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BEYOND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE: FACTORS AFFECTING COMPLETION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE CAREER TRANSITIONS PROGRAM

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BEYOND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE: FACTORS AFFECTING COMPLETION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE CAREER TRANSITIONS PROGRAM

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Mrs. Eurevett (Hunter) Pugh whose life exemplified faith, love, strength, and compassion and was filled with quiet dignity and grace. Her spirit continues to inspire me and our family.

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I would like to thank my God through Jesus Christ for perseverance and grace for growth. I would like to thank my mother, for believing in my ability and giving me the inspiration to pursue higher education. To my husband William, for his prayers and undying faith that continually remind me of always keeping my focus on a Higher Power. To my family, all of those who supported me as well as those whose memories still inspire me, thank you for believing in my ability to complete my goal. And for my family who have started down their own educational path using me as a model, keep on striving. To my siblings John, June, Georgia, and Ramona, I thank you for loving me throughout all the challenges, trials, and tribulations.

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Finally, in closing, I thank the students who responded to the anonymous surveys and those who participated in the interviews for this study. Your comments and insights will continue to give direction and encouragement to students with similar challenges, enabling them to realize their educational dreams.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the characteristics of students who successfully completed "Career Transitions," a program to help adult learners obtain certification, degrees, and employment. The population for this study is low-income, single parents between the ages of 18 and 55 that were enrolled in a support program for TANF recipients. In this study I investigated background characteristics of participants' attitudes toward program supