring how policies and practices impact student groups differently, could we unlock new approaches to student achievement? Could we ultimately make college more accessible? If we were successful how would this mitigate the workforce shortage?

Which of these recommendations seems to unlock the greatest potential for change? By bringing together diverse internal and external stakeholders, could we move this forward in a way that allows for new partnerships, accountability and innovation to emerge?

Recommendations

From the results of the research study, the following are a summary of the recommendations.

“(The college has) pockets of really good people and programs. Some are terrific, but the whole thing isn’t coordinated, there is some connection, but nothing official. Not that people don’t work hard...people are overwhelmed, but with the wrong things.”

1. Create intentional, coordinated college-wide programs with the goal of student success:

Specifics: The quote above speaks to many of the challenges and barriers discussed in the report. Specific departments and individuals are really making a difference in students' lives, but those efforts are not coordinated to be accessible to all students. The administration at both colleges should explore new ways to lead these efforts, while communicating, engaging, and partnering with faculty and staff. Specific actions could include:

- Implement consistent communications from the colleges' Administration offices to ensure that all faculty and staff understand the college's goals and their role related to student success.
- Correct deficiencies with collecting and reporting Student Information System data. Improve ability to track students at risk and understand the reasons why students dropout of college.
- Offer coordinated departmental and college-wide training to all faculty and staff related to teaching or supporting a diverse population of students.
- Create a performance management system to track and report data on the impact of departments on student success.
- Continue working to improve how faculty and staff understand, represent, or accommodate the diverse population of students (and their backgrounds, strengths, and needs). Increase the diversity of tenured and adjunct faculty.

2. Programs and processes should be designed with students at the center: Our research revealed a disconnect between how academic programs and institutional processes function compared to the backgrounds and needs of the diverse student population. Specific actions could include:

- Replicate wrap-around programs and departments that work for students, such as TRiO and Disability Services, to increase access to and quality of advising and counseling services and academic, health, and basic supports.
- Offer (or require) First Year Experience courses for all students and focus the course on understanding college culture, expectations, and gaining the skills (both academic and life) to be successful.
- Understand what students' goals are for enrolling and ensure that the proper supports are available to help them achieve those goals. Consider how academic programs can be adjusted to align with student goals for their college experience.
- Reconsider scheduling of classes to accommodate all students. Offer enough sessions of key courses so that especially part-time students who need to balance their schedule with work can access the courses they need.
- Ensure that the financial aid departments are fully staffed and trained, students receive and understand all the necessary information before they enroll, have check-ins while they are students, and get supports if an adverse event occurs.

- Re-examine the orientation process, with student leadership, to determine if students are learning and understanding what they need to begin their college education.
- Work with public (city, county, school district) and private partners to provide reliable transportation options that work with class scheduling, so students can always attend the classes they need.
- Work with public partners to build affordable housing options for college students.
- Engage families in helping to support their students. Families were listed as their biggest support systems. Colleges should consider ways to strengthen that support system, especially for first generation college students.

3. Continue to ask questions and find answers: This report has just scratched the surface of what the colleges need to understand to increase persistence for each student. Further research needs to be completed to understand how to coordinate efforts for student success and design programs and processes with students at the center. Specific actions could include:

- Understand institutional processes and student experiences behind unsuccessful courses, holds, and withdrawn courses.
- Explore why Black or African-American students get holds, unsuccessful courses, or withdrawn courses more than other racial/ethnic populations.
- Understand why students of color feel they have less information and are less satisfied with the information they receive about applying and paying for college.

Stop Drop Enroll!

1st Year College Student Persistence Study

June 26, 2019



Hennepin Technical College™



North Hennepin
Community College



Brooklyn Bridge
ALLIANCE
for YOUTH

The purpose of this study is to understand individual and institutional reasons why students do not persist longer than one year of college, and to propose recommendations that would increase persistence.

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Student Research Team Profiles

"I was interested in participating in the photovoice project because a friend of mine dropped out of school because it took her an hour and 55 minutes to get to school by bus. The photovoice project is helpful because we show students how they can stay in school longer and finish their education. I know that many students want to attend Hennepin Technical College but struggle with transportation. I wanted to be a part of the project to help think of ways to help students. It was interesting to hear that the students at Hennepin Technical College and North Hennepin Community College experience similar issues. Through the photovoice project, I have learned that if I have a question about how to continue my education, there are people that I can go to who can help me find ways to stay in school longer." – **Fahda Abdi**



"It has been a wonderful experience for me to work with the photo voice project. I participated because I have always had challenges as an International Student which include but are not limited to affordable rental housing, transportation, insurance fees and finding on campus employment opportunities. Joining this project has given me the opportunity to express the challenges that other students may face through photos, and I have learned that "**a problem shared is half solved.**" I believe this project will give the management of schools in the Brooklyn communities an understanding of the challenges that might make students, not just International students to Stop, Drop, or re-enroll in college." – **Linda Kalu**



My main reason to participate in this research project was that I am a first generation college student. As the Honors Department work study, I have watched on campus in a very short time frame, the challenges and obstacles my peers face day to day. Instead of doing nothing, I wanted to be involved in the solution. By way of the Photovoice portion of this project, I was able to capture several barriers and a few supports that perfectly portray the challenges that directly impact the college experiences of every one of my peers. With this project we have collectively gained a wealth of knowledge to help campuses all over the Midwest and beyond. Critical information as to why students are unable to complete their college objectives has become apparent and a charge we must all righteously take on. "If not me, who? If not now, when?" - Unknown. – **Rachel Fraser**



"The reason I decided to become involved with the Stop, Drop, Enroll research project was to be able to make education more equitable by finding solutions to retaining college students. I wanted to make sure that individuals understood that higher education is not out of reach. I wanted to do this because growing up, I always saw other students being downplayed in their ability to succeed which made them have low academic self-esteem when in fact they had the potential to succeed but couldn't see it because one person told them they couldn't. Now, I want to make a difference by participating in this project by making students have the resources they need to succeed in higher education." - **Sergio Nunez-Avila**

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Background

The Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth (Alliance) brings city, county, colleges and schools together to improve high school graduation, pathways to college and careers and youth safety and well-being.

Through this research project in partnership with Hennepin Technical College (HTC) and North Hennepin Community College (NHCC), and with support from our board of directors, we have completed the first ever project of this kind, with a shared purpose to increase persistence for post-secondary students in the Brooklyns.

We began this study for several reasons:

- In our community we are experiencing a workforce shortage that increases the demand for educated workers
- Our college partners lose roughly **\$6,780,842 in tuition annually** (2131 dropouts per year x 17.2 credits per dropout per year x \$185 per credit)
- For our cities and county to be vibrant we must do all we can to support students to complete their degrees, and become self-sufficient
- We collectively share the goal of closing educational and economic disparities throughout our region
- We recognize that equal access to college is not the same as equitable access
- We seek to take immediate collaborative action on the results of this study to advance our shared goals

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined by Minnesota State System of Colleges and Universities:

- **Stopout:** Student left college after the 1st semester before transferring or completing a degree, did not enroll the 2nd semester, and re-enrolled the 3rd semester.
- **Dropout:** Student left college within the 1st year before transferring or completing a degree and did not return by the 3rd semester.
- **Persistence and completion:** Number/percent of the entering cohort of full-time undergraduate regular and transfer students that have progressed, graduated, or transferred by the second year (3rd semester).
- **Completion:** Completion is measured as graduation or transfer by the end of the third semester after entry at the colleges.

Local Context: Persistence Challenges

At Hennepin Technical College (HTC), half of all first-year enrolled students either do not finish their first year or are not enrolled at HTC the following fall semester. This means that only 50% of students persist in their studies from one academic year to the next.

At North Hennepin Community College (NHCC), their fall-to-fall persistence rate is 71% overall, but the completion (graduation and transfer) rate is roughly 52%. Like HTC, students leave the

college for various reasons, none of which have been formally researched or investigated. Similarly, data available to NHCC was also limited.

Overall both colleges had anecdotal information that persistence issues were due to student issues. There were some ideas that there were systemic issues, but what they were exactly, and how they impacted students was unknown. More rigorous investigation was needed to unearth the causes and solutions.

Key Stakeholders

The 40% of students that dropout and stopout in their 1st year of school
The families of these dropouts
The Alliance Board of Directors
HTC and NHCC College Presidents
HTC Persistence Committee
HTC Associate Vice President on Equity and Inclusion
NHCC Equity Specialist
NHCC Academic and Student Affairs
Hennepin County: Administration, HSPHD, Public Works and Housing
Osseo School District Equity Specialists, Career and Technical Education Directors, College and Career Resource leaders in high schools
Brooklyn Center School District Career and Technical Education Directors, Equity Specialists, College and Career Resource leaders in high schools
Robbinsdale School District Career and Technical Education Directors, Equity Specialists, College and Career Resource leaders in high schools
Anoka-Hennepin School District Career and Technical Education Directors, College and Career Resource leaders in high schools, Equity Specialists
City of Brooklyn Center
City of Brooklyn Park
TwinWest Chamber of Commerce
Local employers and businesses

Framing the Study: Literature Review

In “Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Community College Student Success”

Sara Goldrick-Rab (University of Wisconsin-Madison, *Review of Educational Research*, September 2010, Vol. 80, No. 3, pp. 437-469) finds that the investment in Community Colleges is questionable when large proportions of students who enter community colleges do not persist for longer than a semester, complete a program, or attain a credential.

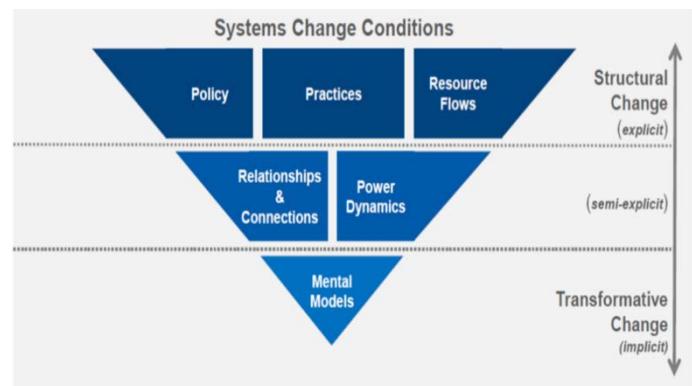
Goldrick-Rab's research searches for explanations for lack of persistence, emphasizing what is known about challenges stemming from three levels of influence, or sources of difficulty that community colleges face before deciding on solutions: the macro-level opportunity structure, denoting exogenous factors limiting or facilitating the work of community colleges; institutional practices (i.e. pedagogical practices and access to credit-bearing coursework) and how they relate to student outcomes; and the social, economic, and academic attributes students bring to college, and how these attributes are consistently viewed as demographic as opposed to

ascriptive, meaning they reflect positions in a stratified system. The relationships and interactions between and among individuals, institutions, and policy settings, directly impact student outcomes, because student choices are not absent of, or unconstrained by established structures such as state and federal policies and their implementation, or long-established institutional practices.

Goldrick-Rab notes how factors at each level affect rates of success at key times, including 1) the initial transition to college, 2) the experience of remedial education, and 3) persistence through credit-bearing coursework. The article also discusses potential and ongoing reforms that could increase rates of community college success by addressing one or more areas of influence (the macro, the institutional, or the individual).

In conclusion, increasing success in the open-access, public 2-year sector requires reforms directed at multiple levels and cannot be achieved with either student- or institution-focused incentives alone.

Thus, we will use a system building perspective to understand the results of this research as well as to develop approaches for moving forward. Which includes understanding policy, practice, resources, relationships, power dynamics and underlying mindsets that hold problems and privileges in place.



Source: John Kania, Mark Kramer, and Peter Senge, "The Water of Systems Change"

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Purpose and Description

The purpose of this study is to understand the individual and institutional reasons why students Dropout or Stopout from post-secondary education in the Brooklyns. We used a systems view as we sought to discover the root causes of the problem, as well as the solutions.

The purpose of this research is to learn

1. What are the reasons students dropout or stopout?
2. How can we (colleges, schools, cities, county, students and community) work differently to prevent students from dropping or stopping?

Research Questions

The following are our shared, overarching research questions:

1. Who are the students who dropout or stopout?
2. Why do these students dropout or stopout? (personal, institutional, systemic)
3. What supports, or systems changes would prevent dropping out?
4. What assets and strengths do students have that help them persist that we could foster systemically?

Methods

The following set of mixed methods helped us answer our research questions.

Method 1: Student Enrollment Data analysis

We gathered enrollment data for 1st year students from 2014 – 2018 school year. From this data we will analyze how many students:

- How many dropped out, returned and completed? General demographics: Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Age, City of Residence, High school/GED/Home school.
- Who was most likely?
- What are predictive factors for dropout?

Method 2: Student and Faculty Surveys

We created a survey for both student and faculty to gather data on the (individual and institutional) reasons why students Dropout or Stopout.

Examples of questions on the survey for students:

- What were the reasons you dropped/stopped out?
- What helps you stay in college? What changed so you returned?
- How could the college help you stay enrolled?

Examples of questions on the survey for faculty and staff:

- What were the reasons students dropped/stopped out?
- What helps students stay in college?
- What resources do you think youth need on campus to support students?

Method 3: Student and Faculty Interviews

We conducted interviews of current students and faculty/staff to further explore reasons why students persist or not. We also investigated assets that enable persistence.

Example of student interview questions:

- Why did you decide to enroll in community college?
- What type of support systems do you have? What assets or strengths help students succeed? What else would help you or other students succeed?
- What were the reasons that you had to leave school? What changed so that you were able to return to school? (for students that stopped out)

Example of faculty interview questions:

- In what ways do you have students succeed?
- From your view, what are institutional barriers/assets to student success at your college?
- What changes or improvements would help students succeed in school?

Method 4: Photovoice

Students captured visual images reflecting data collected in methods 1, 2, and 3.

Overall Findings

METHOD 1 – Student Enrollment Data Analysis

Challenges with the Data. During the Method 1 process, there were several challenges that may affect the validity of the results.

- Accessing the Student Information System to retrieve the data to understand student persistence was more time-consuming than expected.
- Data on holds from one of the colleges was not accurate; enrollment data collected by the colleges does not report persistence accurately; and Pell Grant Eligibility Status is not an accurate proxy for low-income status.
- Students' motivations for attending college are not understood. They include more than graduating with a degree or certificate or transferring to another institute of higher education.

Analysis of the student data from the 4 years starting in Fall 2013 through Spring 2017 showed that after students' first 2 semesters:

- 23,234 students from HTC and NHCC
- 7% graduated (e.g. transfers into the college who finished their degree)
- 16% transferred to another institution
- 37% progressed to a 3rd semester
- 2% stopped-out (dropped out the 1st semester, not enrolled the 2nd semester, and re-enrolled the 3rd semester)
- 38% dropped out 1st or 2nd semester

Student Data also showed that students with the following experiences had the highest probability of dropping out of college:

- Unsuccessful Course (<C grade) 1st term (61%)
- Holds* (61%)
- Withdraw from a Course 1st term (57%)
- Academic Development or Developmental Course 1st term (44%)
- Part-time Load (44%)

We also found that when broken down by race or ethnicity, students who identified as Black or African American students, and students who identified as Two or More Races, were disproportionately more likely to:

- Have an unsuccessful course
- Have a hold
- Withdraw from a course

METHOD 2 – Surveys to Students Who Dropped Out, Faculty and Staff

The purpose of these surveys was to answer: Why do students who dropout or stopout?

Reasons Students Dropout

Students, faculty and staff offered similar reasons why students dropout of college.

Student Insight

Students who dropped out responded that their top reasons for leaving college early were:

- 74% of students who previously dropped out responded that personal and life events influenced their leaving college (inability to balance school with work, and mental health challenges)
- 65% cited academic reasons (inability to enroll in the classes they needed because they were not offered at times that worked with their schedule)
- 61% cited financial reasons (inter-related challenges such as the cost of tuition and fees, the amount of financial aid available, and willingness to take on loans)

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff surveyed responded that the biggest institutional reasons that students dropped out were:

- A student failing one or more classes
- Students aren't prepared for the academic rigor of college, or their personal lives intruded with their studies
- Colleges do not prepare students with academic skills to be successful

Difficulty balancing work and school was a top reason offered by students who dropped out from college, which aligns with the faculty and staff's reason of student's personal lives affecting their academic performance. Similarly, with not doing well academically and failing a class.

Furthermore, students' financial and work-school balance difficulties may be the underlying causes for failing a class as faculty and staff reported.

Multiple factors add up to create the conditions where students dropout of college. There is no one "smoking gun" variable, but rather a confluence or overlapping of multiple variables that describe the "typical" dropout or stopout student. Even though students are resilient enough to survive overcoming a few barriers, when there are too many, and without the right support systems, they become overwhelmed.

Institutional Supports That Help Students Succeed

Students, faculty, and staff agree on what students need to succeed.

Student Insight

Students surveyed identified the following factors that would have helped them stay in college:

- Financial supports
- Guidance and support from school
- Academic supports
- Better schedule fits

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff surveyed responded that the top academic, health, and basic needs supports that helped students succeed were:

- Tutors, Writing Center, CSA, Math Resource Center
- Academic Advising Services
- Counseling Services

Student Assets or Strengths

Students, faculty and staff do not agree on which assets help students succeed.

Student Insight

Students said assets and strengths that help them succeed are:

- Motivation: the desire to succeed
- Self-awareness: the ability to accurately judge your own performance and behavior
- Persistence: willingness to continue to try in the face of challenge

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff responded that the following assets or strengths help students succeed:

- Caring faculty and staff
- Academic supports
- Advising / guidance

Faculty and staff responded to the question on **student** assets and strengths with **institutional** assets. Faculty and staff may have misunderstood the question and reported institutional assets rather than student assets.

Also, an important question to consider is: are students expected to have these assets and strengths *before* enrolling in college, and where are they expected to learn them?

Process for Identifying and Supporting Students at Risk

Most students and almost a quarter of faculty and staff were not aware of a process for identifying and supporting students at risk for dropout or stopout.

Student Insight

Students were asked how struggling students were addressed by their colleges.

- 53% responded that the college did nothing

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff were asked a similar question about the process for identifying and supporting students at risk of dropping out.

- 54% of NHCC faculty and staff identified the Early Alert Referral System
- 36% of HTC faculty and staff identified the Student of Concern Process
- 25% of faculty and staff at both colleges were not aware of any process

Readiness for College

Students, faculty and staff do not agree about students' readiness (academic knowledge, academic skills, social and emotional skills) for college.

- 68% of students Completely Agreed or Agreed that they were either "Very Well" or "Well" prepared for college
- Only 17% of faculty and staff believed that students were "Very Well" or "Well" prepared for success in college

Motivations for Enrolling in College

Students were surveyed about their original motivations for enrolling in college.

Typical motivations colleges track outcomes for:

- Earn a degree (43%)
- Earn a certificate (16%)
- Transfer to a 4-year college or university (23%)

Other Motivations:

- To get a higher earning job (36%)
- Learn new skills (35%)
- New career (30%)
- Try out college (21%)
- Advancing in your current job (18%)

Colleges tend to count success as earning a degree or certificate or transferring to another institution of higher education. However, students responded that there were other motivations for enrolling in college which may require different guidance and supports to attain their individual goals.

Information About Applying and Paying for College

- More than half of students did not receive assistance in applying and paying.
- More than half of students did not find the colleges' information helpful.
- Based on an analysis of student responses, students of color reported they received less assistance on applying and paying than white students, and they rated the information they did receive as less helpful than the ratings provided by white students.

Fewer than half of students received the help they needed to apply for college and to pay for college, which may indicate a need for improved outreach or orientation efforts. There are gaps expressed by survey participants that indicates student of color and indigenous students received less information, and were less satisfied with the information they received, about applying and paying for college than white students.

METHOD 3 – Interviews with Enrolled Students, Faculty and Staff

Barriers to Persistence

We asked students about barriers they had to overcome and faculty and staff about institutional barriers that students face.

Student Insight

Students identified the following as the top barriers that students have had to overcome:

- Transportation (37%)
- Work – School Balance (32%)
- Unclear Academic Requirements (16%)
- Online classes / Technology Issues (16%)

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff identified the following as the top institutional barriers students face:

- Faculty and institution do not understand, represent, or accommodate students and student needs (76%)
- Advising and counseling (availability and number of, and ineffective coordinated practice) (59%)
- Institution does not prepare students to understand the college culture, expectations or processes (59%)
- Financial aid process is too complex for students (53%)

- Students are required to navigate the maze of student services on their own, with no guidance or trusted advisor (41%)
- Difficulties in the relationship between administration, staff, and faculty can cause tension and create turnover (35%)

Assets That Lead to Persistence

We asked students about their top assets and strengths and faculty and staff about institutional assets that contribute to student success. The answers received in the interviews mirror the results of the survey.

Student Insight

Students identified the following as the top assets or strengths that help students succeed:

- Help-seeking (63%)
- Motivation / Focus (58%)
- Time Management (37%)

Faculty and Staff Insight

Faculty and staff identified the following as the top institutional assets that contribute to student success:

- Faculty and Staff (71%)
- Student Support Services (FYE, TRiO, Disability Services, etc.) (53%)
- Facilities: location, technology, comfort, cleanliness (47%)

Measuring Faculty and Staff's Impact on Student Success

We asked faculty and staff how the colleges and/or interviewees were measuring the impact of their role on student success. Their responses follow:

- Anecdotal or informal evidence (47%)
- No measurement or evaluation (35%)
- Surveys and assessments created by individual or department (29%)

There was no consistent college-wide process used to gather and report data. Many of these faculty and staff did mention that it would be very valuable to have this information.

Faculty and Staff Training and Education

We asked faculty and staff interviewees what training or education they had received for their roles at their college. Faculty all had advanced degrees or certificates in their area of instruction as well as many years of experience working in the field. Most staff had college degrees related to their roles and half also had a degree in education.

Many of our interviewees mentioned that they did not receive any kind of coordinated departmental or college-wide training related to teaching or supporting students specific to their departments or colleges.

Student Motivations

The interviews allowed a deeper understanding of why students enrolled in community college and why they decided to enroll full-time or part-time. Among the responses:

- Students reported that they decided to attend community college based on the college offering a degree program in their area of interest and the college's affordability. Additional reasons cited were because they were not ready for a four-year institution of higher education and they were still figuring out their interests while they completed their general education courses.
- Students who made the decision to enroll part-time did so to accommodate work.
- Students who made the decision to enroll full-time reported doing so mostly because they wanted to finish as fast as possible.

Suggestions from Students, Faculty, and Staff

Interviewees were asked about their suggestions on changes that would improve student success.

Student Insight

- Advertise existing student support resources so that students are aware of them.
- Add new, increase or improve existing student support resources (increase mental health resources and health clinic hours, offer on-campus child-care, etc.).
- Make academic or enrollment improvements (more scheduling options for classes, tutorials on how to navigate D2L, etc.).

Faculty and Staff Insight

- Provide better access to student supports (revamp orientation process, expand TRiO-type wrap-around services, create student-centered face-to-face one-stop shop for student support services, active outreach and engagement from Financial Aid to students, etc.)
- More support for faculty and staff (more advisors and financial aid staff positions, efforts to decrease constant turnover, college-wide professional development opportunities for all faculty and staff, etc.)

Results

METHOD 1: STUDENT ENROLLMENT DATA ANALYSIS

Although the colleges provided data from their Student Information Systems from Fall 2013 through Fall 2018, only data from Fall 2013 through Spring 2017 was used. The persistence data for Fall 2018 was not complete, so it was removed from the analysis. What remained were 11,195 records for HTC and 12,039 records for NHCC for a total of 23,234 records.

First, using the persistence data from MNSCU, the students were separated into different categories:

Dropout/Stopout

- Dropped out after 1st semester
- Dropped out after 2nd semesters
- Stopped out: Dropped out after 1st semester and returned for the 3rd semester

Successful

- Progressed all 3 semesters
- Transferred after 1 or 2 semesters
- Graduated after 1 or 2 semesters
- Stopped out (transfer): Dropped out after 1st semester, transferred 2nd semester, returned for the 3rd semester

To simplify the analysis, these outcomes were redefined as a binary set (comparing two items). First, negative outcomes (dropouts and stopouts, the first 3 categories listed above) were lumped together as **Dropouts/Stopouts**. Students who stopped out but transferred during the 2nd semester were not considered a negative outcome because there was no stoppage in college. Therefore, the rest of the categories are lumped into a **Successful** category. Then, data variables included in the data sets from both colleges were examined. These are listed below.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial Year and Term of Enrollment• Student Load (Full-time or Part-time)• Age• Reporting Race / Ethnicity• Gender• Pell Grant Eligibility• Veteran Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TRiO Status• Unsuccessful Course (received a grade of <C 1st term)• Withdrawn Course (first term)• Academic Development / Developmental Courses (1st term)• Holds
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The probability for each variable of students dropping out or stopping out were calculated. Then, to get an idea of how that probability compares to students not in that category, we calculated a risk ratio, which is used in epidemiology. A risk ratio assumes that each variable can be expressed as a binary (belongs to the “treatment” group or belongs to a “control” group). These are listed below.

“Treatment” Group	“Control” Group
Spring Initial Term of Enrollment	Fall Initial Term of Enrollment
Part-time	Full-time
18-25 years old	>25 years old
People of Color and Indigenous (POCI) race/ethnicity	White race group
Male	Not Male (Female or Unknown)
Pell grant eligible	Not eligible for Pell grant and Unknown eligibility
Veteran	Non-Veteran
TRiO student	Non-TRiO student
Unsuccessful Course 1 st term	No Unsuccessful Course 1 st term
Withdrew from a Course 1 st term	Did not Withdraw from a Course 1 st term
Took Academic Development or Developmental Course 1 st term	Did not take an Academic Development or Developmental Course 1 st term
Had a Hold (Warning, Probation, Suspension, or Hold)	Did not have a Hold

A Risk Ratio is calculated as the ratio of the probability of dropping out in one (treatment) variable group to the probability of dropping out in the “opposite” or control variable group. For example, the Risk Ratio for Student Load would be the probability of Part-time students dropping or stopping out over the probability of Full-time students dropping or stopping out.

$$Risk\ Ratio = \frac{Probability\ of\ Dropping\ Out\ of\ Treatment\ Group}{Probability\ of\ Dropping\ Out\ of\ Control\ Group}$$

To answer the second question about whether these variables would be meaningful, first, the incidence of each variable in the whole student population was calculated. Second, using the probabilities of dropping or stopping out calculated for the Risk Ratio, and the number of students with each variable, a Potential Effect Size of how many students each variable may have influenced to dropout or stopout was calculated.

CHALLENGES with Method 1

As the data for Method 1 was being gathered, there were several challenges that may affect the validity of the results.

- *Accessing the Student Information System:* Since there were no reports created that already gathered the information we were requesting, new scripts had to be written. The Institutional Research department at one of the colleges was unable to create a script to pull information for their college. However, the other college was not equipped to write their own script. They used the same script from the first college, which created issues since some of the data was not categorized the same (i.e. holds, developmental courses, etc.). Specifically, with holds, we know that one of the college's data is inaccurate.
- *Enrollment Data vs. Persistence Data:* The colleges collect accurate enrollment data, which tracks whether students are enrolled at the college for each term. However, that does not track whether students are not enrolled because they transferred or graduated. MNSCU does have a data set that tracks transfers and graduations. We were able to use that data set to determine who truly dropped out.
- *Motivations for Attending College:* Understanding which students dropped out of college can be difficult because it is not always clear why students enrolled in college in the first place and whether those goals were met when they stopped enrolling. The assumption is that students attend college, so they can get a degree (or certificate) at the college they enrolled in, or so they can transfer to another college or university to complete their degree. That assumption is affirmed because they declare a major. However, to access financial aid, students need to declare a major, so there is a financial incentive to do so even if their real intention is not to graduate. Students may enroll in college for other reasons besides graduating with a degree or transferring, including learning new skills, trying out college, parental expectations, to get a higher earning job, start a new career, peer or societal pressure, or having no other options. In these other reasons, their goals for attending could have been met without attaining a degree or transferring and dropping out would not be a failure to success.
- *Data Analysis Consultant:* We worked with a data analysis consultant that one of the colleges retains. There were some difficulties working with this consultant. We did not feel they created sufficient engagement with our research team as was needed to truly understand how to analyze the data that would produce the results we desired. There were several mistakes made in accurately understanding our desires communicated to them in email. The final report at first did not use the definitions we agreed upon in the scope of work; the consultant had to go back and fix it. And there was little attempt to explain their choice of analysis methods before it was started and in the final report. Again, the consultant was asked to address this in a rewrite. Finally, we felt there was little understanding of (or desire to understand) the community context of the two local community colleges and the student population which affected the analysis of the data.
- *Pell Grant Eligibility Status:* Pell Grant eligibility is often used as a proxy for income level. However, for both colleges, the number of students whose Pell Grant eligibility was "Unknown" was very high (28%-33%), which made any correlation between that variable and dropping out suspect.

RESULTS from Method 1

Student Outcomes

The student outcomes were calculated using the persistence data from MNSCU and reported below in the following chart and table. The overall dropout rate for students at both colleges was 37%. The overall stopout rate was 2%. Just over a third of students (37%) progressed onto their

third semester, and 7% graduated and 17% transferred. Students at HTC had a higher rate of graduation after the 1st or 2nd semester than students at NHCC. Students at NHCC had a higher rate of transferring to another institution after the 1st or 2nd semester than students at HTC. The rates of students progressing through the 3rd semester of study, stopping-out during their 1st 3 semesters, and dropping-out by the end of their 1st year at both colleges were similar. However, students at HTC were more likely to dropout after their 1st semester than students at NHCC.

**CHART: STUDENT OUTCOMES AFTER 1st YEAR
(2013-2017 School Years)**

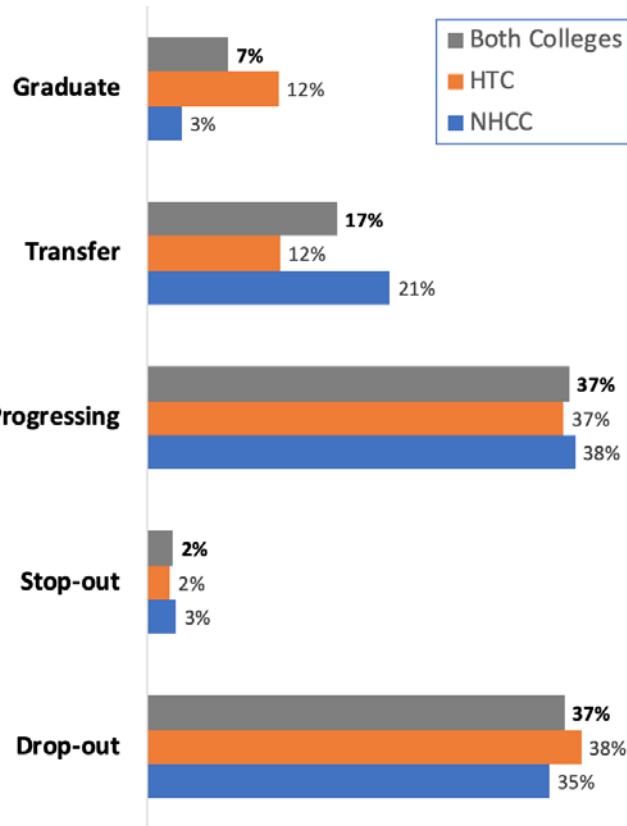


TABLE: STUDENT OUTCOMES (2013-2017 School Years)

Student Outcome (after 1 st year)	Both Colleges	HTC	NHCC
Graduate	7%	12%	3%
Transfer	17%	12%	21%
Progressing	37%	37%	38%
Stopout	2%	2%	3%

Dropout	37%	38%	35%
<i>Dropout after 1st semester</i>	22%	25%	20%
<i>Dropout after 2nd semester</i>	14%	14%	15%

Probability of Dropout / Stopout

Student holds are not included in this analysis of the student information system data from HTC. There is reason to suspect the accuracy of the data pulled from the student information system. Data from their IR department shows that the number of students with Holds is high, so we may assume that there is some correlation between students with Holds and students who leave college early, but we cannot make that determination with the existing data from HTC.

This chart and table shows the probability of dropping out or stopping out for student data variables. At the top is the overall rate of leaving college (dropout or stopout) of 39% overall. The highest 3 dropout/stopout rates for both colleges were Unsuccessful Course, Holds, and Withdrawn Course. TRiO students had a much lower probability of dropping out or stopping out (26%) than the overall rate (39%).

In between, there were a handful of variables that slightly increased the probability of dropping out or stopping out. Overall it seems that there is no one “smoking gun” variable, but rather a confluence or overlapping of multiple variables that describe the “typical” dropout or stopout student. It is also possible that the variables that are more directly related to a negative student outcome are not available from the Student Information System (i.e. motivations for enrolling in a community college, student readiness for college, access to supports, etc.). Subsequent methods may provide more answers.

**CHART: PROBABILITY OF DROPOUT / STOPOUT 1st YEAR
(2013-2017 School Years)**

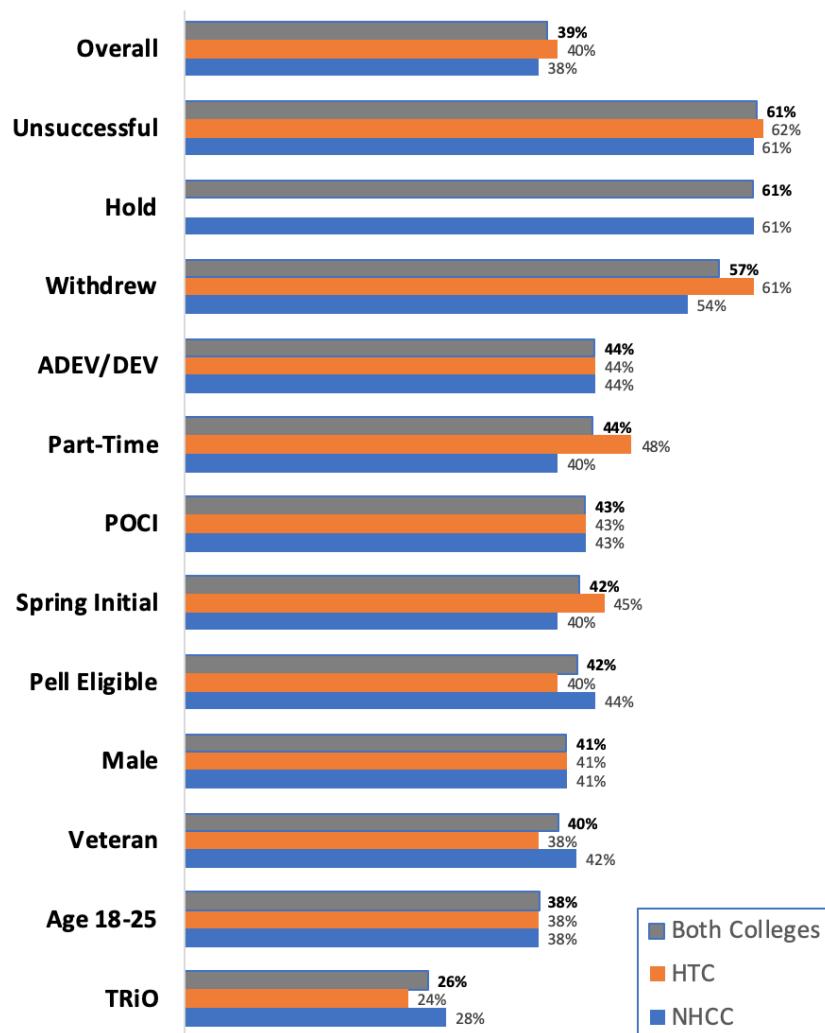


TABLE: PROBABILITY OF DROPOUT / STOPOUT 1st YEAR (2013-2017 School Years)

Variable		Both Colleges	HTC	NHCC
Overall (Dropout/Stopout)		39%	40%	38%
Unsuccessful Course 1 st Term	Yes	62%	62%	34%
	No	29%	34%	26%
Had a Hold (Warning, Probation, Suspension, Hold)	<i>Had a Hold</i>	61%	N/A	61%
	<i>Did not have a Hold</i>	32%	N/A	32%
Withdrew from Course 1 st Term	Yes	61%	61%	38%

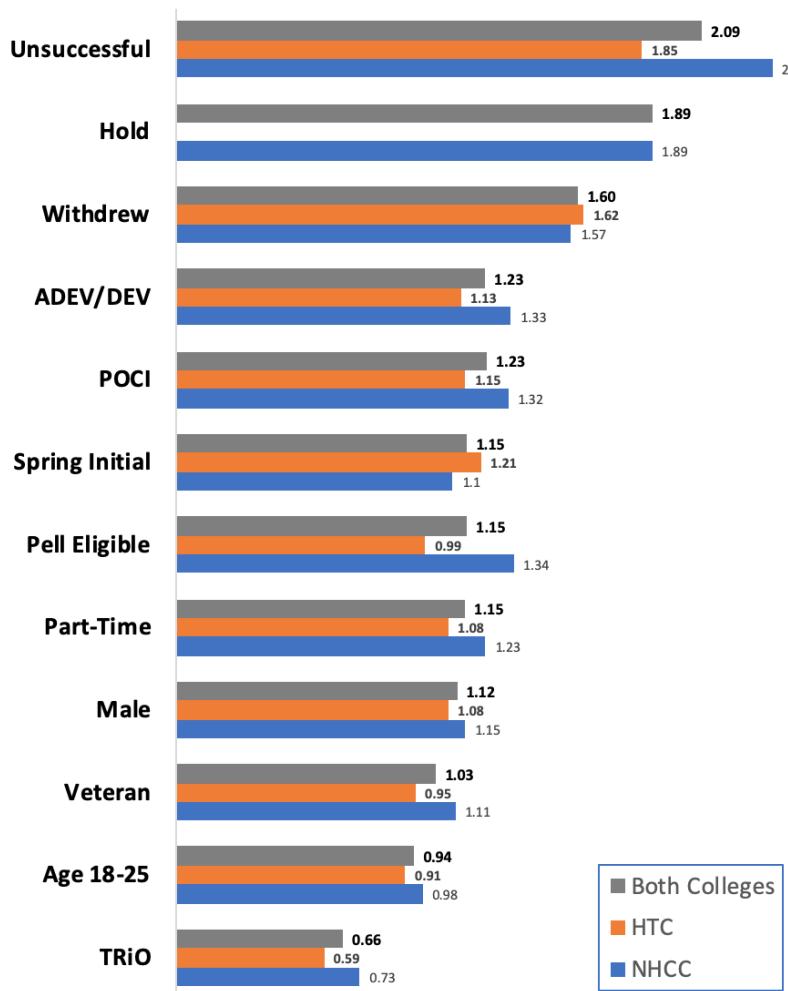
	No	36%	38%	34%
Took Academic Development or Developmental Course	Yes	44%	44%	39%
	No	36%	39%	33%
Student Load	<i>Part-time</i>	48%	48%	29%
	<i>Full-time</i>	38%	44%	33%
Race/Ethnicity	<i>POCI</i>	43%	43%	38%
	<i>White</i>	35%	37%	33%
Initial Term of Enrollment	<i>Spring</i>	42%	45%	40%
	<i>Fall</i>	37%	37%	36%
Pell Grant Eligibility	<i>Eligible</i>	40%	40%	40%
	<i>Not eligible or Unknown</i>	36%	40%	33%
Gender	<i>Male</i>	41%	41%	38%
	<i>Female or Unknown</i>	37%	38%	36%
Veteran Status	<i>Veteran</i>	38%	38%	40%
	<i>Non-Veteran</i>	39%	40%	38%
Age	<i>18-25 years old</i>	38%	38%	38%
	<i>>25 years old</i>	40%	42%	38%
TRiO Status	<i>TRiO student</i>	24%	24%	40%
	<i>Non-TRiO student</i>	39%	41%	38%

Risk Ratio

The next chart shows the risk ratios for student variables. Note that a risk ratio of 1.0 would mean that there is no difference between the probability of leaving college for the treatment variable and the control variable. A risk ratio higher than 1.0 would indicate the ratio is higher for the treatment variable. For example, the first variable is whether a student took an unsuccessful course (got below a C grade) in his or her first term. Students who did have an unsuccessful course had a risk ratio of 2.09 which means they were over 2 times more likely to leave college than a student who did not have an unsuccessful course. The highest 3 risk ratios were for Unsuccessful Course, Hold, and Withdrawn Course. Like the previous section, TRiO students had the lowest risk ratio.

This analysis shows the same top variables as the previous probability analysis. However, risk ratios are more sensitive to the sizes of the treatment and control group sizes and they reveal variables with a bigger difference between dropout/stopout rates between those two groups.

**CHART: RISK RATIOS (OF DROPOUT / STOPOUT) 1st YEAR
(2013-2017 School Years)**



Variable Group Size

The next chart measures the group size: how many students belong to this variable. The population and percentages are listed in the table below. There was a total of 11,195 students who enrolled in a major program at HTC and 12,039 students who enrolled in a major program at NHCC during the 4-year period. The variables with the largest group size were part-time students, students ages 18-25 years old, and male students.

This data may be helpful in determining where to focus further research in understanding what the experiences are for students who belong to the largest variable groups, and to appropriately size interventions depending on how many students would be affected. For example, the group with the highest probability of dropping out is students with an unsuccessful course (61%). However, those students only make up just over a quarter of students overall (28%), so any action taken should be appropriately sized. There is also an additional question about whether

the 429 total students reported to be involved in TRiO programs on both campuses from 2013-2017 is under-reported.

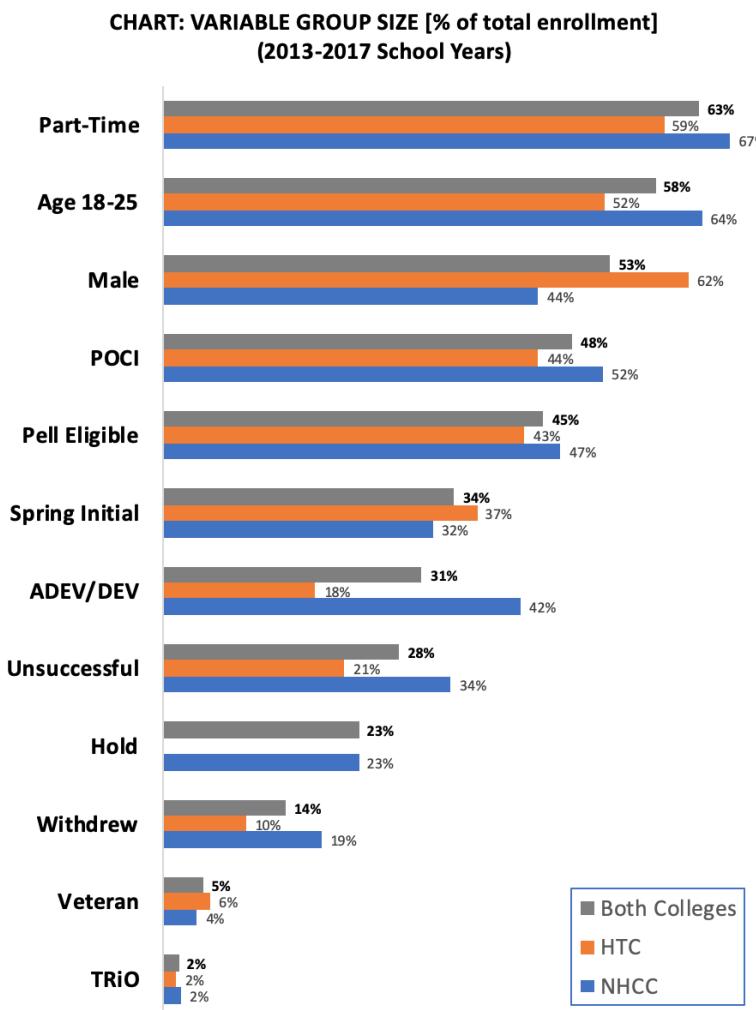


TABLE: VARIABLE GROUP SIZE AND PERCENTAGE (2013-2017)

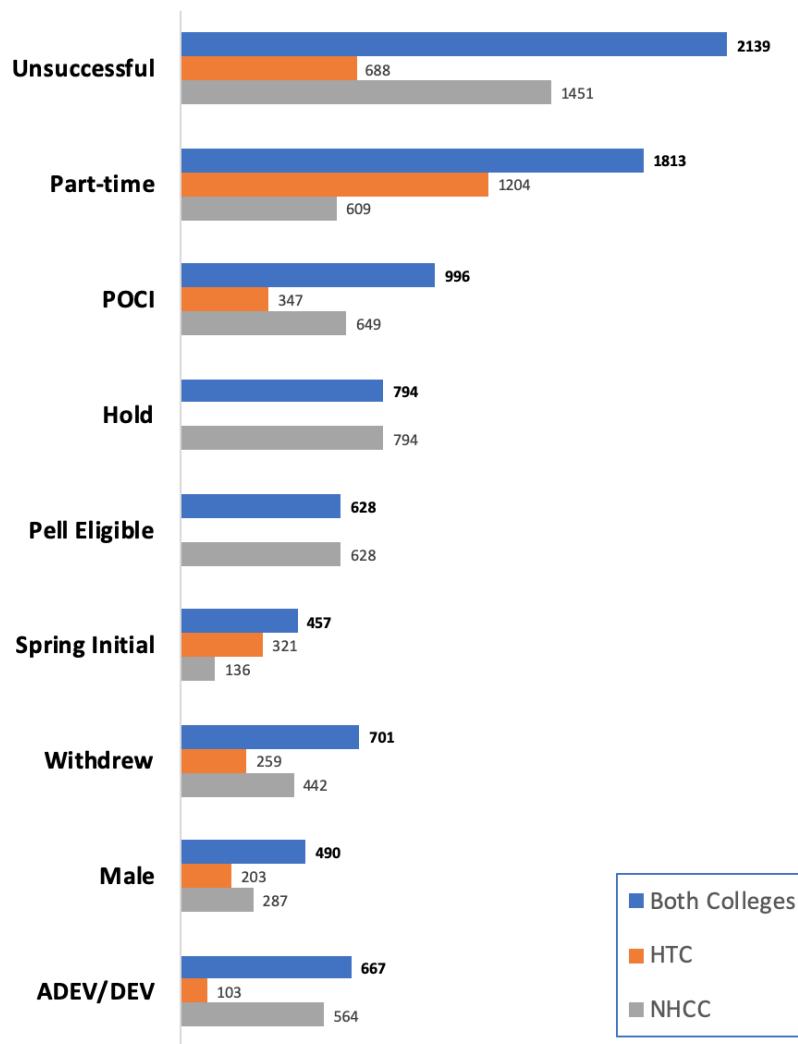
Variable	Both Colleges		HTC		NHCC	
	Size	%	Size	%	Size	%
Total	23,234	100%	11,195	100%	12,039	100%
Part-time	14,692	63%	6,622	59%	8,071	67%
Age 18-25	13,507	58%	5,840	52%	7,667	64%
Male	12,279	53%	6,943	62%	5,336	44%

People of Color and Indigenous (POCI)	11,216	48%	4,966	44%	6,250	52%
Pell Eligible	10,433	45%	4,781	43%	5,652	47%
Spring Initial Term	7,985	34%	4,152	37%	3,833	32%
Academic Dev. or Developmental Course	7,098	31%	2,018	18%	5,080	42%
Unsuccessful Course	6,491	28%	2,400	21%	4,091	34%
Withdrawn Course	3,357	14%	1,100	10%	2,257	19%
Holds	-	-	-	-	2,783	23%
Veteran	1,109	5%	621	6%	488	4%
TRIO	429	2%	175	2%	254	2%

Potential Size Effect

The last chart attempts to calculate a potential effect size, which uses the variable group size and the probabilities of leaving college for both treatment and control groups of each variable. For example, the probability of dropping out or stopping out at HTC is 48% for Part-time students. The total number of Part-time students is 6,622 and the number who leave college is 3,152. However, if the probability of leaving college is calculated using the probability (29%) for Full-time students (the “control” group, opposite of Part-time), then the number who would leave college would be 1,948 instead. This means that 1,204 students leave college due at least in some part because their load status (i.e. Part-time). If a similar calculation is done for Part-time students at NHCC, then 609 students dropout or stopout. The total number of students who dropout or stopout of both colleges would be 1813. The highest 3 potential effect sizes were Part-time, Unsuccessful Course, and Non-White. Another way to understand this is a potential effect size of every 50 students accounts for about 1% of the Dropout rate, so Part-time students account for about 24% of students who dropout at HTC. Note that Potential Size Effects are not necessarily additive; instead, they may overlap.

CHART: POTENTIAL EFFECT SIZE (2013-2017 School Years)



Racial / Ethnic Disparities in Holds, Unsuccessful Courses, and Withdrawn Courses

Since Unsuccessful Courses, Holds, and Withdrawals had the highest probabilities of leaving colleges and risk ratios across both colleges, we looked at how these variables related to Race/Ethnicity: how much more probable it was for different races and ethnicities to have an unsuccessful class, a hold, or withdraw from a class.

**CHART: PROBABILITY OF HOLD, UNSUCCESSFUL COURSE,
AND WITHDRAWN COURSE VS. RACE / ETHNICITY**

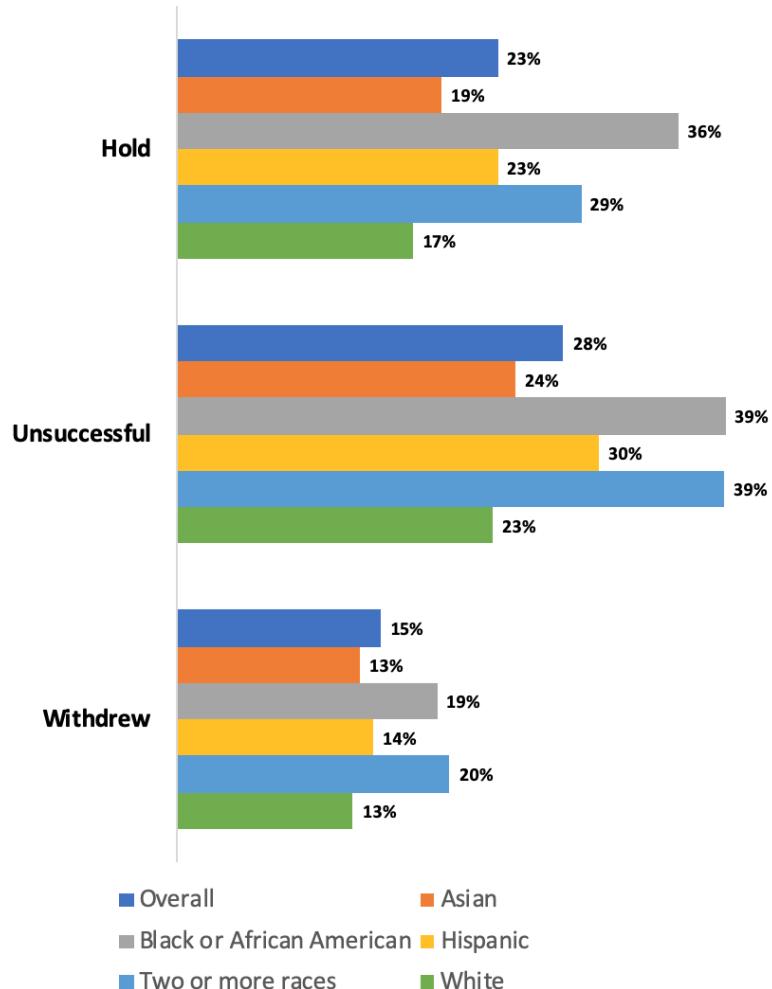


TABLE: PROBABILITIES OF HOLD, UNSUCCESSFUL COURSE, AND WITHDRAWN COURSE BY RACE/ETHNICITY (HTC)

Variable	Hold			Unsuccessful Course 1 st Term			Withdraw from Course 1 st Term		
	Both	HTC	NHCC	Both	HTC	NHCC	Both	HTC	NHCC
Overall	23%	N/A	23%	28%	21%	34%	15%	10%	19%
Asian	19%	N/A	19%	24%	16%	32%	13%	9%	17%
Black or African American	36%	N/A	36%	39%	31%	47%	19%	14%	23%

Hispanic of any race	23%	N/A	23%	30%	23%	37%	14%	11%	17%
Two or more races	29%	N/A	29%	39%	33%	45%	20%	17%	22%
White	17%	N/A	17%	23%	18%	27%	13%	8%	17%

Since the Holds data for HTC was inaccurate, no determinations could be made about this variable for HTC.

Students who are Black or African American or Two or more races at HTC and NHCC are more likely to have a hold, an unsuccessful course during their 1st term, or withdraw from a course 1st term, which we have identified as increasing the probabilities of dropping out or stopping out of college.

DISCUSSION of Method 1

There are deficiencies in collecting and reporting Student Information System data.

College-wide student data from the Student Information System is not consistently available to all faculty and staff (especially administration) to be used to track how many and which students are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out. Also, there was some question about whether the data that is available is accurate and useful for faculty and staff, specifically, data on persistence, holds, TRiO involvement, and Pell Grant eligibility. As a part of understanding student persistence, their motivations for enrolling in college also needs to be understood to accurately assess student outcomes. Since 22% of students dropped out after only 1 semester, additional information on individual student performance should be reported to faculty and staff during the semester to support those at-risk students before they decide not to (or are not allowed to via hold) re-enroll for their 2nd semester. Many K-12 schools use a weekly data dashboard to convey that information to faculty.

Students who do poorly in classes, withdraw from a class, or have a hold are more at-risk from dropping out. Both the analyses for probability of dropping and stopping out and the risk ratios revealed the same top categories: Unsuccessful Course, Holds, and Withdrawn Course. It was not clear what the institutional processes were for how students obtain an academic or financial hold, nor what student experiences lead to unsuccessful or withdrawn courses. On the other end of the spectrum, TRiO students had a much lower probability of dropping out or stopping out than the overall rate. The reasons why this is true are discussed more in depth in latter sections, but the wrap-around, one-stop services offered (and mandated for participation in the program) by consistent, trusted staff, are exactly the supports at-risk students need to succeed.

Multiple factors add up to create the conditions where students dropout of college.

Overall it seems that there is no one “smoking gun” variable, but rather a confluence or overlapping of multiple variables that describe the “typical” dropout or stopout student. If understood from a mental health perspective, one explanation of why students are dropping out is that even though students are resilient enough to survive overcoming a few barriers, when there are too many, and without the right supports, they become overwhelmed. It is also possible that the variables that are more directly related to a negative student outcome are not

available from the Student Information System (i.e. motivations for enrolling in a community college, student readiness for college, access to supports, etc.).

Part-time students have different motivations and needs than full-time students. The analyses on variable group size and potential size effect identified part-time students as an important group to watch since it represents 63% of the total student population. Specifically understanding their motivations and needs, distinct from full-time students, would help to adjust classes and supports so they can be more successful. This may include exploring financial and other options to allow students to transition to a full-time load, since we know from this study and national research, full-time students are more likely to be successful.

There are disparities for some racial or ethnic groups that increase their probabilities of getting an unsuccessful course, a hold, or a withdrawn course. Students of color had a slightly higher probability of dropping out from college overall, but when we examined how unsuccessful courses and holds related to race/ethnicity, we found that Black or African-American students or students with Two or More Races were much more likely to have an unsuccessful course or a hold or withdraw from a class. It is not clear why there is a racial disparity for those items.

RECOMMENDATIONS from Method 1

Correct deficiencies with collecting and reporting Student Information System data. Create ways to measure student information that will help us understand whether they are at risk for dropping out, including understanding their goals or motivations for enrolling, whether they have graduated or transferred to another institution, understanding whether they are low-income, and collecting accurate hold and TRiO involvement data. Set up a regular and accurate data gathering process from the Student Information System that can report performance measures to help each college identify which students are at risk of dropping out of college.

Understand institutional processes and student experiences behind unsuccessful courses, holds, and withdrawn courses. Understanding the reasons why students are unsuccessful in a course or must withdraw from a course will help the colleges to create supports to at-risk students before those events occur. Understanding how each college system assigns holds, and the reasons why students end up with them will also allow the colleges to prevent them in the first place.

Understand why students in TRiO programs have better outcomes. The lowest dropout and stopout rates were from students in the TRiO program. Examine the program design and wrap-around supports for students to understand what can be replicated college-wide.

Understand the specific motivations and needs of part-time students. Sixty-three percent (63%) of students are part-time, and aside from students who have an unsuccessful course, part-time students have the highest potential effect size. Understanding the motivations and needs of part-time students will help the colleges increase their persistence.

Explore why Black or African-American students get holds, unsuccessful courses, or withdrawn courses more than other racial/ethnic populations. Black or African American students make up the second largest race/ethnicity population at both colleges yet have some of the highest percentages of getting holds, unsuccessful courses, or withdrawn courses which lead to dropping out.

METHOD 2: STUDENT AND FACULTY SURVEYS

We conducted online surveys (Qualtrix and Survey Monkey, see Appendix 1) for students that had dropped out, and current faculty and staff (see Appendix 2), to gather data on the individual and institutional reasons they believe why students dropout or stopout, and assets or strengths that might help them overcome barriers to success.

Surveys were sent out to all students identified in Method 1. Students were offered a \$20 incentive to complete the survey. However, Hanover did not use the correct persistence definition and sent the survey invitation also to some students who had graduated or transferred. Thus, while 218 surveys were collected, only 105 were dropouts/ stopouts.

Complete and partial survey responses were used. The evaluator read through open-ended responses and additional survey questions to assign each student to a school status category, including dropout, stopout, persist, graduate, transfer, obtain a certificate, and other (which mostly includes people that enroll for a few specific classes). Two students' school status was unknown, and these cases were excluded from analysis. Students in the dropout and stopout categories are classified as "Dropout/ stopout." Students in the persist, graduate, transfer, obtain and certificate and other categories were classified as "Did NOT dropout/stopout." Student data on race was used from university enrollment sources. The data was cross checked with self-reported data in the survey. If there was a discrepancy between the university enrollment race data and self-reported race data, self-reported data were used. Students reporting more than one racial or ethnic group were considered students of color for this study.

Pearson Chi-Square significance tests were conducted to examine differences between white students and students of color among students that dropped out or stopped out of school. For significant findings, the Pearson Chi-square value, degrees of freedom and significance p-value are presented. If Pearson Chi-Square significance tests were not able to be performed due to cell counts lower than 5, Fisher's Exact Tests were used. For significant findings, significance p-values are presented.

Surveys were sent out to all faculty and staff at both colleges (all campuses) via emails from the respective Deans of Student on April 26, 2019. We received 168 anonymous responses and the survey closed May 17, 2019.

CHALLENGES with Method 2

As the data for Method 2 was being gathered, there were several challenges that may affect the validity of the results.

- *Student dropout or stopout status was assessed incorrectly in determining who would be sent the student survey:* As mentioned previously in Method 1, the initial data we received from the Student Information System only determined student outcomes by enrollment status and did not include graduation and transfers. Therefore, the number of students categorized as dropouts or stopouts was inflated. Unfortunately, when determining which students would be sent the survey (and eligible for the incentive), the

data consultant used the wrong group to send the survey to. Thus, instead of only targeting students who had dropped out or stopped out from the community colleges, we received answers from a much larger population.

- *The response rate for the student survey was low.* The students we were trying to reach most likely did not complete their college experience the way they had hoped, so they probably weren't positively inclined to complete the survey. And these students had enrolled in the colleges from 2013 to 2017, so the contact information in the colleges' database may not have been accurate anymore. Adding onto the already expected low response rate for an online survey, it was not entirely surprising that out of the 8,500 students contacted, only 105 usable responses were received from students who had dropped out or stopped out.
- *There is no current process for reaching out to students who dropout of college.* The colleges do not normally communicate with students who are no longer enrolled. There was no established process to do so, or prior data collected on this population.

DEMOGRAPHICS from Method 2

Out of the 218 surveys that were collected from students, only 105 identified as having dropped or stopped out. For the purposes of this report, we used person of color or indigenous (POCI), non-person of color or indigenous (White) categories.

OUTCOME	All	POCI	White
Dropped out	102	51	51
Stopped out	3	2	1
Graduated with degree or certificate, transferred, or persisted	113	17	96
Total respondents	218	70	148

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between race and college persistence. The relationship between these variables was significant, $\chi^2 (1) = 31.344$, $p < 0.001$. Students of color in this survey sample were more likely than white students to dropout or stopout of school.

COLLEGE	%
Hennepin Technical College – Brooklyn Park Campus	35%
Hennepin Technical College – Eden Prairie Campus	22%
Hennepin Technical College – Online	11%
North Hennepin Community College – Brooklyn Park Campus	48%

North Hennepin Community College – Online	14%
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FIRST GENERATION STUDENT	%	POCI	White
Yes	26%	44%	10%
No	74%	56%	90%

Students of color were more likely than white students to report being the first person in their family to attend college. This finding was statistically significant.

One hundred sixty-eight (168) faculty and staff from both colleges responded to our survey. The breakdown by role is included below for the colleges. Two (2) respondents indicated they taught at both colleges, and 1 respondent did not wish to identify which college he or she worked at.

Role	All	HTC	NHCC
Career and Technical Education / Technical Faculty	35	28	8
General Education Faculty	55	19	37
Administration	13	7	6
Staff	68	39	29
ALL FACULTY AND STAFF	168	89	80

RESULTS from Method 2

Student Survey Results

The results from the survey of students who had previously dropped out from the colleges are listed below.

Question #1: Originally, what were your motivations for enrolling in college? (Please select all that apply.)

Motivations for enrolling in college	All	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
Earn a degree	43%	43%	42%	33%	59%
To get a higher earning job	36%	38%	35%	34%	38%

Learn new skills	35%	30%	40%	41%	22%
New career	30%	23%	37%	33%	26%
Transfer to a four-year college or university	23%	25%	21%	14%	31%
Try out college	21%	19%	23%	17%	22%
Advancing in your current job	18%	19%	17%	21%	17%
Earn a certificate	16%	17%	15%	19%	14%
Parents expected me to attend	14%	17%	12%	12%	14%
Best option after high school	13%	15%	12%	10%	19%
My friends were also attending college	12%	11%	14%	5%	19%
Other	8%	6%	10%	7%	9%
<i>Typical motivations: earning degree/certificate, or transfer</i>	61%	65%	57%	52%	74%
<i>Other motivations: getting higher earning job, learning new skills, etc.</i>	39%	35%	43%	48%	26%

The top original motivations for students to have enrolled in college were to earn a degree, get a higher earning job, and to learn new skills. It's important to note that typically we consider that students enroll in college to earn a degree or certificate, or to get enough credits to transfer to a 4-year college or university. However, only 61% of respondents reported those motivations. Thirty-nine percent (39%) reported something different, including: getting a higher earning job, learning new skills, attaining a new career, trying out college, advancing in their current jobs, parental expectations, college was the best option after high school, and their friends were also attending college.

Question #2: Reasons that most influenced student leaving college

Reasons influenced leaving college	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
Personal and Life Events	74%	77%	71%	62%	84%
Academic	65%	67%	64%	66%	69%
Financial	61%	72%	50%	53%	72%

Overall, 74% of students who previously dropped out responded that personal and life events influenced their leaving college, 65% said academic reasons, and 61% said financial reasons.

A. Which financial reasons most influenced your decision to leave college? (Please select all that apply.)

Financial reasons most influenced leaving college	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
I did not want to take on more student loan debt	24%	23%	25%	24%	22%
Tuition was too expensive	19%	21%	17%	16%	22%
I did not receive enough financial aid	15%	21%	10%	16%	17%
I was not eligible for financial aid	15%	19%	12%	19%	16%
Additional fees were too expensive	13%	23%	4%	17%	12%

Overall, 61% reported there was a financial reason for dropping out of college. While common, financial reasons were not universal. Also, among students who dropped out, white students were more likely to report that there were no financial reasons. And, among students of color, they were more likely to report that the expense of additional fees influenced their decision. Both findings were statistically significant.

B. Which academic reasons most influenced your decision to leave college? (Please select all that apply.)

Academic reasons most influenced leaving college	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
The courses were offered during times unsuitable to my needs	18%	23%	14%	26%	16%
I changed my interest in what to study	15%	8%	23%	17%	14%
I was not doing well academically (academic warning or probation)	15%	15%	15%	12%	17%
I did not have enough guidance	14%	15%	14%	14%	14%
The faculty/staff at my college did not show interest in my academic progress or getting to know me	14%	14%	14%	10%	14%
I was unsatisfied with the program curriculum and quality of courses	11%	12%	10%	5%	14%
I only wanted to take a few classes	5%	10%	0%	3%	7%

Overall, 65% reported there was an academic reason for dropping out of college. While common, academic reasons were not universal. One notable data point was that “Had to take developmental course” (2.9%) was the lowest ranked academic reason for leaving college. There was not a significant difference between white students that dropped out of school and students of color that dropped out of school in any of these areas.

C. Which additional reasons most influenced your decision to leave college? (Please select all that apply.)

Additional reasons most influenced leaving college	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
Didn't fit with work schedule	23%	24%	22%	21%	26%
Mental health issues	20%	22%	18%	12%	23%
No one helped me navigate the college process	13%	14%	12%	14%	11%
Transportation issues	12%	16%	8%	14%	7%
College was not what I was expecting	12%	8%	16%	7%	16%
I needed a break from my studies	11%	10%	12%	7%	16%
Didn't like my classes or major	9%	6%	12%	0%	16%
Illness (personal or family)	9%	16%	2%	9%	9%
Housing issues	8%	12%	4%	7%	9%
Childcare issues	7%	10%	4%	7%	9%

Overall, 74% reported there was a personal or life event reason for dropping out of college. While common, personal or life event reasons were not universal. The top responses were school didn't fit with students' work schedules, and students had mental health issues. Among students that dropped out of school, students of color were more likely to report that personal or family illness influenced their decision to leave school than white students. This result was statistically significant.

Question #3: Please tell us more about the reasons that led to your decision to leave college. (Open-ended)

Reasons most influenced leaving college	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
Financial	23%	21%	25%	19%	24%
Personal reasons / life events	19%	23%	19%	16%	24%
School not for me	11%	9%	13%	5%	15%
Lack of support	9%	11%	6%	9%	7%
Transportation	8%	9%	6%	9%	5%
Moved	7%	6%	8%	9%	3%
Conflicts with work	6%	6%	6%	3%	8%

Students of color most frequently cited personal reasons and life events (23%) that led to their decision to leave college, followed closely by financial reasons (21%). White students most frequently cited financial reasons (25%), followed by personal reasons and life events (15%). More students of color cited lack of support as a reason for leaving school (11%) compared with white students (6%).

Students of color

- *I didn't have the financial means to stay enrolled. My time was limited, and I did not get help from guidance counselors or anyone at the college to help me regarding tutoring or assistance.*
- *The classes were only offered in the mornings. I was also working 2 jobs and going to school full time my mental health started to deteriorate.*
- *School was always so hard for me I could never study hard enough, and I could never be good Enough for the teachers.*
- *Employers are seeking both experience and an education and it's not possible to get both at the same time.*
- *I decided I didn't need the degree to accomplish my goals.*
- *I lived in an apartment with my husband and I had to help pay bills. I couldn't go to school full time as well as work full time. Especially since we only had 1 car. I left college so I could help pay bills. Even if I didn't have to pay bills, I still didn't have a ride to school.*

White students

- *I had a class that was based online, and I was so confused and frustrated with the process and I didn't know who to go to for help, so I ended up ending the class and never enrolling in another class. I would love to go back though, if I have more guidance and a clear understanding of what I need to do going forward.*

- *I needed to take 2 city buses and they only ran 1 run in the morning and 1 run in the afternoon. My schedule did not fit. It was difficult to get to the bus stop (2 miles away) on foot. I would have stayed in college if I had adequate transportation.*
- *I had no help to navigate through college I was confused and failed most my classes and I was in debt from loans.*
- *Took classes to advance in my career but couldn't pass the test and it was too hard to get a hold of the teacher and too expensive to go back for study help, also too expensive to drive 3 hours to study then head back home.*
- *The biggest reason was due to my 50-hour work schedule. The last semester of my program was 4 hours a day, 5 days a week and I live an hour away. It was nearly impossible.*
- *I had no idea what I wanted to do, and the amount of money was too much to not know. I was uninterested with the classes and felt like it wasn't for me.*

Question #4: *What would have helped you stay in college and not leave?* (Open-ended)

What would have helped you stay in college?	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
Financial supports	30%	38%	23%	28%	31%
Guidance and support from school	15%	11%	19%	16%	15%
Academic supports	10%	6%	13%	5%	14%
Better schedule fits	7%	2%	12%	9%	7%

Both students of color and white students most frequently reported that financial supports could have helped them stay in college (38% and 23%, respectively). Guidance and support from the school would have been helpful according to students of color (11%) and white students (19%). White students also listed academic supports (13%) and better schedule fit (12%) as resources that would have helped them stay in school more frequently than students of color (academic supports: 6%, better schedule fit: 2%).

Students of color

- *Knowing that what I'm studying can be used to get paid more with a current employer. And having different availability for classes with students that work full time.*
- *Financial stability.*
- *More guidance and better finances*
- *Financial and Family support*
- *I should have signed up for a class maybe two and took on less hours at work.*
- *If the required classes that I had to take due to my academic scores cared more about my learning than treating it like a quick course that would take a semester to get through.*

White students

- *Financial help*
- *Free tuition.*
- *Probably if course would have been in person rather than online. I prefer being in a classroom setting with other students. Also, if financially we could have had childcare options to help with kids during class and study time (if we were in an actual classroom).*
- *If I had better guidance from teachers. I needed help in an area I was struggling with and in the end didn't get the help or understand enough to pass.*
- *Better focus. Less personal distractions.*
- *A part time program. I could financially afford each semester with the payment plan installments and be able to succeed in a part time and not full-time basis*
- *Certainty of getting a job in the field I studied; motivation to work and study hard (especially reading - this was a key issue).*
- *No influence from the school would have changed my mind*

Question #5: If you did not complete your last semester, when did you stop attending classes? (Select one answer.)

When students stopped attending class their last semester	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
Beginning of the semester	27%	39%	19%	36%	25%
Middle of the semester	46%	39%	52%	32%	54%
End of the semester	27%	22%	30%	32%	21%

Out of the 48 student respondents who did not complete their first semester all the way through, more (46%) students reported that they stopped attending classes in the middle of the semester, versus the beginning or end of the semester.

Question #6: If at any time during college, you (or someone you knew) struggled, how was it addressed by the college? (Open-ended)

How were struggling students addressed by college?	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
Did nothing to address struggling students	53%	50%	56%	46%	63%
Resources were offered to address challenges	12%	9%	12%	7%	17%
Advisor provided help	10%	12%	8%	7%	11%
Don't know what was done	10%	12%	8%	14%	6%
Instructors provided help	8%	9%	8%	14%	3%

Put on academic probation or given a warning	5%	9%	0%	7%	3%
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Of the survey sample (N=59), 34 students of color and 25 white students reports that they or someone they knew were struggling. Half (50%) of students of color and 56% of white students said that the college did nothing to address students that were struggling. While no white students reported they were put on academic probation, 9% of students of color said they were put on academic probation or given a warning. Twelve percent of students of color and 8% of white students didn't know how the college addressed the struggles they were having.

Students of color

- *My instructor was supportive and spoke with me regarding my injury and we agreed it was best for me to withdraw.*
- *Unaware of any interventions by college. There may have been, but I didn't know of them.*
- *The college didn't know because I wasn't sure who'd be able to even help.*
- *Colleges don't really address the situations.*
- *The professors usually are lenient about helping you get caught up if you fall behind.*

White students

- *It was not addressed by the college at all.*
- *I did not seek guidance from the college, I typically didn't receive much help from the counselors in the past, so I wasn't going to waste the time trying again.*
- *Referral to appropriate resources.*

Question #7: What academic supports or resources were most helpful while you were in college? (Check all that apply.)

Most helpful academic supports or resources	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
Instructor's office hours	31%	38%	24%	26%	34%
Library	29%	35%	22%	34%	26%
Technology Access (Computer Labs, etc.)	26%	23%	28%	26%	25%
Academic Advising	24%	27%	20%	25%	21%
Career Center	14%	17%	12%	15%	13%
Tutoring (of Center for Student Achievement)	9%	10%	8%	11%	9%
TRiO Student Support Services	8%	10%	6%	4%	13%

Overall, students listed the top most helpful academic supports or resources as: instructor's office hours, the library, technology access, and academic advising.

Question #8: *What health and basic needs supports, or resources were most helpful while you were in college? (Check all that apply.)*

Most helpful health and basic needs supports or resources	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
Financial advising	27%	33%	20%	30%	23%
Counseling	19%	27%	12%	21%	15%
Fitness Center / Gym	15%	27%	4%	8%	25%
Work-Study	14%	19%	10%	13%	17%
County and community supports	9%	13%	6%	15%	6%

Overall, students listed the top most helpful health and basic needs supports or resources as: financial advising, counseling, and the fitness center.

Question #9: *To what degree are the following statements true? (Matrix/Rating Scale)*
(Completely Disagree, Disagree, Neither disagree or agree, Agree, Completely)

Completely Agree or Agree	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
I received assistance applying to college	39%	36%	42%	40%	37%
The information I received about applying to college was useful.	47%	40%	54%	57%	40%
I received information about paying for college before applying.	51%	43%	58%	55%	44%
The information I received about paying for college was useful.	44%	38%	50%	47%	40%
I was prepared academically (English, math, science, skills in note-taking, paper-writing, test-taking, studying, research, etc.) to succeed in college.	68%	62%	74%	68%	67%

Under half of students reported they received assistance applying to college (39%) and that the information they received was useful (47%). Slightly over half of students responded that they received information about paying for college before applying, and only 44% reported the information they received was useful. Sixty-eight percent (68%) felt that they were prepared academically to succeed in college.

Question #10: From your perspective, what school or life experiences helped best prepare you for college? (Open-ended)

School or life experience best prepared you for college	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
No experiences	23%	29%	17%	21%	22%
High school	23%	21%	24%	17%	24%
Personal attributes or experiences, including motivation and independence	18%	14%	21%	19%	20%
Previous work experience	15%	12%	19%	17%	10%
Family or other support systems	15%	10%	21%	15%	14%
Previous college experience	13%	7%	19%	19%	6%

Overall, 23% of students surveyed (29% of students of color and 17% of white students) reported that no experiences helped best prepare them for college. High school was response for another 23% of students (24% white students and 21% of students of color). Eighteen percent (18%) (21% of white students and 14% of students of color) reported their personal attributes or experiences, including motivation and independence best prepared them for college.

Students of color

- *High school counselor. Otherwise I wouldn't have even considered college. My parents didn't go to college and they're not from the United States, so I knew nothing*
- *My siblings told me that college has a huge, different from high school. There's a lot of homework in college. And I saw from my siblings that their homework is due next week, but it was long and need to think deeply.*
- *I jumped right into college when I graduated from high school, so I didn't have much to prepare for. I didn't want to go to college, but I figured that I would just try it out. I wasn't mentally ready or fully invested in college.*
- *High School*
- *The want and need to propel myself to the next level - career wise and to support my family.*
- *Working first before attending college*

White students

- *My work history. High School did not prepare me at all for what was ahead in school.*
- *Study skills*
- *High school.*
- *My independence and intelligence to figure things out and being strong willed/ determined to obtain some sort of degree. My parents support at the time helped as well*

- Previous college

Question #11: What assets or strengths do you have that help you succeed in school?
(Check all that apply.)

Assets or strengths that help student success	Overall	POCI	White	HTC	NHCC
Motivation: desire to succeed	63%	69%	58%	71%	60%
Self-awareness: the ability to accurately judge your own performance and behavior	57%	51%	18%	54%	58%
Persistence: willingness to continue to try in the face of challenge	56%	53%	58%	56%	58%
Self-efficacy: believing that you can achieve your goals	52%	51%	52%	56%	46%
Goal-setting: the process of deciding what you want to accomplish and devising a plan to achieve the result you desire	47%	44%	50%	48%	54%
Family Connectedness: family and friends provide encouragement, accountability, and help	37%	31%	42%	40%	38%
Help-seeking: knowing when help is needed, what type of help is needed, and how to get the help you need	36%	38%	34%	37%	40%
Collaboration: the ability to work effectively and respectfully with other students	36%	36%	36%	33%	42%
Belief in Giving Back: desire to use your resources to help others in your community	25%	27%	24%	23%	26%
Other	4%	4%	4%	6%	2%

Overall, the top assets for strengths reported to us by students were: motivation, self-awareness, and persistence. There were no significant differences between students of color and white students.

Question #12: What advice would you give a new college student? (Open-ended)

Please answer the following question if you left college and re-enrolled after a gap of at least one semester.

Advice from 218 previously enrolled college students to new college students...

- “seek out help and resources, specifically from professors or support staff at school”

- “be persistent”
- “work hard”
- “figure out what you want to get out of your college experience before enrolling”

Students were asked what advice they would give to a new college student. Both students that dropped out or stopped out, as well as students that did not dropout or stopout, shared similar advice. One quarter (25%) of dropout or stopout students, and 18% of other students suggested new college students seek out help and resources, specifically from professors or support staff at school. Fourteen percent of dropout or stopout students and 11% of other students would advise new students to be persistent. Twelve percent of dropout or stopout students and 11% of other students would advise new students to work hard. Nine percent of dropout or stopout students and 6% of other students would advise new students to figure out what you want to get out of your college experience before enrolling.

Quotes from students that have dropped out or stopped out

- *Know what you want from college. Don't go waste your money if you don't know what you want from it.*
- *Ask all the questions, find someone who's been to college, make sure you know your end goal.*
- *Make sure you are motivated and committed to attend college. It's hard work and dedication. Make sure to have friends to help push each other to work harder. Have fun!*
- *Don't go just because people tell you that's what you should do next. If the life you want to live five years down the road requires that you get a degree, at least figure out how to pay for it without going into debt.*
- *Talk to your advisors if you don't know what you're getting into. Ask about resources. How to access your email and checking on deadlines for assignments and doing group debates online. Textbooks are expensive, use online sources or borrow/rent textbooks for cheaper. Be an over achiever and do homework ahead of the deadline. It saves you time. Its mind boggling. Be proactive and do your best to time manage. The social life can wait.*
- *Really research your career before selecting a major. Consider job openings, salary and salary potential, outlook, cost of school, shadowing and internship experiences, personality of self, strengths and weaknesses, and reason you want to study in your given field.*
- *Don't over reach between work and college. Start basic and then add more*
- *Understand what your strengths are and reflect on those to choose a career that will play to your strengths.*
- *Take your time deciding what you want to do before diving in, sometimes college isn't always the best option.*
- *Don't take time off, it's harder to go back.*

Question #13: What changed between when you left college and when you re-enrolled that allowed you to start school again? (Open-ended)

Of the survey sample, a total of 38 students (17 students of color and 21 white students) responded to the question about changes that happened to allow them to reenroll. Forty-seven percent (47%) of students (59% of white students and about 38% of students of color) reported personal improvements allowed them to reenroll. Sixteen percent (16%) (24% of students of color and 6% of white students) reported financial improvements helped them reenroll.

Evaluator note: Caution should be used in interpreting these findings as it appears many people did not understand the question or responded to the question if it did not apply to them.

Students of color

- *I was more motivated.*
- *Personal stuff changed; no more problems.*

White students

- *I explored life and had people pressuring me to go back to school, so I did, (then) left again a semester later.*
- *I made a set goal and got back my motivation to continue in something.*

Faculty and Staff Results

**Question #1: What are the institutional reasons students dropout of your college?
(Choose all that apply)**

Reasons Students Dropout	All	HTC	NHCC
Failed one or more classes	67%	60%	77%
Other (please specify)	39%	41%	33%
College academic skills training (time management, studying, etc.) is not provided	37%	34%	38%
Cost of attending school is too high	36%	31%	43%
Not enough guidance (i.e. about which classes to take, etc.) provided	36%	31%	43%
Not enough financial aid offered	32%	24%	42%
Students are not made aware of academic, health, or basic need supports or resources	34%	31%	38%
Lack of intentional, ongoing, one-on-one interaction with students	34%	33%	35%
Not enough academic, health, or basic need supports, or resources offered	30%	27%	33%
Requiring remedial courses that don't count towards degree	26%	26%	27%
Classes are not meeting career needs	13%	10%	18%

HTC faculty and staff overall noted that failing one or more classes was the biggest institutional reason that students dropped out of college. The second highest reason was the "Other" answer choice. Even though the question was about *institutional* reasons why students dropped out,

45% of respondents who selected this option let us know that there were *student* reasons for dropping out. These reasons fell into two main categories, evenly split: students weren't prepared for the academic rigor of college, and other aspects of students' lives (work, family, childcare, transportation, medical) intruded in their studies. The third highest reason was that students were not receiving the college academic skills training they needed to succeed.

For NHCC, faculty and staff also thought the biggest institutional reason that students stopped out of college was that they failed one or more classes. The second highest reason was that the cost of attending school is too high. The third highest reason was that there was not enough guidance (i.e. about which classes to take, etc.) provided.

The top institutional reason faculty and staff at both colleges felt that students dropped out of both colleges was that they failed one or more classes. This was consistent with the data analysis in Method 1 of the student data that found that the highest probability of students dropping out of college was from students who had at least one unsuccessful class (<C) in their first term.

Question #2: What academic, health, and basic needs supports, or resources help students succeed at your college?

Academic, Health, and Basic Needs Supports	All	HTC	NHCC
Tutors, Writing Center, CSA, Math Resource Center	42%	37%	46%
Academic Advising Services	29%	21%	38%
Counseling Services	29%	22%	35%
TRiO Student Support Services	15%	11%	20%
Food Shelf	15%	4%	26%
Health Clinic	15%	1%	31%
Student Life	11%	10%	11%
Financial Aid or Work Study	9%	8%	10%
Community Connections	7%	1%	13%
Access Services (Disability)	7%	2%	11%
Faculty Office Hours and Support	6%	4%	8%

Other responses: Career Development Advising, Childcare, Diversity and Equity Office, Peer mentoring program, student crisis grants, staff that can direct students to services, access

coordinator staff, diversity and equity office, first year experience, housing, childcare, transportation, don't know, library and librarians, resources, small class size, CARE team, diversity In student body, hygiene supplies, fitness center, language and math supports, support groups, STEM, English language comprehension, ESOL classes, Student Senate, Lactation room, study groups, computer labs, developmental courses

The top supports or resources that help students succeed identified by both HTC and NHCC faculty and staff were Tutoring (including the Writing Center, CSA, and the Math Resource Center), Academic Advising Services, and Counseling Services.

Question #3: What are institutional barriers that make it difficult for students to succeed at your college?

Institutional Barriers	All	HTC	NHCC
Not enough advisors or counselors to provide guidance	20%	17%	24%
Student personal challenges (transportation, childcare, etc.)	21%	17%	25%
Not enough on-site supports for students	13%	9%	16%
Class scheduling can create problems for students	10%	17%	3%
Not aware of supports available	8%	6%	10%
Challenges with registration or enrollment	7%	10%	3%
Challenges with financial aid	7%	6%	8%
Complicated academic requirements to graduate	7%	8%	5%
Costs and affordability of college	7%	3%	10%
Confusing, biased, or ineffective policies	6%	4%	8%
Limited academic services for night class students	5%	6%	4%
Developmental courses	5%	8%	1%

Other responses: Students aren't in contact with enough supportive staff, Colleges have old technology, faculty/staff who don't support students, access to affordable textbooks, some faculty don't understand the challenges facing current students, open access means accepting students who are unprepared for college, online classes to complicated, semester is too long, staff turnover, email communication to students doesn't work, poor public transportation, need more online classes, lack of comprehensive orientation, no one is tracking early alerts, lack of culturally relevant curriculum, lack of faculty and staff diversity, money, lack of support from

administration, lack of connection with peers, classes are too large, lack of sense of belonging to school, socio-economic class barriers, different academic expectations between instructors, none.

The top 3 institutional barriers listed by HTC faculty and staff were: Not enough advisors or counselors, student personal challenges, and class scheduling that creates problems for students. The top 3 institutional barriers listed by NHCC faculty and staff were similar: Not enough advisors or counselors, student personal challenges, and not enough on-site supports. It's interesting to note that even though the question asked about institutional barriers, the #2 answer for both colleges related to student personal challenges as barriers.

Question #4: What assets or strengths help students succeed at your college?

Respondents listed both student and institutional assets and strengths. They are listed under separate tables.

Institutional Assets or Strengths	All	HTC	NHCC
Caring faculty and staff	43%	42%	44%
Academic supports	16%	12%	21%
Advising / guidance	11%	7%	16%
Student life, clubs, connections with the school	11%	7%	16%
Resources for Students (basic needs, etc.)	7%	0%	14%
TRiO Student Support Services	7%	4%	10%
Financial aid / Scholarships	5%	6%	7%

Other responses include: counseling, student services, having resources for teachers to assist students, HTC foundation grants, job placement, first year experience.

The top institutional assets identified by faculty and staff at both colleges were caring faculty and staff and academic supports (tutoring, etc.).

Student Assets or Strengths	All	HTC	NHCC
Persistence	8%	7%	8%
Motivation	8%	9%	5%

Stable family and support at home	8%	7%	8%
Time Management	7%	8%	5%
Studying Skills	5%	6%	4%
Help-seeking or connected to supports	5%	3%	8%
Resilience	5%	4%	5%

Other responses include: friends and classmates at the same college, accountability, academic or technical knowledge, financial backing, life skills, understanding college culture and process, delight or passion, adaptability, realistic assessment of workload, openness, communication skills, self-advocacy, orientation, curiosity, attention to detail, don't know, mentoring, organizational skills, comfortable with technology.

The top student assets or strengths identified by HTC faculty and staff were motivation and time management. The top student assets or strengths from NHCC faculty and staff were persistence, and stable family and support at home.

Question #5: At your college, what is the process for identifying and supporting students at-risk of dropping out?

Process for Identifying and Supporting At-risk Students	All	HTC	NHCC
EARS: Early Alert Referral System (NHCC)	26%	0%	54%
Don't know or not sure or no process	25%	24%	28%
Student of Concern Process (HTC)	20%	36%	0%
Faculty tracking grades and attendance, getting to know students, and reporting issues to advisors	21%	27%	15%
CARE Team: Campus Assessment, Referral, and Education (HTC)	13%	24%	1%
Advisors and counselors intervene with students on academic warning or probation	8%	9%	6%

Other answers: TRiO Student Support Services, BCRT: Behavioral Concerns and Response Team (NHCC), Students let faculty and staff know when they are having problems, HOPE program (NHCC), First Year Experience, Dean of Students

Early Alerts (NHCC) is an online system that allows instructors to identify and report students to advising, when they are in danger of failing their course and/or have poor attendance. Advisors reach out to students whom they get alerts about to intervene. From there, advisors can assess what needs to be done with the student to help them get back on track in their courses. Early

Alerts are not required, but staff encourage faculty to submit these reports, and reminders are sent out 2-3 times per semester. EARS reports are strictly academic concerns.

The Student of Concern (HTC) process is new this year. Instead of faculty and staff having to decide if a student concern they are noticing should be reported to Security, Counseling, Advising, Dean of Students, etc., they report it through one single reporting process online. This includes early alerts, which used to be a separate process for faculty or staff to identify students whose behavior may indicate they need an intervention (not attending class, failed all tests so far, turned in no assignments, appearance changed greatly, etc.).

The CARE team (HTC) consists of their two counselors, the Dean of Students, the Academic Support Programs Director (who oversees disability services and tutoring), and the Director of Campus Safety. They function as the Behavioral Intervention Team for the college.

BCRT (NHCC) is comprised of staff and faculty and administrators (who meet bi-weekly to discuss students of behavioral concern. They engage in proactive and collaborative approaches to identify, assess, and mitigate risks associated with students exhibiting concerning behaviors or thoughts. Faculty/staff submit a report using an icon that is on every desktop across campus.

The top answers given by HTC faculty and staff for how at-risk students are identified and supported were Student of Concern process, faculty tracking grades and attendance / getting to know students / reporting issues to advisors, don't know or not sure or no process, and the CARE Team. From NHCC faculty and staff the top answers included EARS, don't know or not sure or no process, and faculty tracking grades and attendance / getting to know students / reporting issues to advisors.

Each college's faculty and staff identified their school's process (Student of Concern Process, EARS) for identifying at-risk students. However, about a quarter of faculty and staff at both schools thought there was no process or was not aware of what it was. Some faculty and staff believed that faculty were responsible for identifying at-risk students.

Question #6: Which faculty or staff at your college know the students well enough to know if they are struggling? (Can be either a specific person or a faculty or staff position.)

Faculty or Staff Who Know Students Well	All	HTC	NHCC
Faculty	71%	74%	68%
Academic Advisors and Counselors	19%	18%	21%
Tutors, Writing Center, CSA, Math Resource Center	13%	15%	10%
Any Staff with Direct Student Contact	10%	10%	10%
TRiO Student Support Services Staff and Advisors	8%	9%	8%

Don't know	6%	3%	9%
EAP / ESOL Instructors	4%	3%	5%
Access Services (Disability)	3%	1%	5%
Academic Development Staff	3%	1%	5%

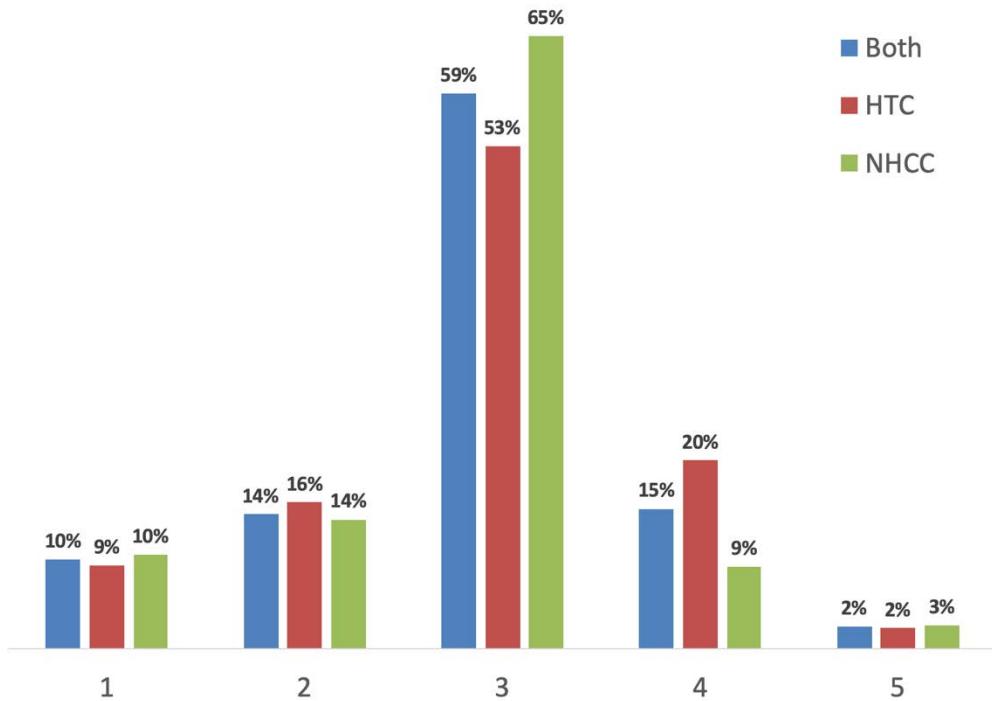
Other responses: Student Life, Deans, Not many, Career Development Staff, Honors Staff, Success Specialist, Latino Outreach, Student Services Staff, Director of Advising, Diversity and Equity Staff.

The top response from both colleges for who would know the students well enough to know if they were struggling was (all) Faculty. The other top responses include Academic Advisors and Counselors, and Tutors, Writing Center, CSA, Math Resource Center.

Question #7: On a scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 being Not Ready to 5 being Very Ready), from your experience, how well are students prepared for success (academic knowledge, academic skills, social and emotional skills) at your college?

	Both School	HTC	NHCC
Average Rating	2.9	2.9	2.8

On average, faculty and staff at HTC felt that students enrolled at their school were less prepared than the median value (*Somewhat, 3*) at 2.9. Faculty and staff at NHCC reported a similar average value (2.8). The chart below shows the distribution of responses (1 – 5).



Most respondents at both colleges felt that students were only *Somewhat* (3) prepared for success. There seems to be a “belief” gap among faculty staff that students are not prepared to be successful when they first enroll.

DISCUSSION from Method 2

Many students have “non-traditional” motivations and goals for enrolling in college. Only 61% of respondents reported their motivations to enroll in college were to earn a degree or certificate, or to get enough credits to transfer to a 4-year college or university. Almost 40% of students have other primary motivations. Colleges don’t currently ask about or know what students’ personal motivations for enrolling in college are. Students may require different guidance and supports to attain their individual goals.

Students dropout of college for many different personal and life event, academic, and financial reasons. Overall, 74% of students who previously dropped out responded that personal and life events influenced their leaving college, 65% said academic reasons, and 61% said financial reasons. The top personal reasons why students dropped out was the inability to balance school with work, and mental health challenges. The top academic reason students offered was the inability to enroll in the classes they needed because they were not offered at times that worked with their schedule. The specific financial reasons were all inter-related as tuition and fees costs, the amount of financial aid available, and willingness to take on loans are all different facets of financial ability. The top institutional reason faculty and staff at both colleges felt that students dropped out of both colleges was that they failed one or more classes. This was consistent with the data analysis in Method 1 of the student data that found that the highest probability of students dropping out of college was from students who had at

least one unsuccessful class (<C) in their first term. Other institutional barriers were not enough advisors or counselors or on-site supports.

Institutional (academic, health, and basic needs) supports are vital to students persisting in college. Students who had dropped out said that financial supports, and guidance and support from the school would have helped them stay in college. Students listed the top most helpful supports or resources as their instructor's office hours, the library, technology access, academic advising, financial advising, counseling, the fitness center, and tutoring services. Students identified that the lack of on-site supports on the campuses contribute to students' personal challenges (transportation, childcare, etc.). Faculty and staff surveyed at both colleges said that the most helpful institutional supports were caring faculty and staff, academic supports (tutoring, etc.), academic advisors and counselors, and tutoring services.

Student assets and strengths contribute to success in college. Students surveyed reported that motivation, self-awareness, and persistence were the top assets and strengths students should have to be successful in college. Similarly, faculty and staff surveyed identified similar strengths: persistence, motivation, and time management. Students who were interviewed told us that the advice they would give new students would be to seek out help and resources, be persistent, and to work hard.

Students are not always able to find classes that fits their transportation or work schedule. Problems with class scheduling was mentioned by student survey participants as something that could be improved to keep students from dropping out. This is true especially for students who struggle with transportation or who have limited availability because they are working. Faculty and staff also mentioned class scheduling as one of the top institutional barriers to student success.

Most students and many faculty and staff are not aware of existing early warning systems that identify at-risk students. Since almost half (46%) of survey participants said that they did not complete the semester they dropped out, colleges need to know which students are at risk before the end of the semester. HTC uses the Student of Concern process and NHCC the Early Alert Referral System to identify at-risk students. However, over half (53%) of students did not know what the colleges did to help students that were struggling. And a quarter (25%) of faculty and staff at both colleges also were unaware of the processes at their colleges.

Faculty and staff play an important role in supporting student success, but often use a deficit instead of asset-based approach. Faculty and staff believe that they are the top institutional asset at their colleges, and that they are the ones that know students the best to know if they are struggling. However, faculty and staff responses showed that respondents pointed out what students were lacking, even when asked about institutional barriers. Furthermore, they had a difficult time identifying students' assets and strengths.

Only about half of students receive the assistance and information they need to apply to and pay for college. In addition, when asked about experiences that helped them best prepare for college, about one quarter (23%) of students of color and 13% of white students reported that no experiences helped best prepare them for college.

There is a gap between students and faculty and staff on whether they believe that students are prepared to be successful when they first enroll. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of

students believed they were ready for college academically (English, math, science, skills in note-taking, paper-writing, test-taking, studying, research, etc.) compared to only 17% of faculty and staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS from Method 2

- **Increase the access to and quality of advising and counseling services:** Faculty and staff believe that there is not enough guidance for students. However, they also believe the academic advising and counseling are two of the more important supports offered by the colleges.
- **Increase the amount and quality of academic and personal supports:** Faculty and staff believe that the number one reason students dropout of school is that they fail one or more classes. They identified academic supports as an institutional asset, so alignment with student needs should be created. They also identified that the lack of on-site supports on the campuses contribute to students' personal challenges (transportation, childcare, etc.).
- **Figure out how to prepare students with college-level skills:** Faculty and staff believe that students are not prepared with the academic knowledge, academic skills, social and emotional skills to be successful. They identified persistence, motivation, and time management as top skills that students should have to be successful. Skills training can be offered as part of classes that first-year students enroll in.
- **Help faculty and staff view student's backgrounds and experiences from an asset-based lens instead of a deficit-based lens, to create student-centered institutional solutions for persistence.** Faculty and staff responses showed that respondents pointed out what students were lacking, even when asked about institutional barriers. As mentioned above, supports need to be created for students' personal needs, but just as important are to review institutional policies and processes that create barriers to student success. For example, faculty and staff identified that class scheduling can create problems for students. These and other processes can be re-examined and fixed.
- **Communicate to all faculty and staff so they are familiar with their own college's formal process to identify at-risk students.** Too many respondents were not aware of how at-risk students are identified.
- **Make sure that all faculty and staff understand their roles in supporting student success.** Faculty and staff believe that they are the top institutional asset at their colleges, and that they are the ones that know students the best to know if they are struggling. The colleges should create their own coordinated and unified effort to communicate to all faculty and staff, so they understand how they contribute individually to the larger effort to ensure students' succeeding beyond just the classroom.
- **Understand what students' goals are for enrolling and ensure that the proper supports are available to help them achieve those goals.** Colleges tend to count success as earning a degree or certificate or transferring to another institution of higher education. However, students responded that there were other motivations for enrolling in college including getting a higher earning job, learning new skills, starting a new career, trying out college, and advancing if their current jobs. Students may require different guidance and supports to attain their individual goals.
- **Improve ability to track at-risk students and understand the reasons why student's dropout of college.** Currently, at-risk students are tracked if faculty and staff report to the early warning systems at each college, or when they don't enroll in the subsequent semester. However, 50% of the survey participants said that they did not

complete the semester they dropped out, so there are many students who struggle during the semester and may not be identified. Understanding when and why students dropout of college will allow for more timely and targeted efforts to prevent future dropouts, and ensure that the academic, financial, and personal student supports offered align with needs expressed by students.

- **Reconsider scheduling of classes to accommodate all students.** Class scheduling was mentioned by survey participants as something that could be improved to help students from dropping out. Especially for students who struggle with transportation or who have limited availability because they are working, ensuring that they can attend a session of a class that they need is vital.
- **Ensure that programs designed to help at-risk students work and educate students about how they work.** Over half (53%) of all students of color said that the college did nothing to address students that were struggling. This may be because the programs that exist are not effective for all at-risk students, or most students do not know these programs exist.
- **Ensure that students have more access to the most helpful academic, health and basic supports.** Students surveyed reported that instructors' office hours, the library, computer labs, academic advising, financial aid advising, counseling, the gym, and work study were the most helpful supports. Improving access to these supports may include increasing the number of advisors, financial aid staff, and counselors available to students, improving the processes that connect students to financial aid and academic supports, increasing the hours that libraries and computer labs are open, and creating ways to encourage more students to connect to instructors outside of class.
- **Increase outreach efforts to assist students in applying and paying for college.** Under half of students received the help they needed to apply for college and to pay for college. Increase outreach efforts in high schools and the community to reach prospective students, or revamp orientation efforts to ensure that students have all the information they need. Especially consider how to address the gaps expressed by survey participants that indicates POCI students received less information, and were less satisfied with the information they received, about applying and paying for college than White students.
- **Address the college readiness skills perception gap between faculty and staff, and students.** Sixty-eight percent (68%) of students believed they were ready for college compared to 17% of faculty and staff. Create a framework to define what being prepared for college means and a way to assess it so that both faculty and staff, and students can be in alignment of how ready students are, and what additional supports they will require to be successful.
- **Engage current or past students to mentor new students on skills and mindsets that would help them become successful.** Survey respondents offered a lot of good advice they would give new students. Engaging current or past students as mentors may be an effective way to better communicate to new students what is necessary to be successful.

METHOD 3: STUDENT, FACULTY, AND STAFF INTERVIEWS

We conducted a set of one-on-one in-person interviews with 19 students, total at both colleges. The study participants were identified by a combination of the student leadership teams and by the interviews approaching students on campus. Before the interviews began, study participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights to privacy and provided their consent (See Appendix 3). Students were compensated with a \$25 gift card for participating. The answers provided by the interview participants were analyzed and qualitatively themed. A student interview guide can also be found in Appendix 4.

In addition, we conducted a set of one-on-one, in-person interviews with a total of 17 faculty and staff at the colleges. The study participants were identified, and interviews were set up by the Deans of Students at HTC and NHCC. Before the interviews began, study participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights to privacy and provided their consent. The first two methods provided us with a large amount of quantitative data and they informed methods 3 and 4. In addition, we believe these interviews provided us with a deeper insight into the barriers and assets of students at our local community colleges. Staff and faculty interview guide can be found in Appendix 5.

CHALLENGES with Method 3

As the data for Method 3 was being gathered, there were several challenges that may affect the validity of the results.

- *Recruitment of student interviewees:* Initially, students were recruited by our student leadership team, but because of a delay in the other methods, interviews were not conducted until months later. By then most of the students were not available for interviews. The remainder of the students were recruited by going to each campus and seeing who was available for an interview. The population of students who are (a) on campus but not in class, and (b) have time for a 60-minute interview, might provide a different sample than the overall student population.
- *Recruitment of faculty and staff interviewees:* The Deans of Students at HTC and NHCC selected the faculty and staff interviewees based on a list of roles the leadership team had come up with. There may be implicit biases in how these faculty and staff were selected.

DEMOGRAPHICS from Method 3

Student Demographics

The students sampled for this method represented a diverse population of gender, race/ethnicity, academic load, year, and other categories.

Demographics	%
Gender	

Male	37%
Female	63%
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	
Person of Color and Indigenous (POCI)	67%
White	33%
<i>Student Load</i>	
Full-time	67%
Part-time	33%
<i>Year</i>	
1 st year	63%
2 nd year or later	37%
<i>Other</i>	
Stopout student	28%
Academic or financial hold	40%
1 st generation student	47%

Faculty and Staff Demographics

For this study we used the following definitions for faculty and staff.

- *Faculty*: College instructors, professors, or lecturers, both for general education, and career and technical education, full-time and adjunct
- *Staff*: Non-teaching employees, usually providing administrative or support services for the college

Roles

Faculty and staff were selected from a pre-determined list of roles to ensure we had a good mix of those who would help us best understand the barriers and assets of college students that contribute to their success or action to leave college.

Role	HTC	NHCC
Career and Technical Education / Technical Faculty	2	0
General Education Faculty	0	2
Developmental Education Faculty	1	1
First Year Experience Faculty	0	1

Director of Academic Programs (Tutoring)	1	1
Financial Aid Advisor	1	1
Director of TRiO Programs	1	1
Academic / Enrollment Advisor	1	1
Counselor	1	1
ALL FACULTY AND STAFF	8	9

Experience

We asked participants how long they had worked in their role at their college or at a similar institution. There was a broad range of years of experience across both colleges. The results are listed below.

Years of Experience	HTC	NHCC
9 and under	1	3
10 - 19	4	2
20 - 29	1	4
30 and over	2	0
ALL FACULTY AND STAFF	8	9

Training and Education

We asked interviewees what training or education they had received for their roles at their college. General education faculty members had all received advanced degrees in the areas they taught in. Technical faculty either had advanced degrees or certificates in their area of instruction as well as many years of experience working in the field. Half of all staff also had a degree in education. Most staff had college degrees related to their roles; however, about a quarter of staff learned by on-the-job training.

Many of our interviewees mentioned that they did not receive any kind of coordinated departmental or college-wide training related to teaching or supporting students specific to their departments or colleges.

RESULTS from Method 3

Student Interview Results

Question #1: *What are your family's expectations about you attending college? How do they support you?*

We asked this question to better understand if students' families had expectations for them attending college and if they provided support.

Family expectations and support	Total	% (HTC)	% (NHCC)
Parents/family are supportive of decision to go to college	89%	90%	89%
Financial support / help with FAFSA	58%	50%	67%
Expectation of college graduation	42%	40%	44%
Parents helped remove life barriers (e.g. childcare, transportation, housing, etc.)	26%	20%	33%
Parents don't know how to support	16%	30%	0%

The overwhelming percentage of students we interviewed responded that their families were supportive of their decisions to attend college, and almost 40% expected them to graduate. Almost 60% of families provided financial support or help with FAFSA and just over a quarter (26%) helped remove life barriers.

However, there were also many students who told us that their families never talked to them about college. They had to learn about, make decisions about, and navigate their path to college all on their own, usually with help from high school teachers, counselors, or friends. Having PSEO experience was very helpful for students to understand what to expect from their college experience.

Students described supportive families in several ways. Many of the students' parents talked to them about college while they were growing up. One student told us his grandparents pushed him to enroll, and since they came here as refugees during the Vietnam war, he felt like he owed them to "not waste time but to be successful." Other students mentioned that their families are always checking in with them: how are classes going, are you able to pay your fees, are you having any difficulties, etc.

Some students described their families as "pushing" them towards areas of study (for example, computer-aided drafting, education, or vocational degree) or just to return to school after dropping out.

Some families were not supportive of their decisions. Interestingly, some families tried to dissuade students from attending community college because they thought they could "do better." Others didn't approve of their areas of study, wanting them to study something "useful" which meant the students had to pay for college themselves. And one family wanted the student to stay near home and find a job instead of going to college.

The support that family and significant others provided included helping to watch students' kids, so they could go to class or do homework or complete online classes. Many students said their families helped pay for tuition, health insurance, or allowed them to live at home rent-free. Transportation was another way that families supported students, either by sharing the use of a car, or by driving them to and from school each day.

Question #2: *Why did you decide to enroll in community college?*

We asked this question to understand why students decided to enroll in community college. The top three themes are highlighted overall and each college.

Reasons why community college	Total	% (HTC)	% (NHCC)
Degree program of interest	63%	80%	44%
More affordable	58%	60%	56%
Not ready for or working towards 4-year college	47%	20%	78%
Smaller community / better learning environment	37%	30%	44%
Close to home	37%	40%	33%
Figuring out interests / completing general education classes	32%	20%	44%
Diversity of student population	16%	10%	22%
Friends or family attend the college or recommend it	11%	10%	11%

The top reasons given by students about why they enrolled in a community college included that the school had the degree program they were interested in, it was more affordable, and they weren't ready for (or were working towards) a 4-year college or university. Students at HTC noted that it was closer to where they lived. Students at NHCC included that their campus was a smaller community and better learning environment, and they were still figuring out their interests or completing general education classes.

Students also talked about how the student population at both colleges reflected racial and ethnic diversity, "there were lots of people like me", and life stage diversity, "especially since I'm a mom." The smaller size and enrollment of the colleges made it feel more of a community than a big university. Students talked about being able to make personal connections much easier and felt that the school focused more on students.

Several students told us they had originally enrolled in another Twin Cities Metro community college, but their experiences there were not positive (not supported by advisors, too big, academic suspension), so they enrolled at HTC or NHCC because of recommendations from friends, a specific degree program (pre-engineering, culinary arts, horticulture), or it was closer to home.

Many students told us they chose to go to the local community colleges because of their interest in the degree programs offered. Students at HTC mentioned that they specifically wanted to attend a vocational institution to learn hands-on skills and because it offered a greater chance to get a job due to institutional connections with industry.

Students perceived that the transition from high school or working to community college was an easier one than if they had gone directly to a 4-year university. Instead they planned to start at a community college and transfer later. Finally, some students said that their families pushed them to go to community college.

Question #3: *Why did you decide to enroll full-time or part-time?*

We asked this question to understand the reasons why students decided to enroll full-time or part-time.

Reasons why enrolled FT or PT	Total	% (HTC)	% (NHCC)
<i>Full-time</i>	68%	60%	78%
Want to finish as fast as possible	37%	50%	22%
Required for international students	11%	0%	22%
School Recommended	5%	10%	0%
Tuition Financed by Work	5%	10%	0%
<i>Part-time</i>	32%	40%	22%
To accommodate work	21%	30%	11%
Not ready to be full-time student	5%	0%	11%

Students enrolled full-time mostly to finish as fast as possible. Students enrolled part-time mostly to accommodate work. However, the reasons why students could go full-time or needed to go part-time instead were much more nuanced.

Students who went full-time had financial support from financial aid, parents, or workers compensation. However, some full-time students still had to work part-time to have enough money to live. For some majors, full-time load is the only option. A few students started off full-time but then realized they couldn't handle the load, so they dropped one or more classes to more manageable schedule.

Some students told us that they had to work because the financial aid process was too confusing or difficult, so they chose to only go part-time so they could work to pay for tuition. Some students worked up to 10 hours a day to make ends meet and then would have to study

late into the night. One student decided to go part-time to help her family take care of her younger primary-school aged sister.

Question #4: *In what ways have you interacted with the college system?*

We asked this question to understand which parts of the college system that students interact with the most. The top three themes are highlighted overall and each college.

Interaction with college system	Total	% (HTC)	% (NHCC)
Student clubs / Student Life	68%	50%	89%
Advising	58%	50%	67%
Libraries	37%	40%	33%
Work Study	32%	30%	33%
Tutoring	32%	0%	67%
Computer Labs	26%	30%	22%
TRiO	26%	20%	33%
Financial Aid	26%	30%	22%
Professors' Office Hours	21%	20%	22%
Peers	21%	20%	22%

Other: Career Resource Center, Gym / Fitness Center, Orientation, Learning Center, Counselors, Disability Services,

The top answers given by students were: student clubs and student life, advising, and libraries. Students at NHCC also interacted with tutoring services.

Students that joined clubs, usually joined affinity groups (Latino club, anime club, etc.) or clubs associated with their programs of study (culinary club, horticulture club, etc.). Others were involved with student senate or participated in student life activities or the campus center.

Many students mentioned that they didn't have time for clubs or activities, especially because of work. They would get their class work done and leave campus. And even if they need to use resources, it was mostly at the beginning of the semester. Some students didn't interact with resources because they never needed help: students relied on themselves to find answers. Other students felt that staff at the colleges didn't provide helpful assistance, so they never sought it. One student mentioned he had no interest in joining any outside activities.

Some students talked about need help with technology. They used the library to rent computers or used the computer labs on campus a lot. Some were new to using cloud-based services and the college's system, but had difficulty finding out where to get help.

Four students identified TRiO as the part of their college they interact with the most. They mentioned that they were able to work with their own TRiO advisors who they can talk to multiple times a semester to help them choose classes, keep them on track, and assist with applying for scholarships and programs such as Urban Scholar. One student summarized her experience with TRiO: "probably the smartest decision I've made here because no one close to me has gone to college". However, one student mentioned she applied to the TRiO program but was never contacted.

Many students also talked about their interaction (or lack of) with the financial aid department. Students described working with financial aid as a "task", with one student saying that "after filling out the form, they keep sending it back, but the online and hard copy versions of the form are not the same; my dad is on disability, and there are not options for that in the online form. It's 50/50 in terms of how helpful the financial aid staff have been, sometimes they are helpful, sometimes I feel like I'm getting the run-around." Another student mentioned he only goes to his friend in the financial aid office for help because he trusts him. Several other students avoid talking to anyone in the financial aid office. One student mentioned that she "has no idea the status of my FAFSA. I'm too afraid to ask anyone, so I just kind of wait it out."

Students also talked about how they interacted with academic advisors but were split on whether it was helpful or not. Some students said that advisors were very helpful in finding the resources they needed or to map out the right classes so they could graduate. Other students said that the advising center was only partially helpful, that they didn't understand prerequisites or how to transfer credits.

Question #5: *What are you worried about this semester that would prevent you from succeeding?*

We asked this question to understanding what students were concerned about currently that might affect their ability to be successful. The top three themes are highlighted overall and each college.

What are you worried about?	Total	% (HTC)	% (NHCC)
Finals / Finishing classes	37%	30%	44%
Finding a job or graduate school after graduation	26%	10%	44%
Finances or financial aid	26%	30%	22%
Balance between work and school	21%	20%	22%
Family and housing	16%	10%	22%

Online classes	16%	10%	22%
Degree pathway is unclear	11%	10%	11%

Overall, students that were interviewed reported that finals or being able to finish their classes was their biggest concern. Since the interviews were scheduled the last month of the semester, this may have biased their answers since finals were so near. The other concerns noted were finding a job or graduate program after graduation, and their finances. Students at HTC were also concerned about the balance between work and school.

Many students brought up financial issues they were worried about, mostly about how they would pay for school the following semester. These distractions affected their focus on their current studies. For one student, because of his financial situation, he had to live at home, which caused additional stress because of poor family relationships. Problems applying for financial aid was another related concern of students, especially if it had caused problems in previous semesters. They were concerned about not filling something out right or that some important information was missing.

One student mentioned that she was most worried about having teachers who didn't understand her situation: "A teacher who doesn't understand I don't always have access to a computer, having to do homework on a phone...not understanding my home life, and why I may have to turn in homework late...not understanding that I live in an old house that has issues with electricity, the lack of a stable home...not understanding that I have to work as a manager at Burger King and that can be stressful."

Students talked about being worried about taking online classes, especially having technical issues logging on. One student said that online homework is hard; he would rather physically write it out. Another student said she took one online class and hated it, and she had to drop it.

Some students talked about being worried about mental health issues popping up during a stressful semester. One student talked about the stress of being only one of the few women in her computer aided drafting class.

Other students were concerned about graduating or transferring to another institution. Specifically, they were worried about getting the right classes they needed, and that the course recommendations from advising they received were frustrating, with lots of overlap.

Question #6: *What are some of the barriers you've had to overcome to attend class and do well in school?*

We asked this question to students to understand some of the barriers they have personally dealt with. The top three themes are highlighted overall and each college.

Barriers Students Overcome	Total	% (HTC)	% (NHCC)
Difficulties with transportation	37%	30%	44%

Balancing work and school	32%	50%	11%
Unclear program requirements	16%	10%	22%
Difficulties with online classes / Technology issues	16%	30%	0%
Difficulties with tuition / finances	11%	10%	11%
Bad weather	11%	20%	0%
Lack of motivation	11%	0%	22%
Language barriers	11%	0%	22%

Other: Lack of face-to-face communication with professors, campus too far away, holds, childcare, mental health, class scheduling

The top barriers that students said they had faced included difficulties with transportation, balancing work and school, unclear program requirements and difficulties with online classes or technology issues. Students from NHCC also identified lack of motivation and language barriers.

Students told us that their transportation problems were mostly because they couldn't drive (no driver's license) so they had to take the bus for over an hour each way. If the bus made them late over 15 minutes, some instructors would consider them absent. Some students could drive but lived over an hour from school or had to share a car with other family members. While she was at another college, one student had a car, but got into an accident so she had to take public transportation. The harassment that she received at downtown bus stops was so bad, that was one of the reasons she decided to transfer to one of our local community colleges.

Students also talked about balancing work and school. One student was a manager at a fast food restaurant and had to be at work more than she liked if staffing was low or someone didn't show up. Other students talked about having to figure out which classes they needed to devote more of their time to and not procrastinating doing the work. Another student said that last semester he struggled with paying for tuition because he didn't have a job, but this semester he struggles with finding enough time for school but is more secure financially.

The online struggles that students talked about included the professors of online courses not always having office hours. Students who have mostly online classes are not on campus very much, which makes it harder for them to connect with other students and with campus resources. Some students would rather have in person classes, but online ones are the only ones that are offered or that fit their schedules. Students with both online and in person classes found it hard to balance them both since they require different skill sets.

Mental health issues were talked about in several interviews. Even if services are available on campus or in the community, students don't always reach out for help. Not every student has insurance, so they tend to deal with poor mental health by themselves.

Question #7: What types of support systems do you have?

We asked this question to understand from students which support systems they had access to. The top three themes are highlighted overall and each college.

Support Systems	Total	% (HTC)	% (NHCC)
Family or Significant Other	84%	90%	78%
Friends or Classmates	79%	70%	89%
Tutors or Learning Centers	47%	40%	56%
Faculty or Staff	42%	50%	33%
Self (Motivation, Confidence, etc.)	42%	60%	22%
Advisors and Counselors	16%	20%	11%
Diversity of student population	16%	10%	22%
Friends or family attend the college or recommend it	11%	10%	11%

Other: Disability Services, Computer Lab, High School Teachers, Health Clinic, Food Shelf, Qualified Rehabilitation Consultant

Students interviewed responded that their top supports systems were family (or significant other), friends or classmates, and tutors or learning centers. Students HTC also mentioned themselves (motivation, confidence, etc.) as one of their top support systems. Connections with family, friends, and even faculty or staff were some of the top answers. Institutional supports such as tutoring, advisors, and counselors were also important support systems.

When students talked about families and significant others being important support systems, they talked about them providing motivation to persist in college, modeling work ethic, not judging, providing supportive criticism, pushing them to be better students and workers. Families and significant others also provided tangible supports, such as helping with tuition, housing, living expenses (gas, food, etc.), and school supplies (laptop). Students who are dependents also need their parents to help when applying for financial aid.

Friends and classmates were also an important support system. Some students said that they would rather go to people they know for help instead of the tutoring centers, or that study groups with peers were better than using tutors. It was easier and more comfortable to find peers to study with who would understand them (same race or ethnicity, language, or affinity club) than academic support staff. Most students talked about how friends were a vital emotional support group. They talked about being able to go out with friends and vent about issues or share about how things are going.

Some students said that they only relied on themselves to handle problems. These students told us they don't like to ask for help and they are self-motivated to succeed in college. They worked hard to pay for their tuition and didn't always take advantage of financial aid.

The institutional support systems that students mentioned included the wrap-around services offered by Disability Services and the TRiO program. Students said TRiO advisors have a smaller case load, work with students for the whole time they are enrolled, get to know the students well, and hold students to high standards. For students without medical insurance, the medical clinic was mentioned as a place that is free for active students and can prescribe medication. One student said, "It's saved my butt. When I first moved here, I didn't have insurance. I had a few bad sinus infections. It was more affordable than urgent care."

Students also pointed out that many of their instructors were helpful and available when contacted in person or via email. However, some students said that not all faculty care about students.

Question #8: *What assets or strengths help students succeed?*

We asked this question to understand from students what they felt were assets and strengths that were important to student success. The top three themes are highlighted overall and each college.

Student Assets or Strengths	Total	% (HTC)	% (NHCC)
Help-seeking	63%	70%	56%
Motivation/focus	58%	60%	56%
Time management	37%	60%	11%
Confidence	32%	20%	44%
Self-direction / be yourself	32%	40%	22%
Good study habits / organization	32%	20%	44%
Connection to campus / sense of community	26%	30%	22%
Support from family and friends	26%	20%	33%
Work-life balance	21%	40%	0%
Peer network	21%	20%	22%
Preparation for coursework	16%	20%	11%

Engagement	16%	10%	22%
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Other: financial planning, self-care, setting goals, staff/faculty support, self-care

Students identified help-seeking, motivation or focus, and time management as the top three assets of strengths that lead to success. Students at NHCC also identified confidence and good study habits or organization. All the assets and strengths mentioned in the interview are important for students to be successful in college. The questions therefore are whether students are expected to have these assets and strengths *before* enrolling in college, and where are they expected to learn them?

Many students talked about being staying true to and believing in themselves as important strengths. They told us that they “don’t think about what anybody else is saying” and thought for themselves instead of just doing what other people told them (since no one else has your best interests in mind or understands you as much as yourself). Some students mentioned that it was important to be self-motivated, to develop a drive to go to college for yourself, to take responsibility for yourself, to be proactive in your education, and not to expect others to tell you what to do. Students also said that it was important to have confidence in yourself and your abilities. School becomes easier when your personal aptitudes matched with your classes. Students felt that they could do more than they originally thought when they had confidence. One student said she learned to believe in herself because no one else believed in her (except her mom) when she was growing up.

Students listed having prior experience as an asset. Students mentioned that doing well in high school gave them confidence in college. High school was also a place where many students learned the skills they needed to succeed. Some older students have previous college experience, so they’ve had opportunities to learn the skills they need. Finally, some students talked about their prior or current work experience running their own businesses or working for an employer that helped them develop strengths they could transfer to their schooling.

Some students talked about the importance of connecting with other peers as an important asset. They recommended getting to know others so that when students need help, they would know who to reach out to. Since students aren’t always self-aware when problems crop up, or might be too embarrassed to ask for help, if their peers know them well they would be able to notice when they were struggling. Some students said they would prefer getting help from peers rather than a tutor.

Students talked about managing their time well as a key strength. This included making time for work and school and scheduling meticulously for both, as well as taking breaks for self-care. One student said that he spends more time using a paper planner to set those schedules. Students mentioned being very disciplined and being realistic about what needs to happen to achieve success.

Question #9: *What else would help you or other students succeed?*

We asked students this question to see what other ideas they had that would help students succeed. The suggestions fell into 4 basic categories as listed below.

Advertise existing student support resources so that students are aware of them

- *There are plenty of resources here, but not a lot of people use them.*
- *Tell students about the food cupboard.*
- *Tell students about the gym: it's really beneficial.*
- *Advertise resources. Post about crisis resources in bathrooms. Post about academic supports on bulletin boards.*
- *The Learning Resource Centers are helpful.*
- *Tell other students to utilize the writing center as a resource.*
- *Orientation was really helpful and different from the open house.*
- *TRiO is a big support.*
- *ESL programs help students to read, write, and speak for the first two semesters.*
- *Nothing. HTC has already done a lot at bringing community together: having pizza night, popcorn day, blood donation. Feels like students are getting what they need to be successful here.*

Add new, or increase or improve existing student support resources

- *Provide more counselors or mental health therapists for students. Went through post-partum depression after having children. Need more awareness around how serious mental health is.*
- *Open the clinic for longer hours.*
- *Increase mental health supports. Many students struggle with anxiety or depression.*
- *Hire more counselors.*
- *Having an on-campus health clinic would be nice.*
- *College could provide housing resources for students struggling with money for housing.*
- *Provide more resources for on-campus child care. Usually instructors allow students to bring kids if childcare falls through. And it would be good for kids to be on campus.*
- *Having activities during finals week (maybe more with student senate) to help de-stress students. Workshops to learn how to study for finals or how to take a break.*
- *Financial aid office should spend more time with each student to explain more thoroughly about what needs to be done.*
- *Many in my program who are leaving would stay if they had better career advising, to be able to answer the question, "How will this benefit my career?"*
- *Help finding a getting a job: interview practice and job preparation.*
- *Better way for students to interact with each other, like BEAM, honors, Latino clubs.*

Academic or enrollment improvement suggestions

- *More individual study rooms for quiet studying.*
- *More class options: for example, different times or days, online or in-person.*
- *Better placement testing*
- *Can tell that faculty retention is poor; have more senior faculty would be helpful.*
- *Tutorials on how to use things: how to use financial aid, how to access D2L, how to access Office on email, how to utilize resources online and on campus, how to add/drop classes, applying for grants and scholarships and outside resources, able to get links and ways to access those and on the website (by degree), instead of finding them on their own.*
- *School needs to understand that most students who are struggling with personal issues has nothing to do with the college.*
- *Being able to review classes: descriptions don't match up with what the classes really are like.*

Personal life skills advice

- *Have a plan B so you have something to fall back on.*
- *Do homework on time. Participate in class. Turn in homework even if you don't think it's good.*
- *Take responsibility for yourself; don't expect people to tell you what to do. Be proactive in your education.*
- *You must involve yourself in school.*
- *Tell students that perseverance and patience is the key to being successful here.*

Question #10: For stopout students: What were the reasons you had to leave school? What changed so that you were able to return?

We asked this question to students who had stopped out to understand what had changed after they had dropped out that allowed them to re-enroll.

- *I struggled with maturity. Now I am personally older and wiser and have more support in my life.*
- *Parents were going through a divorce and I needed to help my family. I had the financial ability to come back.*
- *I had an academic hold at Mankato State. I didn't have a goal; was taking only general education classes. When I was ready to start taking classes again, the hold was removed easily.*
- *I was taking general education classes at Anoka Ramsey and wanted to take a break. I came to HTC because they had the child development classes that I wanted.*
- *I dropped out at a local before due to depression and anxiety attacks while working full-time and doing school. Took a 3-year break. I came back because I hated my job and wanted to leave for a better paying position.*
- *I didn't do well at St. Cloud State. Was on academic probation for 3 semesters before I dropped out. I wasn't ready to be a student. Dealt with mental health issues and grew up before I came to NHCC for school.*

The six students who did stopout gave us several different reasons for being able to come back. Mostly, they talked about personal issues (maturity, family issues, mental illness, etc.) that they dealt with before re-enrolling. A few had academic challenges which led to holds.

Faculty and Staff Interviews

Question #1: How was your role meant to impact student success?

We asked this question to understand better how faculty and staff saw their role in impacting student success. The top three themes are highlighted overall and each college.

Impact Student Success	All	HTC	NHCC
Connect students to resources	47%	63%	33%
Help students stay on track academically	35%	50%	22%

Help students navigate college culture and processes	35%	50%	22%
Provide college readiness skills instruction for students	29%	25%	33%
Help students figure out career goals and how to reach them	24%	25%	22%
Engage students to build relationships with them	12%	0%	22%
Provide a place/person where students can get all their needs addressed	12%	25%	0%
Create a safe space for students	12%	0%	22%
Provide academic and technical instruction	6%	13%	0%

Overall, faculty and staff felt that their role was meant to impact student success by guiding, advocating, and equipping students. This included: connecting students to resources, helping students to stay on track academically, and to help students navigate college culture and processes. Many faculty and staff at NHCC also added that their role was to provide college readiness skills instruction for students.

All interviewees were able to articulate how their role specifically impacted student success.

- Academic advisors talked about how their role was to guide students academically.
- Financial aid advisors talked about helping students get assistance to pay for school.
- Counselors talked about career counseling, and helping students deal with more serious personal and academic issues.
- Tutoring program directors talked about providing academic supports for students.
- Faculty talked about instructing students.
- Developmental course and First Year Experience instructors talked about helping students to be prepared to handle the academic and social rigors of college.
- TRiO program directors talked about providing the wrap-around services (advising, tutoring, etc.) they offer their students.

However, many faculty and staff also discussed how their roles have changed over the years as student needs have changed. Faculty talked about how they now do academic advising, mentoring, and helping students develop life and academic skills. Staff discussed how they sometimes are asked by students who trust them to advocate for them and provide supports beyond their roles.

Many faculty and staff indicated that as the colleges have hyper-specialized roles and require students to go to multiple offices to remedy multiple issues, students prefer to go to people they trust to seek help, even if it's not the "right" people. And since students mostly interface with instructors, many of the faculty we interviewed felt that they had to do more than just instruct a subject matter, but also provide additional support for students.

Question #2: *What barriers to student success does your role address?*

We asked this question to understand what barriers to student success our interviewees felt their roles addressed. The top three themes are highlighted overall and each college.

Barriers to Student Success Your Role Addresses	All	HTC	NHCC
Personal student barriers (transportation, medical, family, housing, mental health, etc.)	82%	63%	100%
Financial barriers	59%	50%	67%
Not understanding college culture and expectations, or processes	53%	50%	56%
Not prepared with college skills	41%	50%	33%
Difficulties with class selection, scheduling, or enrollment	35%	38%	33%
Structural racism	12%	0%	22%

Faculty and staff at both colleges indicated that the top barriers to student success their roles addressed were personal student barriers, financial barriers, and not understanding college culture, expectations, or processes. As the high percentage indicates, many faculty and staff regardless of role felt that they had a role in helping students address their personal barriers, as well as barriers specific to their institution such as college culture, expectations, or processes, guidance with class selection, and structural racism.

Question #3: How do you measure/evaluate how you are impacting student success?

We asked this question to understand how interviewees were measuring the impact of their role on student success. The top three themes are highlighted overall and each college.

How Impact on Student Success is Measured	All	HTC	NHCC
Anecdotal or informal evidence	47%	50%	44%
No measurement or evaluation	35%	38%	33%
Surveys and assessments	29%	25%	33%
Attendance or grades	24%	25%	22%
Federal reporting requirements (TRiO, Perkins, etc.)	18%	13%	22%

Anecdotal or informal evidence: About half of all interviewees answered that they measured the impact of their role on student success by considering anecdotal or informal evidence. This

includes students coming back to talk about the impact, tracking students via LinkedIn, hearing from faculty about what produces impact, noticing that students don't return for tutoring services, and seeing students succeed in leadership positions.

No measurement or evaluation: Over one-third of interviewees responded that they had no measurement or evaluation data for them to assess the impact that their roles had on student success. Many of these faculty and staff did mention that it would be very valuable if they were given this information.

Surveys and assessments: Over a quarter of interviewees said that they used information collected from surveys or assessments to measure the impact of their role on student success. However, there was no consistent process used to gather data. Each faculty or staff who mentioned they had a survey or assessment created their own or their department created their own.

Attendance or grades: About a quarter of the interviewees (only from faculty who teach courses, and tutoring program) mentioned that they use attendance (whether students stay in class) and grades (how they are doing academically) to track how they impact student success. This is limited only to how students are performing in a faculty member's specific class (or in the tutoring program).

Federal reporting requirements: Federally funded programs (for example, TRiO) are required to report outcomes, but these were mentioned more as a fact that they existed than they were being used to gauge impact internally.

In addition, there was mention of surveys that have been completed in past years, but nothing consistently done year after year. Also, one study on student success by Institutional Research was completed but results not released to faculty and staff.

There seems to be a lack of college-wide performance measurement feedback systems for all faculty and staff to evaluate how they are impacting student success.

Question #4: *What are institutional assets that contribute to student success at your college?*

We asked this question to understand from our interviewees, which institutional assets at their college helped students succeed. The top three themes are highlighted overall and each college.

Institutional Assets	All	HTC	NHCC
Faculty	71%	88%	56%
Student support services (FYE, TRiO, Student Life, EARS, CARE, etc.)	53%	25%	78%
Facilities (location, technology, comfort, cleanliness)	47%	38%	56%

Resources for students (academic and personal)	41%	50%	33%
Staff	41%	63%	22%
Advising	29%	13%	44%
Community (small-town feel)	24%	38%	11%
Students' voices are heard	18%	25%	11%
Connection to industry and careers	18%	38%	0%
Counseling services	18%	0%	33%
Variety and quality of academic and technical programs	18%	13%	22%

Other answers: Diversity in staff and student body, developmental courses, FYE courses, administration, prayer rooms, professional development of faculty

Caring Faculty and Staff: Interviewees at HTC talked mostly about caring faculty and staff as the biggest asset at their college. They felt that many people working at HTC listen to students and do what they can to support them, which creates a small-town community feel to the college. They take the time to ensure that students are taking the proper classes and are on the right path to graduation. This happens because faculty spend the most time with the students and should know them the best. Many staff, especially those that have been at HTC for a long time, truly invest time in students, even beyond their role. Like HTC, many interviewees from NHCC felt that the faculty and staff at their college were passionate about helping students succeed. They felt that students could go up to anyone and get the support they needed. Specifically, interviewees mentioned that advisors are helpful and care about students and the administration tries to gather student input on different decisions they make.

Student Support Services: TRiO and the Student Life department were mentioned as assets at HTC that work together to provide supports and programs that help students “stick around campus” and create a sense of belonging to the school. Disability Services was also discussed by some interviewees as an asset to students who can use their services to get the accommodations they need to be successful in their classes. For first generation students who may not understand the college culture and expectations, there are summer bridging programs available through TRiO or First Year Experience. Interviewees at NHCC identified student support services as the college’s greatest asset. Access (disability) Services was mentioned by many people as an exemplar because they felt the staff listen to the needs of the student and provide individualized attention: “they provide resources that individual needs to be able to earn a degree, they act as a liaison between the student and the instructor”. Student Life was also identified as an important college asset, engaging students by providing activities to the school to build campus life: clubs for different groups, such as immigrants, LGBTQ, and students of color. For new students, Welcome Day is very successful in connecting them to information and departments, and the First Year Experience class helps them can learn critical skills to

navigating college. Other services mentioned as excellent were TRiO, the Diversity Office, and counseling services.

Facilities: Interviewees at NHCC also talked about how the campus facilities are an asset to students. It is accessible by bus line, and there are many spaces on campus dedicated to supporting students: the multicultural room, a meditation room, the upstairs of the student center, there are lots of spaces for students to get together to study or de-stress, the student health clinic (where students can get help for non-life-threatening medical needs), and the cafeteria (where students are able to get different food options).

Resources for Students: Interviewees also felt that there are many resources available for students. There are resource closets that provide free necessities for students and community resource lists that provides information on where to access housing, food shelves, etc.

Technical Programs: Faculty and staff interviewees at HTC also talked about the technical programs at the college being an asset, especially having unique programs like plastics engineering and landscape, horticulture, and greenhouse. Students are not only able to study liberal arts, but to work in teams and “get their hands dirty”. They also noted the technical faculty’s connection to industry and employers that facilitates students getting jobs. These faculty have a “good feel for where the jobs are, what (employers) are looking for, and the guiding and mentoring piece.” Employers are closely connected to the college and serve on advisory boards.

Diverse Community: The rich cultural diversity helps students feel welcome. Students of color can see people who look like them on campus, therefore creating a feeling that they are a part of the campus when they come here.

Question #5: *What are institutional barriers to student success at your college?*

We asked this question to understand from interviewees what they felt were institutional barriers to student success at their college. The top three themes are highlighted overall and each college.

Institutional Barriers	All	HTC	NHCC
Faculty and institution do not understand, represent, or accommodate students and student needs	76%	63%	89%
Advising and counseling (availability and number of, and ineffective coordinated practice)	59%	75%	44%
Institution does not prepare students to understand the college culture, expectations, or processes	59%	63%	56%
Financial aid process is too complex for students to understand	53%	50%	56%
Students are required to navigate the maze of student services on their own, with no guidance or trusted advisor	41%	75%	11%
The relationship between administration, staff, and faculty can cause tension, and lead to turnover	35%	25%	44%

Requiring non-credit earning developmental courses	24%	25%	22%
Ineffective orientation	18%	38%	0%
Business needs of the college compete with the academic needs of the students	18%	38%	0%
Lack of coordination of processes across the college that affect students	18%	13%	22%

Other: Classrooms in disrepair, online courses too difficult

Faculty and institution do not understand, represent, or accommodate students and student needs: Interviewees at HTC mentioned that some faculty are not accommodating with students' personal issues, for example, if they need to change classes in the middle of the semester because of work schedule changes. Some faculty have an "old-school mentality, expecting students to be at a high level, but not necessarily willing to help students get there." As an institution, it can feel as though the expectation is that students make school the priority in their lives, but the reality is that students' lives come first. To see those students, succeed, the school must be able to tell those students that they understand their life situations and will help them find supports so they can be successful at school. And yes, the institution does strive to understand students' situations, but there are too many gaps (caused by faculty who aren't empathetic) that students fall through. One department chair said that it was hard to get part-time adjunct faculty to understand this because they are not around campus much. There was little time for professional development or for those instructors to develop relationships with students. At NHCC, interviewees talked about similar struggles. The demographics of faculty at the college don't represent the diversity of the student population, which can make it difficult for students to believe their instructors understand their lives (vs. thinking that they are seen as "not working hard enough"). This disconnect in awareness can lead to punitive and uncaring actions on the part of faculty, and students not being motivated to learn in that class as well. The tenure system and unionization of faculty can make it difficult for faculty of color to hold power and make changes to the traditionally white-dominated system. Not all faculty are trained in how to teach a diverse student population at the community college level. An example would be that many students from socio-economic backgrounds are more used to an oral culture of receiving information versus the more Western traditional print culture. Do instructors know how to include more oral formats for teaching when they have students who learn better that way?

Access to guidance from academic advisors and counselors: Interviewees at HTC talked about how they felt there were not enough advisors to help students navigate through enrollment issues. And there is only 1 counselor on each of the college campuses, which means the hundreds of students with academic warnings and financial holds must connect with that one person only. Similar, any career counseling support needed by students must go through the 1 counselor on campus, not the academic advisors. Interviewees at NHCC mentioned that many students are completely disconnected from their assigned advisors. The advisors are the "front line of defense in engaging students. They do a lot; no one works on campus like (they) do." However, a high turnover rate and being understaffed makes it difficult to give students the quality of support they need. Currently, there are two counselors, which interviewees thought was about half as many as needed for the student population and their counseling needs.

Institution does not prepare students to understand the college culture, expectations, or processes: Interviewees at HTC talked about how college can be very different than any other system that first-time students have ever faced. And if students don't understand how the system works won't be able to stay on task without guidance. Where do students get prepared to navigate the college system? Only the online orientation is mandatory, which does not provide any feedback or ability to answer questions students might have. There is so much information that new students need to be aware of to be successful in college. And as online classes become more prevalent, many students do not do well in an environment where they are not able to get instant feedback to their questions. This is especially true for students who have never taken an online course before. Faculty at NHCC interviewed shared that many students don't really understand how to navigate financial aid, wait until the last minute to register for classes or miss it altogether, don't know the policy about when they can drop classes without penalty, etc. Much of that information is given during orientation, but there is so much talked about that they may not understand. Oftentimes, policies aren't the barrier, but the student's (lack of) understanding of the policy. When students aren't aware of how college functions (ex. textbooks, technology, etc.) it should be on the faculty to teach them, not just focusing on the subject matter.

Financial aid process too complex: At HTC, students can apply for and receive financial aid without speaking with a financial aid advisor to make sure they understand all the stipulations that come with the award. Many students are not aware of the consequences of dropping a class while receiving financial aid, which can lead to holds that prevent them from enrolling the next semester. Financial aid doesn't know that students withdraw until professors report it, so there is no opportunity to communicate with the student. During student orientation, there is only 5 minutes allocated to financial aid. Students must sign up for outreach sessions to receive more information about financial aid; there are only spots for 10 students each session. There is no mechanism for the financial aid department to contact students to inform them about financial aid until they complete their FAFSA and name the school as a prospective destination. There is 1 financial aid advisor at each campus. And financial aid support is especially important when the average student credit card debt is \$3,000 and the average third year student debt is \$30,000. Interviewees at NHCC told us that the entire financial system of the college, including tuition and financial aid, can be so complex to navigate, that it creates profound inequities for first-time or first-generation students. One interviewee says she must walk students down to the financial office personally to help them understand what questions to ask and what answer is being given. Also, the federal government caps the number of semesters students can use financial aid, so adding developmental courses can make it harder to finance an education. Students are not assigned a consistent financial aid advisor, so each time to meet with an advisor, their case may be new to them. The financial aid department also suffers from a high turnover rate, with a constant workload from fall term to spring term to summer term with very little downtime. And since they are constantly understaffed, advisors must cover responsibilities for the open positions. Meeting with a financial aid advisor to understand what it means to take out a loan is not mandatory. Some students are awarded financial aid, but don't understand how it works, stop taking classes and receive a collections notice because they must pay back the money. The expectation is that they received that information during orientation or by watching a video online, but they still end up angry.

Students are required to navigate student services by themselves: Interviewees at HTC talked about how as the college has cut costs, it has increased the turnover of staff, making it difficult for faculty, students and other staff, to know who to ask for help on specific topics. And if faculty can't figure out who to ask for help, how are students expected to know? Some departments,

like TRiO and Disability Services, offer a broad spectrum of services to students (or work with students to navigate to them) in one location. But if they aren't part of those programs, they have to go to different people (most they don't know or trust) to get supports. Some students don't use services because they feel like failures and "no one is making it real for them." One instructor suggested that students don't need "a sage on the stage, but a guide on the side, a Sherpa." One interviewee from NHCC mentioned that their college culture expects that when students turn 18 years old, they don't need anyone to advocate for them. Students internalize this even though that's not how human society works. And to really help students, many people talked about the need to be "intrusive" in their lives so that we can even begin to know there is a problem to being with, and how to best help the student through that challenge. Also, if student support services are designed with the needs of the dominant (privileged) school culture in mind, then even though the services are available, they may not be accessible or relevant for all students.

Distance between administration, and staff and faculty can cause tension and create turnover: Interviewees at HTC mentioned that tension between administration and faculty trickles down to the students. Whereas the President's door has always been open before, the offices of the President and Vice President and HR are now locked in an isolated area. This has led to the loss of a lot of deans and leaders, which has been difficult on the remaining faculty and staff. Interviewees at NHCC mentioned that plans and goals that are driven top-down from administration, without transparent communication, can create unbalanced power structures that are demoralizing to the rest of the faculty and staff. High turnover in the administration and with deans affects faculty moral. In fact, some interviewees mentioned that they have considered leaving the college because the leadership has been inconsistent.

Developmental Courses Can Be A Barrier: Interviewees felt that developmental courses can be have an important role in helping students develop the basic academic and study skills they need to be successful in college. However, instructors need to understand that especially for new college students, "that first experience that can be a huge confidence boost or a big turn-off, like the first month on the job." They need to explain to students that the developmental course is an investment in their future success and not just a hoop to jump through. However, not every student is interested in earning a degree. Developmental courses might not make sense for students earning a technical certificate. Instead of frontloading development courses, it may keep students' interests longer if they were interspersed with technical program courses instead. Since there is a cap on semesters for financial aid, if students have to take a lot of developmental courses, they can run out of aid before they graduate.

Lack of Coordination of Services College-Wide: Many interviewees at HTC felt that both internally in their departments and across departments, there was little coordination to ensure that no students slip through the cracks. The processes to support students exist, but the different departments need to come together to make it work. Not all academic departments work closely with the advising department to make sure that the handoff between general education and technical program advising are seamless for the student. One faculty member expressed that she doesn't know what the administration wanted her to do in addition to instruction to best support students. Other interviewees mentioned that there could be better communication from the leadership of the college on how to better coordinate student services. Interviewees at NHCC talked about how at all levels of the college, faculty and staff need to feel like they belong to one community and communicate amongst themselves first about how to best serve students who aren't engaged in the school. Interviewees felt that in previous years, there was a stronger push to create that environment but in recent years it's fallen by the

wayside. Previously there was a Student Success program that provided wrap-around services (advising, tutors, etc.) for students who scored low on the Accuplacer, but that was disbanded 3 years ago.

Question #6: *What can be done differently to help students succeed?*

We asked this question to elicit suggestions from the interviewees on what changes they believed would positively impact student success. They are listed by theme.

Provide Better Access to Student Supports

- Revamp the orientation process so students get the depth of information they need to understand and navigate the college culture and process.
- Expand TRiO-type wrap-around services.
- Recreate student support services to be student-centered, individualized, and one-stop shop.
- Create a more welcoming environment for students, including the front desk.
- More active outreach and engagement from Financial Aid.
- Add residential housing to address transportation and housing issues.
- Make visits to an academic advisor mandatory for new students to make sure they are on the right path. Have advisors go to where students are.
- Provide more resources students need (transportation, childcare, women's center, etc.).
- Better education on how to navigate website (D2L, etc.) and online courses
- Add life skills (financial literacy, etc.) to FYE course.

More Support for Faculty and Staff

- Cross-train staff so that students can get help from staff and faculty they trust instead of many different sources they don't know.
- Coordinated training for all faculty (especially adjunct) and staff to better understand the needs of students, and best practices.
- Add more advisors and financial aid staff positions.
- Increased job security to decrease staff turnover.
- Address turnover issue amongst deans and staff.
- Increase faculty diversity to better represent student population.

Changes to Academic Programming

- Fewer developmental courses required.
- Fewer general education courses required for technical degrees.
- Create programming that adjust to student needs and priorities.
- Add new academic programs that are attractive to students.
- Shorter semesters (16 weeks is too long).
- Have certificates offered along the way so that if students need to leave college, they still have an opportunity to work.

Increase Coordination and Communication College-wide

- Increased coordination and communication with administration (with faculty and staff) around common goals.
- Improve processes to be simpler and coordinated, and better communicate them to students.

- Collect and disseminate better data on which students are struggling.

Miscellaneous

- Update facilities.
- Connect all students to job providers in the business community.
- More emergency funds for students who run into crisis moments.
- Increase funding.

DISCUSSION of Method 3

Students were most concerned about challenges with transportation, online classes, and mental health. Students who couldn't drive sometimes had to take the bus for over an hour each way to attend school. Some students could drive but lived over an hour from school or had to share a car with other family members. Students talked about the difficulties of taking online classes and the lack of training and support. Some students would rather have in-person classes, but online ones are the only ones that are offered or that fit their schedules. Students also talked about mental health issues popping up during stressful semesters. And even if services are available on campus or in the community, students don't always reach out for help. Not every student has insurance, so they tend to deal with poor mental health by themselves.

Families are an important support system for students in college. The overwhelming percentage of students we interviewed responded that their families were supportive of their decisions to attend college. Families also supported students by talking to them about college while they were growing up, encouraged and motivated them to persist, and provided financial support, support, transportation, housing, and medical insurance.

Students rely on themselves a lot as well. There were also many students who had to rely on themselves on their pathway to college. Some students told us that their families never talked to them about college: they had to learn about, make decisions about, and navigate their path to college all on their own. Some students said that they only relied on themselves to handle problems. These students told us they don't like to ask for help and they are self-motivated to succeed in college. They worked hard to pay for their tuition and didn't always take advantage of financial aid. Many students talked about being staying true to and believing in themselves as important strengths.

Students chose to enroll in community college for various reasons, which may determine what supports they need or communicate what is important to them. Students enrolled in a community college because the school had the degree program they were interested in, it was more affordable, they weren't ready for (or were working towards) a four-year college or university, or their campus was a smaller community and better learning environment. Students at HTC mentioned that they specifically wanted to attend a vocational institution to learn hands-on skills and because it offered a greater chance to get a job due to institutional connections with industry. Some students perceived that the transition from high school or working to community college was an easier one than if they had gone directly to a four-year university. Other students enrolled in community college to figure out what they wanted to study. Students also talked about how the student population at both colleges reflected racial and ethnic diversity, and life stage diversity. The smaller size and enrollment of the colleges made it feel more of a community than a big university.

Students chose to enroll full-time or part-time mostly based on financial reasons, and balancing work and school balance can be difficult, especially for part-time students.

Students enrolled full-time mostly to finish as fast as possible. Students who went full-time had financial support from financial aid, parents, or workers compensation. Students enrolled part-time mostly to accommodate work because they did not have the financial resources for tuition and living expenses. Some students told us they chose to go part-time because the financial aid process was too confusing or difficult, so they could work to pay for tuition.

Wrap-around supports such as TRiO and Disability Services were identified as the most effective. Students said TRiO advisors have a smaller case load, work with students for the whole time they are enrolled, get to know the students well, connect them to resources they need without having to go to multiple offices, and hold students to high standards. Disability Services was also discussed by some interviewees as an asset to students who can use their services to get the accommodations they need to be successful in their classes. Students felt the staff listened to the needs of the student and provided individualized attention, to act as a liaison between the student and faculty.

Student identified assets and strengths that helped them succeed, but where are they supposed to learn these? Students identified help-seeking, motivation or focus, and time management as the top three assets or strengths that lead to success. They talked about the importance of connecting with other peers at the college so that when help was needed, they would know who to reach out to. Similarly, they talked about being able to go to trusted faculty and staff for assistance. Students also talked about being motivated or focus to complete college as vital for success. And as many students had to balance their work and school schedules, they told us that being able to manage their time and schedules and being disciplined was a key strength. An important question to consider is: are students expected to have these assets and strengths *before* enrolling in college, and where are they expected to learn them? Some students mentioned that high school was also a place where they learned the skills they needed to succeed, while others said previous college or work experience.

Faculty and staff identified their role in student success. Overall, faculty and staff felt that their role was meant to impact student success by guiding, advocating, and equipping students, including connecting students to resources, helping students to stay on track academically, and to help students navigate college culture and processes. And students mostly interface with instructors at the colleges, so they should know them the best and would be the logical people to advocate for students. Interviewees at both colleges felt that faculty and staff were passionate about helping students succeed, and that students could go up to anyone and get the support they needed.

However, faculty and staff who don't understand, represent, or accommodate students and their needs were perceived as a barrier to student success. Students mentioned that they are concerned about having teachers who don't understand their lack of access to transportation and technology, and difficulties in their home life and balancing work. Some faculty are not accommodating with students' personal issues, expecting students to be at a high level, but not necessarily willing to help students get there. There was no professional development provided on how to teach a diverse student population at the community college level. The demographics of faculty at the colleges don't represent the diversity of the student population. The tenure system and unionization of faculty can make it difficult for faculty of color to hold power and make changes to the traditionally white-dominated system.

Students had difficulty navigating the financial aid process. Students can apply for and receive financial aid without speaking with a financial aid advisor to make sure they understand all the consequences, for example, of dropping a class while receiving financial aid, which can lead to holds that prevent them from enrolling in the next semester. Many students were confused about the financial aid process even after talking with staff. Faculty told us that the entire financial system can be so complex to navigate, it creates profound inequities for first-time or first-generation students.

Access to guidance from academic advisors and counselors can be a barrier. Students mentioned that one of their greatest concerns was knowing and getting the right classes they needed to graduate or transfer on time. They were split on whether guidance from advisors was helpful or not, but students who used TRiO services made the distinction that TRiO advisors were more available and were more familiar with students and their needs than the normal advisors and counselors. Faculty and staff mentioned that there were not enough advisors and counselors at the campuses to effectively provide guidance and counseling for all the students who needed them, which may be due to high turnover rates and being understaffed.

There is a lack of coordination of services college-wide. Many faculty and staff felt that both internally in their departments and across departments, there was little coordination from the leadership to ensure that no students slip through the cracks. There is a lack of college-wide professional development to all faculty and staff related to teaching or supporting a diverse population of students, and performance measurement feedback systems for all faculty and staff to evaluate how they are impacting student success. The processes to support students exist, but the different departments need to come together to make it work.

RECOMMENDATIONS from Method 3

From the results of the interviews with these faculty and staff, the following are the recommendations from this report.

- Engage families in helping to support their students. Families were listed as their biggest support systems. Colleges should consider ways to strengthen that support system, especially for first generation college students.
- Ensure that academic programs and institutional processes accommodate part-time students struggling to balance school with work. Accommodating work was the top reason students decided to go part-time. And/or provide enough financial support, or income supplement, so that part-time students can work less and go to school full-time.
- Ensure that academic programs and institutional processes accommodate full-time students, so they can graduate in the least time possible.
- Some students enroll in community college to figure out what they want to study or complete their general education requirements before transferring to a 4-year institution. Offer courses that can help students explore different career paths while also counting towards their general education requirements.
- Work with public (city, county, school district) and private partners to provide reliable transportation options that work with class scheduling, so students can always attend the classes they need.
- Offer enough sessions of key courses so that especially part-time students who need to balance their schedule with work can access courses they need.

- Provide ongoing supports through staff who have to consistent relationships with students to provide help with connecting students with resources and help they need (i.e. mental health, career counseling, online courses, technology challenges, figuring out academic requirements and sequencing, etc.). Increase number of advisors and counselors. Provide more online tutorials on a variety of topics that students have questions about (i.e. how to use financial aid, how to access D2L, how to add/drop classes, applying for grants and scholarships and outside resources, etc.)
- Offer curriculum, in new or existing classes, that helps first-year students develop skills (including help-seeking, motivation / focus, and time management) and connects them to institutional assets (including tutoring, library, and Student Life services) that contribute to their academic success.
- Administration consistently communicate and ensure that all faculty and staff understand the college's goals around student success.
- Offer coordinated departmental and college-wide training to all faculty and staff related to teaching or supporting a diverse population of students. Faculty and staff were mentioned as the top asset at the colleges. They should be equipped to provide coordinated supports to students so that none fall through gaps and each one receives what they need to be successful.
- Create a performance management system to track and report data on the impact of departments on student success, for continuous quality improvement efforts.
- Replicate wrap-around programs and departments that work for students, such as TRiO and Disability Services. Increase the number of advisors and counselors so that meetings can be required for all students to ensure that they are receiving the supports they need, and that students can work with the same staff person throughout their college career. Co-locate services or cross-train staff so that students don't have to meet with many faculty and staff to get their needs met.
- Students need more support to help them navigate the financial aid process. Ensure that the financial aid departments are fully staffed and trained, and that students receive and understand all the necessary information before they enroll, have check-ins while they are students, and get supports if an adverse event occurs (i.e. withdraw from a class).
- Similarly, the orientation process should be re-examined to see if students are learning and understanding what they need to begin their college education.
- Continue working to improve how faculty and staff understand, represent, or accommodate the diverse population of students (and their backgrounds, strengths, and needs). Increase the diversity of tenured and adjunct faculty.
- Consider how academic programs can be adjusted to align with student goals for their college experience. Offer shorter, stack-able credentials (certificates) in case students need to leave college early. Remove requirements for developmental courses for some technical degrees or remodel those courses so they are more relevant to the technical degree desired.

METHOD 4: PHOTOVOICE

Photovoice is a participatory action research strategy which can contribute to youth mobilization for community change. Photovoice is an opportunity to (1) record and vivify their community's strengths and concerns; (2) promote critical dialogue and knowledge about community issues

through group discussion of photographs; and (3) reach policy makers. The photovoice process aims to use photographic images taken by persons with little money, power, or status to enhance community needs assessments, empower participants, and induce change by informing policy makers of community assets and deficits (Wang & Burris, 1994, 1997).

Our student research team captured visual images that represented the results of previously mentioned data. These pictures, and the coinciding description of these pictures, assist in illuminating the opportunities for change.

KEY FINDINGS from Method 4

- There are numerous assets at both colleges.
- Student services and supports don't align with student needs. E.g. There are no library hours on the weekend, when students might most likely access this resource.
- Students assets such as peer support, organizational supports around basic needs, and academic supports like tutoring exist and need to be developed further to advance persistence.

RESULTS from Method 4



EXHIBIT 1
NHCC Barrier-Honors Desk

“This is where I work for the Honors Program. There is a lack of signage and this is a prominent place on campus, students who wish to join the honors program have a hard time navigating themselves to it or even being aware of its location. This causes frustration and a lack of engagement resulting in North Hennepin losing students it could have retained.” - **Rachel F.**



EXHIBIT 2
NHCC Support-Vibrant Community

"These are two sisters from *Sierra Leone* who are in their first years at North Hennepin. They represent the differences between their culture and Minnesota's while simultaneously showing our unity at North Hennepin. This speaks to the vibrant diversity we strive for and foster at North Hennepin Community College." - **Rachel F.**



EXHIBIT 3
NHCC Barrier-Transportation

"I saw this student sitting alone, time passing, patiently waiting for his way home, unsure of when and if the bus would arrive. It struck me how impactful the different journeys each of us take in getting to school and being overall successful. What is a routine ten minute drive for me may be a two hour haul with confusion, uncertainty, and complexity for another student."- **Rachel F.**



EXHIBIT 4
NHCC Support- The Motto

"This motto is located on the wall outside of the Orientation Room in the Educational Services building at North Hennepin. This mural tells all new students that at North Hennepin, we are dedicated to helping invest in them and their futures. It is also a constant reminder to the administration, who don't necessarily engage with the student body everyday, why they are here and do what they do." - **Sergio N-A.**

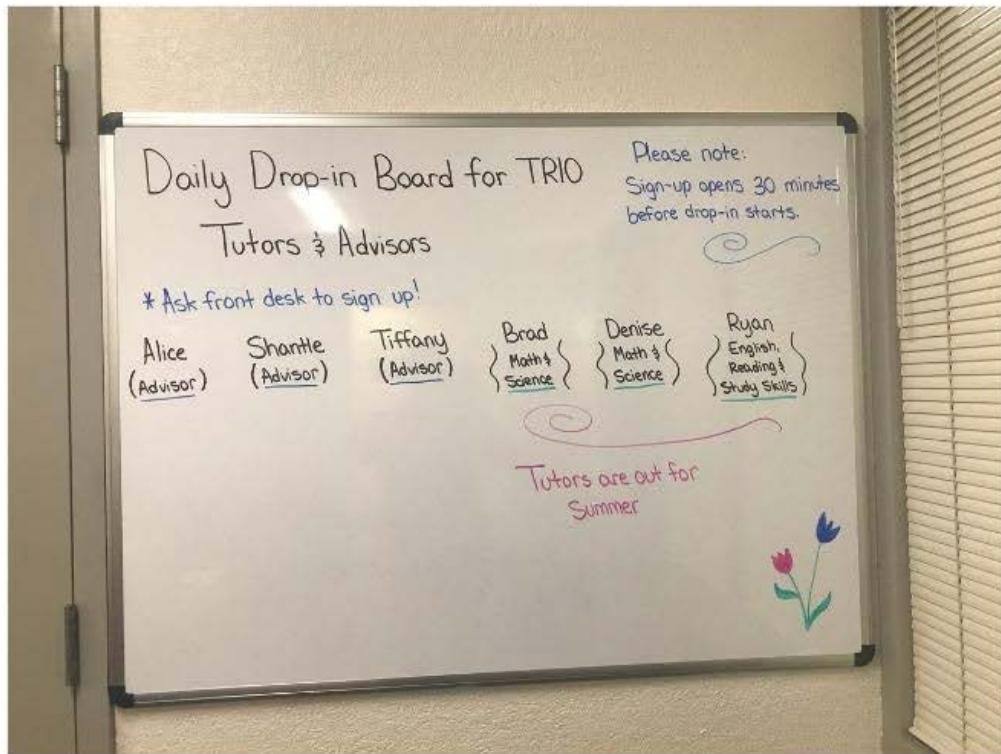


EXHIBIT 5

NHCC Barrier-TRIO Whiteboard

"This whiteboard is a directory for the TRIO students at NHCC to check on the availability of staff. This whiteboard shows that tutors are out for the summer which causes barriers for students taking summer classes. What is otherwise a huge retention strategy for students is neglected during the summer, hindering a large group of students." - **Sergio N-A.**



EXHIBIT 6

NHCC Support-Greenhouse & Mural

"This is what a student sees when they walk into the Greenhouse on campus at North Hennepin. They are welcomed into a space that is meant to be a home away from home. Students can come here to warm up, relax, study, and build community - a huge asset in the long Minnesota winters." - **Sergio N-A.**



EXHIBIT 7

NHCC Barrier & Support- Four Year Partners

"This is a display in the Center for Business Technology building at North Hennepin. I really love this display because it is packed full of opportunity, from the motivational "Start here. Finish here", to "A Bachelor's Degree Just Got Closer". It goes to show how North Hennepin works to connect students to further educational opportunities, a huge factor in connecting students to degrees. However, there are many nuanced details to this degree pathway, often not as simple as the display may depict. I also wanted to show the barrier to understanding this option with the closed and gated four year partner office directly in front of the display. Where can students find accurate information on a great set of partnerships?" - **Maura D.**



EXHIBIT 8

NHCC Barrier- Empty Community Garden

“This is the community garden located in the central courtyard at North Hennepin. This garden by the end of summer usually has plenty of produce which students are free to take. Right now, it is empty except for the top left bin, which is sprouting its first growths. It left me wondering, where else can students go to get fresh produce?” - **Maura D.**



EXHIBIT 9
NHCC Support- Thoughtful Campus Design

"I love this entry way at North Hennepin. Leading from the central courtyard to the Library, when a student walks in and sees the beautiful art leading to the North Hennepin school banner, they catch a glimpse of the thought and care that went into designing North Hennepin. The college is a beautiful place to be and they actively try to make it an enticing place to learn." - **Maura D.**



EXHIBIT 10
HTC Support- Study Area

“The Student Study area is mainly used on Saturday. Students are able to print, use computers and socialize with each other. Seeing other students working together in this space is motivating.” **Fadha.A**



EXHIBIT 11
HTC Barrier- Limited Cafeteria Hours

"The Cafeteria is open for a limited amount of time. Not having access to food is a challenge that many students deal with. There aren't many nutritious options for students." **-Linda.K**



EXHIBIT 12
HTC Support- Representation

"This picture represents the many nationalities that students belong to. The campus feels welcoming and it gives the feeling that everyone is equal at HTC." **-Fadha.A**



EXHIBIT 13

HTC Support- Group Study

"Pictured are a group of students studying. Working as a group allows you to focus and receive help from other students. The space is set up to encourage students to work collaboratively." **-Fadha.A**



EXHIBIT 14
HTC Barrier-Transportation

"Pictured is a bus leaving the HTC campus. Many students have a two hour or more commute to school which can be challenging. This affects attendance and a student's overall grade." -**Linda.K**

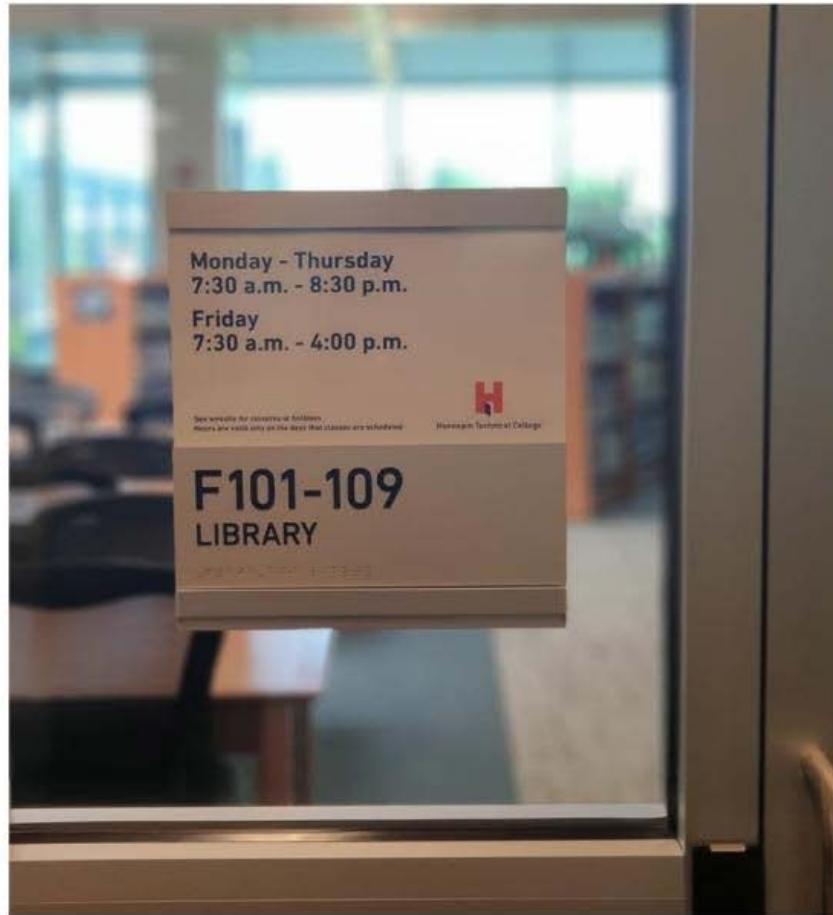


EXHIBIT 15
HTC Barrier- Library Hours

"The Library is a resource for many students. Those who do not have computers at home are able to complete assignments or rent our laptops and textbook rentals. This helps students to be more successful in school." **-Linda.K**

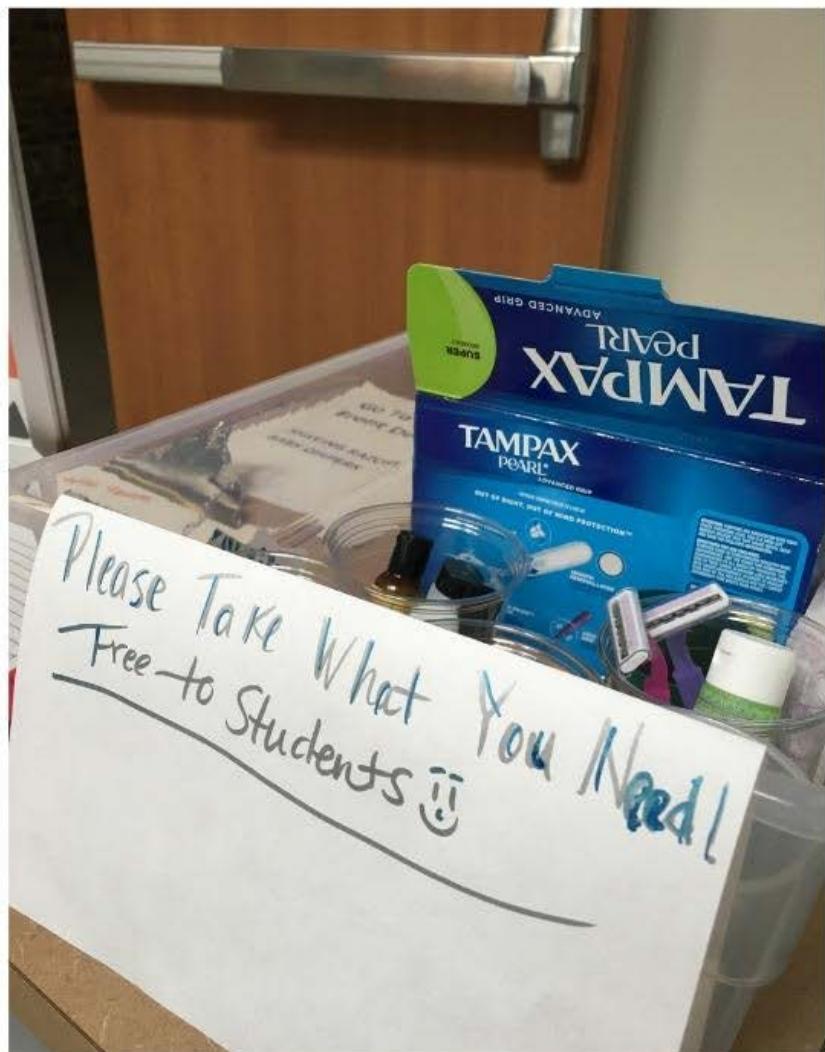


EXHIBIT 16

HTC Support- Free Personal Care Items

"For students who may not have money to afford personal care items, the school has them available for free. This is one less thing that a student has to worry about." **-Laura.N**



EXHIBIT 17
HTC Barrier- Housing

"Housing Is a challenge for students at HTC. If a student does not have a stable place to live, they are likely to drop out of school in order to make more money in order to afford their housing." -**Linda.K**

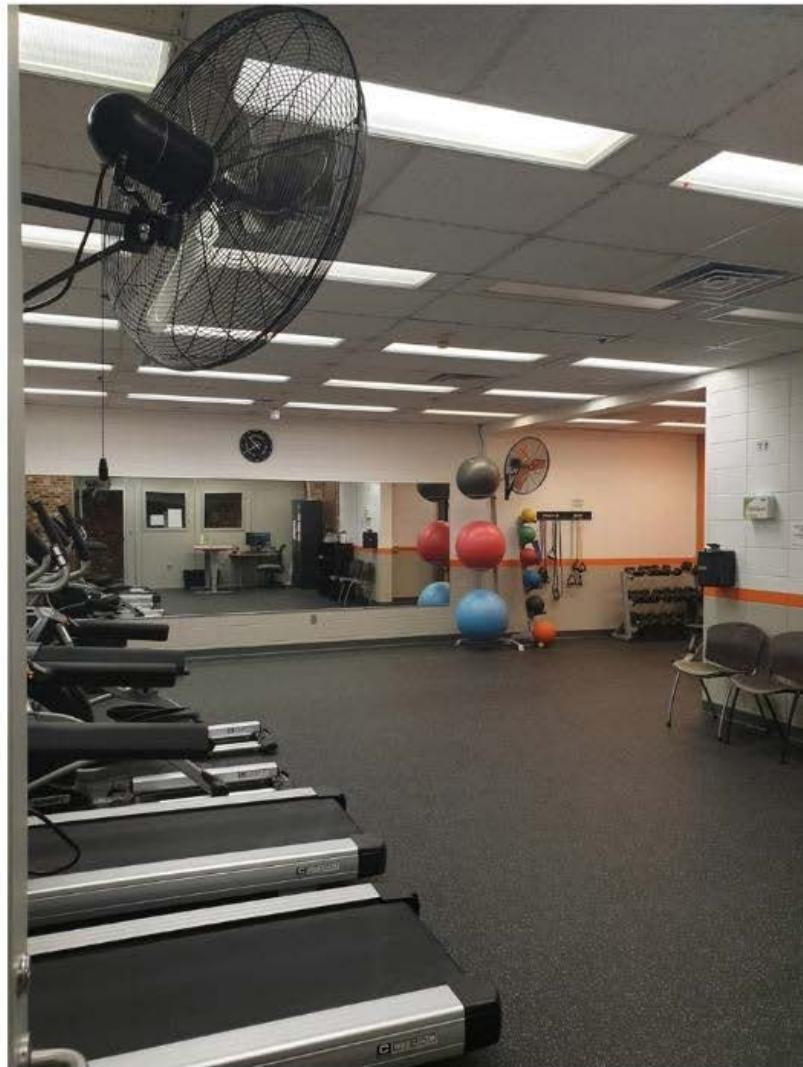


EXHIBIT 18
HTC Support-Fitness Center

"The fitness center is a resource that is available for all students to use for free. For the students who have time, they can add exercise to their busy schedules." **-Linda.K**



EXHIBIT 19
HTC Barrier-Library Hours

"This is a picture of students spending time together in the Student Life and Career Center. The space allows students to create a community and have a sense of belonging." -Laura.N

Discussion

Our research surfaced numerous action ideas and two critical questions:

- How do students **experience** the institutional and systemic barriers? What do they believe about themselves? How do we reinforce or disrupt the damage done through institutional and systemic racism? What research has been done to understand this issue?
- How do faculty and staff **see** students? To what degree do they understand the challenges and dreams that students carry into their classroom? What does the research tell us?

We explored existing literature on the “Belief Gap” that students may have, and the “Empathy Gap” that staff and faculty may have, to help inform our discussion. We found that there was a gap in research on this issue. That there was little empirical research to support these terms explicitly. Additionally, much of the research done is completed with graduate students and Pre-K-12 students, not college students.

Belief Gap

The term “belief gap” currently has little to no empirical research behind it, but the concept of difference in self-perceptions of academic success between students of color and their white peers is not new to the literature. Since the 1980s, research in this area has been done surrounding cultural orientation of black students that creates an apprehension to academic success for fear of “acting white” (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Wildhagen, 2011); skewed cultural identity formation as a result of a white-centered education system that encourages assimilation to mainstream cultural identity (Morrison, 2010), and failure to assimilate results in risk of failure when interacting with the system; and self-concept created through the intertwining of identity formation and societal stereotypes of academic ability by race (Kellow and Jones, 2008; Okeke et.al., 2009).

This research tells us that students’ perceptions and experiences are informed by their previous educational experiences. As they go through a predominantly white education system they internalize varying degrees of otherness, which, as our research team and students posited, may lead them to believe they ‘don’t fit’ or that school is not “for me.”

These experiences build overtime, such that when students are met with red tape, and other barriers they experience these as either implicit or explicit messages that ‘they don’t belong’. Thus, student success requires tremendous resiliencies and results in weathering (Geronimus). A phenomenon characterized by long-term physical, mental, emotional, and psychological effects of racism and of living in a society characterized by white dominance and privilege (McGee & Stovall, 2015).

In both instances, **we believe that how students experience the numerous institutional barriers is a contributing factor to the persistence problem. And, that systemically we can disrupt practices that cause students to feel they do not belong.**

Empathy Gap

Research on an empathy gap is currently being explored in the field of social work, as reported by Meinert (2018), as a failure of white social workers to express empathy across racial lines. There are implications for this in the field of education, but little empirical research has been introduced to study this concept. The research that has begun to explore this calls on the issue of color-blindness as a factor contributing to an empathy gap (Carter, 2009). Most of research related to this is around the topic of faculty-student mentoring, which shows that more meaningful connections are made between students of color and mentors of color due to shared experiences in higher education (Griffin et. al., 2010). These mentoring relationships prove critical for academic success and students' self-perceptions of their academic abilities (Blake-Beard et. al., 2011; Johnson-Bailey, 2007; McCoy et. al., 2015).

This research tells us that when empathic relationships are in place for students, they are critical for academic success and self-perceptions. As our research team and students discussed, many staff and faculty do not directly, or may have never, experienced the institutional barriers that students face. And, it may be especially difficult for faculty and staff who do not represent the profiles of students who dropout (e.g. experienced an unsuccessful course, had a hold on their records that prevented them from registering for classes, or identify as black-African American), to empathize with students, thus blocking them from creating the connections as well as institutional policies, needed to address the persistence challenge.

Lessons Learned

We learned more about students who enroll at HTC and NHCC, especially those who dropout or stopout of college.

- Of the 23,234 students enrolled at HTC and NHCC in the 4-year period we examined, 38% of students dropped out 1st or 2nd semester (without graduating or transferring) and 2% stopped out.
- Students who do poorly in classes, withdraw from a class, or have a hold are more at-risk from dropping out.
- Students chose to enroll in community college for various reasons, which may determine what supports they need or communicate what is important to them. Only 61% of respondents reported their motivations to enroll in college were to earn a degree or certificate, or to get enough credits to transfer to a 4-year college or university.
- Students chose to enroll full-time or part-time mostly based on financial reasons, and balancing work and school balance can be difficult, especially for part-time students.
- There are disparities for some racial or ethnic groups that increase their probabilities of getting an unsuccessful course, a hold, or a withdrawn course.

We learned more about the reasons why students dropout or stopout of college.

- *Multiple factors add up to create the conditions where students dropout of college.* There is no one "smoking gun" variable, but rather a confluence or overlapping of multiple variables that describe the "typical" dropout or stopout student. Even though students

are resilient enough to survive overcoming a few barriers, when there are too many, and without the right supports, they become overwhelmed.

- *Students dropout of college for many different personal and life event, academic, and financial reasons.* The top personal reasons why students dropped out was the inability to balance school with work, and mental health challenges. The top academic reason students offered was the inability to enroll in the classes they needed because they were not offered at times that worked with their schedule. The specific financial reasons were all inter-related as tuition and fees costs, the amount of financial aid available, and willingness to take on loans are all different facets of financial ability.
- *Students currently enrolled were most concerned about challenges with transportation, online classes, and mental health.*

We learned more about the institutional cultures, expectations, or processes that may contribute to students dropping out or stopping out of college.

- *There is a lack of coordination of services college-wide to ensure that no students slip through the cracks.* Support services and efforts by individual faculty and staff are mostly siloed. There is a lack of professional development for all faculty and staff related to teaching or supporting a diverse population of students, and performance measurement feedback systems for all faculty and staff to evaluate how they are impacting student success. In addition, most students and many faculty and staff are not aware of existing early warning systems that identify at-risk students.
- *Accurate college-wide student data from the Student Information System is not consistently available to all faculty and staff (especially administration) to be used to track how many and which students are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out.*
- *Students are not always able to find classes that fits their transportation or work schedule.* Problems with class scheduling was mentioned by student, and faculty and staff survey participants as something that could be improved to keep students from dropping out. This is true especially for students who struggle with transportation or who have limited availability because they are working.
- *Only about half of students receive the assistance and information they need to apply to and pay for college.*
- *Some faculty and staff are perceived as not understanding, representing, or accommodating students and their needs.* Students mentioned that they are concerned about having teachers who don't understand them and their needs. Some faculty are not accommodating with students' personal issues, expecting students to be at a high level, but not necessarily willing to help students get there. The demographics of faculty at the colleges don't represent the diversity of the student population.
- *Students had difficulty navigating the financial aid process.* Students don't always have the information they need to understand the financial aid process. Many students were confused even after talking with staff. Faculty told us that the entire financial system can be so complex to navigate, it creates profound inequities for first-time or first-generation students.
- *Access to guidance from academic advisors and counselors can be a barrier.* Students split on whether guidance from advisors was helpful or not. Faculty and staff mentioned that there were not enough advisors and counselors at the campuses to effectively provide guidance and counseling for all the students who needed them, which may be due to high turnover rates and being understaffed.
- *Faculty and staff play an important role in supporting student success but can approach the issue being deficit-based instead of asset-based.*

We learned more about the assets and supports (both personal and institutional) that may contribute to persistence in college.

- *Institutional (academic, health, and basic needs) supports are vital to students persisting in college.* Students who had dropped out said that financial supports, and guidance and support from the school would have helped them stay in college. Students listed the top most helpful supports or resources as their instructor's office hours, the library, technology access, and advising (academic, financial, counseling).
- *Student assets and strengths contribute to success in college but where are they supposed to learn these?* Students, faculty, and staff surveyed reported that motivation, self-awareness, persistence, help-seeking, and time management were the top assets and strengths students should have to be successful in college. An important question to consider is: are students expected to have these assets and strengths *before* enrolling in college, and where are they expected to learn them?
- *Families are an important support system for students in college.* Families are supportive of their decisions to attend college and helped students by talking to them about college while they were growing up, encouraging and motivating them to persist, and providing financial support, support, transportation, housing, and medical insurance.
- *Many students rely on themselves on their pathways to college: they had to learn about, make decisions about, and navigate their path to college all on their own.* They worked hard to pay for their tuition and didn't always take advantage of financial aid.
- *Wrap-around supports such as TRiO and Disability Services were identified as the most effective.* Students said these support services provided advisors who have a smaller case load, so they can get to know them, work with students for the whole time they are enrolled, connect them to resources they need without having to go to multiple offices, and help get students the accommodations they need to be successful in their classes.
- *Faculty and staff can play an important role in student success.* They felt that their role was meant to impact student success by guiding, advocating, and equipping students, including connecting students to resources, helping students to stay on track academically, and to help students navigate college culture and processes. And students mostly interface with instructors at the colleges, so they should know them the best and would be the logical people to advocate for students.

Recommendations

From the results of the research study, the following are a summary of the recommendations.

“(The college has) pockets of really good people and programs. Some are terrific, but the whole thing isn’t coordinated, there is some connection, but nothing official. Not that people don’t work hard, but people are overwhelmed, but with the wrong things.”

Create intentional, coordinated college-wide programs with the goal of student success:
The quote above speaks to many of the challenges and barriers discussed in the report. Specific departments and individuals are really making a difference in students' lives, but those efforts are not coordinated across the campuses to be accessible to all students. The administration at both colleges should lead these efforts, while communicating, engaging, and partnering with faculty and staff.

- Administration consistently communicate and ensure that all faculty and staff understand the college's goals and their role related to student success.
- Correct deficiencies with collecting and reporting Student Information System data. Improve ability to track at-risk students and understand the reasons why students dropout of college.
- Offer coordinated departmental and college-wide training to all faculty and staff related to teaching or supporting a diverse population of students.
- Create a performance management system to track and report data on the impact of departments on student success.
- Continue working to improve how faculty and staff understand, represent, or accommodate the diverse population of students (and their backgrounds, strengths, and needs). Increase the diversity of tenured and adjunct faculty.

Programs and processes should be designed with students at the center: Our research also revealed disconnect between how academic programs and institutional processes function compared to the backgrounds and needs of the diverse student population.

- Replicate wrap-around programs and departments that work for students, such as TRiO and Disability Services, to increase access to and quality of advising and counseling services and academic, health, and basic supports.
- Offer (or require) First Year Experience courses for all students and focus the course on understanding college culture, expectations, and gaining the skills (both academic and life) to be successful.
- Understand what students' goals are for enrolling and ensure that the proper supports are available to help them achieve those goals. Consider how academic programs can be adjusted to align with student goals for their college experience.
- Reconsider scheduling of classes to accommodate all students. Offer enough sessions of key courses so that especially part-time students who need to balance their schedule with work can access courses they need.
- Ensure that the financial aid departments are fully staffed and trained, students receive and understand all the necessary information before they enroll, have check-ins while they are students, and get supports if an adverse event occurs.
- The orientation process should be re-examined to see if students are learning and understanding what they need to begin their college education.
- Work with public (city, county, school district) and private partners to provide reliable transportation options that work with class scheduling, so students can always attend the classes they need.
- Engage families in helping to support their students. Families were listed as their biggest support systems. Colleges should consider ways to strengthen that support system, especially for first generation college students.

Continue to ask questions and find answers: This report has just scratched the surface of what the colleges need to understand to increase persistence for each student. Further research needs to be completed to understand how to coordinate efforts for student success and design programs and processes with students at the center.

- Understand institutional processes and student experiences behind unsuccessful courses, holds, and withdrawn courses.

- Explore why Black or African-American students get holds, unsuccessful courses, or withdrawn courses more than other racial/ethnic populations.
- Understand why students of color feel they have less information and are less satisfied with the information they receive about applying and paying for college.

Moving Forward

Traditional research projects often end with recommendations on ideas for further study. The purpose of this project was not to identify further research topics, but to reveal opportunities for systemic change towards student persistence.

We recommend the following:

1. Complete transparency in sharing these results with all stakeholders – Students at the college, college leadership, faculty, and staff, and community partners,
2. Leadership in all sectors begin to explore opportunities to engage with college partners to take action,
3. Engaging all stakeholders in identifying priority issues, implementing the action ideas and developing systems change efforts across the following domains:
 - a. Policies
 - b. Practices
 - c. Resource Flows
 - d. Relationships and Connections
 - e. Power Dynamics
 - f. Mental Models / Underlying mindsets

On June 26th, 2019 the executive report was shared with executive leadership from the colleges and the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth. The three-hour session was engaging and powerful. Student photographs and data catalyzed conversation.

All participants agreed that engaging the broader college community, especially faculty, was an essential step in partnering toward change.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Method 2: Student Survey

Stop, Drop, Enroll Research Study

Welcome Page

North Hennepin Community College and Hennepin Technical College are working with Hanover Research to understand why some students who were previously enrolled have not enrolled in more than a year. Results from the survey will help to identify ways to better support students while they are in school. As a student previously enrolled at North Hennepin Community College or Hennepin Technical College, your feedback is very important to us. This study is for research purposes only: all information you provide will be maintained on a confidential basis by Hanover Research and will only be used and reported in an aggregate form, so please be candid in your responses.

The next 200 participants who qualify and complete this survey will be rewarded with a \$10 gift card as a thank you. If you qualify for the gift card, you will be asked to provide your contact information at the end of the survey.

This survey should take about 5 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation!

Please click the arrow button below to begin the survey.

GDPR Block

To ensure compliance with international laws, please answer the following:

Are you a European Union citizen?

- Yes
- No

Are you currently located in the European Union?

- Yes
- No

Survey Quota

As specified in the survey invitation, you are one of the first 200 respondents. As a thank you for your time, we would like to send you a \$10 gift card. Please check the appropriate box below to indicate your preference with regards to the gift card.

- Yes, please send me the \$10 gift card (Note: you will be asked to enter your name and email address when you complete the survey).
- No, I prefer not to receive the gift care, but I would still like to take the survey.
- I would like to exit the survey.

Questions:

1. What college(s) did you attend? (*Please select all that apply.*)

- Hennepin Technical College – Brooklyn Park
- Hennepin Technical College – Eden Prairie
- Hennepin Technical College – Online
- North Hennepin Community College – Brooklyn Park
- North Hennepin Community College – Online

2. Originally, what motivated you to enroll in college? (*Please select all that apply.*)

- Earn a degree
- Earn a certificate
- Learn new skills
- Try out college
- Parents expected me to attend
- Transfer to four-year college or university
- To get a higher earning job
- Advancing in your current job
- New career
- My friends were also attending college
- Best option after high school
- Other (please specify)

3. Which financial reasons most influenced your decision to leave college? (*Please select all that apply.*)

- Tuition was too expensive
- Additional fees were too expensive
- I was not eligible for financial aid
- I did not receive enough financial aid
- I lost my financial aid or scholarship
- I did not want to take on more student loan debt
- I did not receive a work-study grant
- I received a work-study grant, but I was unable to find a position
- Other (please specify)
- There were no financial reasons that influenced my decision to leave college

4. Which academic reasons most influenced your decision to leave college? (*Please select all that apply.*)

- I changed my interest in what to study
- I was not doing well academically (academic warning or probation)
- I was unable to enroll in the classes I needed
- The courses were offered during times unsuitable to my needs
- I was unsatisfied with the overall quality of instruction
- The faculty/staff at my college did not show interest in my academic progress or getting to know me
- I was unsatisfied with program curriculum and quality of courses
- I only wanted to take a few classes
- I did not have enough guidance (i.e. about which classes to take)
- Had to take developmental course
- I had an academic, financial aid, conduct, past due balance or any other hold on my account
- Other (please specify)
- There were no academic reasons that influenced my decision to leave college

5. Which additional reasons most influenced your decision to leave college? (*Please select all that apply.*)

- Illness (personal or family)
- Transportation issues
- Did not understand communications from the college
- Didn't fit with work schedule
- Learning disability
- Family and friends were not supportive of my decision to attend college
- No one helped me navigate the college process
- I needed a break from my studies
- Housing issues
- Childcare issues
- College was not what I was expecting
- Mental health issues (i.e. depression, anxiety, other mental or emotional health challenges)
- Didn't like my classes or major
- Other (please specify)
- None of these additional reasons influenced my decision to leave college

6. Please tell us more about the reasons that led to your decision to leave college. (*Open-ended*)

7. What would have helped you stay in college and not leave? (*Open-ended*)

8. Did you complete your last semester? (*Select one answer.*)

- Yes
- No

9. When did you stop attending classes? (*Select one answer.*) [Only asked if No to Q8.]

- Beginning of the semester
- Middle of the semester
- End of the semester

10. If at any time during college, you (or someone you knew) struggled, how was it addressed by the college? *(Open-ended)*

11. What academic supports or resources were most helpful while you were in college? *(Check all that apply.)*

- Academic Advising
- Career Center
- Clubs and Student Activities
- Disability Access Services
- Diversity and Equity Center
- English as a Second Language Support
- Instructor's / Professors' Office Hours
- Library
- Peer Mentoring
- Technology Access (Computer Labs, etc.)
- TRiO Student Support Services
- Tutoring (or Center for Student Achievement)
- Veterans Affairs or Resource Center
- Other (please specify)

12. What health and basic needs supports or resources were most helpful while you were in college? *(Check all that apply.)*

- Community Connections Resource Center (NHCC only)
- Counseling
- Financial Advising
- Fitness Center / Gym
- Food Shelf (NHCC only)
- Health Clinic (NHCC only)
- Legal Services Clinic (NHCC only)
- Resource Closet (HTC only)
- Work-Study
- County and community supports (food shelf, health clinic, SNAP-food stamps, MFIP, WIC, Section 8, shelter, refugee assistance, etc.)
- Other (please specify)

13. To what degree are the following statements true? *(Matrix/Rating Scale)*

(Completely Disagree, Disagree, Neither disagree or agree, Agree, Completely)

- I received assistance applying to college
- The information I received about applying to college was useful.
- I received information about paying for college before applying.

- The information I received about paying for college was useful.
- I was prepared academically (English, math, science, skills in note-taking, paper-writing, test-taking, studying, research, etc. to succeed in college.)

14. From your perspective, what school or life experiences helped best prepare you for college? *(Open-ended)*

15. What assets or strengths do you have that help you succeed in school? *(Check all that apply.)*

- Goal-setting: the process of deciding what you want to accomplish and devising a plan to achieve the result you desire
- Persistence: willingness to continue to try in the face of challenge
- Self-awareness: the ability to accurately judge your own performance and behavior
- Motivation: desire to succeed
- Help-seeking: knowing when help is needed, what type of help is needed, and how to get the help you need
- Self-efficacy: believing that you can achieve your goals
- Collaboration: the ability to work effectively and respectfully with other students
- Family Connectedness: family and friends provide encouragement, accountability, and help
- Belief in Giving Back: desire to use your resources to help others in your community
- Other (please specify)

16. What advice would you give a new college student? *(Open-ended)*

Please answer the following question if you left college and re-enrolled after a gap of at least one semester.

17. What changed between when you left college and when you re-enrolled that allowed you to start school again? *(Open-ended)*

18. Were you the first person in your family to go to college?

- Yes
- No

19. How do you describe yourself? *(Please select all that apply to you, or select "Other" if none of the answer choices apply)*

- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Hmong
- Vietnamese
- Lao
- Asian Indian
- Middle Eastern
- Hispanic or Latino
- Mexican
- Puerto Rican

- Central American (excludes Mexican)
- South American
- Black or African American
- African
- Liberian
- Nigerian
- Oromo
- Somali
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- White or European American
- Other (please specify)

Appendix 2 – Method 2: Faculty and Staff Survey

Information and Consent

Please read this page carefully before beginning the survey. If you have any questions, please contact the Principal Investigators below. Clicking on the **Next** button at the bottom of the page will indicate that you have read and understand the information presented below, and will bring you to the survey questions.

Purpose of the Research

This is a study to better understand the personal and institutional barriers that might cause first year students at Hennepin Technical College or North Hennepin Community College to drop out, as well as personal and institutional assets that might contribute to second year enrollment. You were invited to participate because you are currently employed as a faculty member or staff at one of those institutions. The research will be conducted April through May 2019, lead to a report by June 2019.

Procedures

You will be asked 10 multiple-choice and open-ended questions about your role and about student and institutional barriers and assets to success at Hennepin Technical College or North Hennepin Community College.

Risks and/or Discomforts

The study has no direct risks to the researcher, participant, or institution. Your participation in this study will not affect your standing with Hennepin Technical College or North Hennepin Community College and all information provided will be kept confidential.

Benefits

The study will allow you to talk about your experiences as a faculty member or staff at Hennepin Technical College or North Hennepin Community College. This information will be used to adjust and create experiences benefitting students at these colleges.

Confidentiality

The information, you provide will be used by the primary investigators to write a report for Hennepin Technical College and North Hennepin Community College. The results may be published on each institution's website, or presented to college administration, staff, and faculty, or at professional conferences. Survey results are anonymous, so your name is not known to the researchers or colleges. Any identifying information you provide will be kept confidential. The raw survey data will be stored on the investigators' personal computers and will be accessed by the investigators and their staff. The records will be deleted upon completion of the project in June 2019.

Opportunity to Ask Questions

You may ask questions about the research at any time by contacting the investigators at the numbers listed below. Sometimes participants have questions or concerns about the research. In this case, you should contact the Hennepin Technical College Institutional Review Board at (952) 995-1626, or the North Hennepin Community College Institutional Review Board at (763) 424-0853.

Freedom to Withdraw

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time throughout the study. Your decision will not affect your relationship with the researchers, Hennepin Technical College, or North Hennepin Community College.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By completing the survey, you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented.

Names and Contact Information of Principal Investigators

Elena Favela

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Survey Questions

Please read each question carefully before answering. Thank you for your participation in our study.

1. What are the **institutional** reasons students drop-out of your college? (*Choose all that apply.*)

- Cost of attending school is too high
- Not enough financial aid offered
- Failed one or more classes
- Requiring remedial courses that don't count towards degree
- College academic skills training (time management, studying, etc.) is not provided
- Classes are not meeting career needs
- Not enough guidance (i.e. about which classes to take, etc.) provided
- Not enough academic, health, or basic need supports or resources offered
- Students are not made aware of academic, health, or basic need supports or resources
- Lack of intentional, ongoing, one-on-one interaction with students
- Other (please specify)

2. What academic, health, and basic needs supports or resources help students succeed at your college?

3. What are institutional barriers that make it difficult for students to succeed at your college?

4. What assets or strengths help students succeed at your college?

5. At your college, what is the process for identifying and supporting students at-risk of dropping out?

6. Which faculty or staff at your college know the students well enough to know if they are struggling? *(Can be either a specific person or a faculty or staff position.)*
7. On a scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 being Not Well to 5 being Very Well), from your experience, how well are students prepared for success (academic knowledge, academic skills, social and emotional skills) at your college?

Not Well	Somewhat	Very Well
★	★★	★★★★★

8. Which college campus(es) are you associated with? *(Check all that apply.)*
 - Hennepin Technical College (Brooklyn Park Campus)
 - Hennepin Technical College (Eden Prairie Campus)
 - North Hennepin Community College
 - Other (please specify)
9. Which description(s) describes your current role at your college? *(Check all that apply.)*
 - Career and Technical Education / Technical Faculty
 - General Education Faculty
 - Administration
 - Staff
 - Other (please specify)
10. OPTIONAL: Please describe your role at your college (i.e. department, job title, etc.).

Appendix 3 – Consent for Participation in Interview Research

Stop, Drop, Enroll: A Study of Factors Impacting 1st Year Student Persistence Consent for Participation in Interview Research

Directions: Please have the interviewee read this form carefully and ask any questions that he or she may have. Before the interview can start, the interviewer and the interviewee should sign two copies of this form. The interviewee will be given one copy of the signed form.

Purpose of the Research

This is a study to better understand the personal and institutional barriers that might cause first year students at Hennepin Technical College or North Hennepin Community College to drop out, as well as personal and institutional assets that might contribute to second year enrollment. You were invited to participate because you are currently a student enrolled at Hennepin Technical College or North Hennepin Community College, or you are currently employed as a faculty member or staff at one of those institutions. The research will be conducted March through April 2019. The research will lead to a report, which should be completed by June 2019.

Procedures

A one-on-one interview will be conducted with you in order to understand the personal and institutional barriers and assets to student success at Hennepin Technical College or North Hennepin Community College. The interview will be audio taped and will take somewhere between 30-60 minutes.

Risks and/or Discomforts

The study has no direct risks to the researcher, participant, or institution. Your participation in this study will not affect your standing with Hennepin Technical College or North Hennepin Community College and all information provided will be kept confidential.

Benefits

The interview will allow you to talk about your experiences as a student, faculty member, or staff at Hennepin Technical College or North Hennepin Community College. This information will be used to adjust and create experiences benefitting students at these colleges.

Confidentiality

The information, you provide will be used by the primary investigators to write a report for Hennepin Technical College and North Hennepin Community College. The results may be published on each institution's website, or presented to college administration, staff, and faculty, or at professional conferences. Your name and information will be kept confidential. Also, the observations made by the investigator during the interviews may be used to describe findings in the research. The records, which will include audio recordings of interviews, interview transcripts, master list of participants, and computer records will be stored on the investigators' personal computers and will be accessed by the investigators and their staff. The records will be deleted upon completion of the project in June 2019.

Compensation

If you are a student participant, you will be compensated for your time with a gift card of \$25.

Opportunity to Ask Questions

You may ask questions about the research at any time by contacting the investigators at the numbers listed below. Sometimes participants have questions or concerns about the research. In this case, you should contact the Hennepin Technical College Institutional Review Board at (952) 995-1626, or the North Hennepin Community College Institutional Review Board at (763) 424-0853.

Freedom to Withdraw

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time throughout the interview. Your decision will not affect your relationship with the researchers, Hennepin Technical College, or North Hennepin Community College.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy

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

_____ Initial if you agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Names and Contact Information of Principal Investigators

Elena Favela

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Jessica Lauritsen

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Appendix 4 – Method 3: Student Interview Guide

Add intro paragraph

Purpose of research

Confidentiality statement

Consent

[Questions 1 and 2 are trying to help us understand their biography, if family educational background makes a difference in their educational success, and how their family are supportive, or not.]

1. What is your personal and family's educational background? (For example, your high school experience or if you have a college-going family background.)
 - Are you a first generation college student?
 - Who else in your family has gone to college or is currently attending college?
2. What are your family's expectation about you attending college?
 - How do they support you?
 - Did your family talk to you about college?
 - How did your family react to you going to college?

[Question 3 helps us to understand the reasons why they chose part-time or full-time, as it relates to barriers.]

3. Why did you decide to enroll full-time or part-time?

[Question 4 helps us to understand connections between students and the school which may be opportunities to assess progress and offer supports?]

4. In what ways have you interacted with the college system?
 - Other than classes where do you go on campus?
 - What campus resources have you used?
 - Have you met with an advisor, a counselor, or a financial aid advisor?
 - What school resources have you used? What are you aware of? (Tutoring, health clinic, TRIO, career center, clubs or students activities, workstudy, etc.)

[Question 5 helps us understand the reasons why students decided to enroll in college.]

5. Why did you decide to enroll in community college?
 - What was your goal in enrolling in college?
 - Where do you see yourself after college?
 - What type of career are you working towards?

[Question 6 and 7 helps us understand potential barriers to success.]

6. What are you worried about this semester that would prevent you from succeeding?
 - What are your biggest concerns right now?

- What stresses you out?

7. What are some of the barriers you've had to overcome in order to attend classes and do well in school?

- Barriers List: (Transportation, child care issues, family issues, work schedule, too tired/exhausted)
- Why might you skip class?
- Is it clear what you have to do to graduate?

[Questions 8-10 helps us understand what supports and assets students have that help them succeed, and what additional supports would help.]

8. What type of support systems do you have?

- Where do you go when you need help with schoolwork?
- Do you know where to go for any kind of help you may need?
- Do you feel like you have support from others?
- What kinds of support do you have?
- Do you have friends who attend college? The same college as you?
- Who pushed you to enroll? And persist?

9. What assets or strengths help students succeed?

- What strengths do you value in other students who have been successful in college?
- What assets or strengths do you have that have helped you succeed?
- What experiences in college have helped you gain strengths?
- Tell me about a time when you used one of your strengths to succeed at something in college?
- What strengths would you tell a new student he or she need to be successful in college?

10. What else would help you or other students succeed?

- What academic, health, or basic needs supports or resources would help?
- What additional supports would help students to succeed?

[Question 11 helps us understand reasons why stopout students leave school and the reasons why they were able to return.]

For students that stopped out:

11. What were the reasons that you had to leave school? What changed so that you were able to return to school?

How to get gift card

Want to get updates? Or further engagement?

Thanks for participating

Contact for any questions or concerns

Appendix 5: Method 3 Faculty/Staff Interview Questions

1. We want to know what your current role is at the college.
 - a. What is your job title and job description?
 - b. What department do you work for?
 - c. What training or education have you received for your role?
 - d. How long have you worked in this role for this college? For any institution?
2. We want to know how your role helps students succeed.
 - a. How was your role meant to impact student success?
 - b. What barriers to student success does your role address?
 - c. How do you measure/evaluate how you are impacting student success?

Answer the following questions beginning with the current area you work in, but also expanding to your entire college:

3. What are institutional barriers to student success at your college?
 - What institutional policies, requirements, procedures, structures, or biases decrease student success?
 - What doesn't work the way it should, thereby creating problems for students?
4. What are institutional assets that contribute to student success at your college?
 - What programs, experiences, spaces, or people contribute to student success at your college?
5. What changes or improvements would help students succeed in school?
 - What can be done differently to help students succeed?
 - What is something new that should be added to help students succeed?
 - What should be stopped because it negatively impacts student success?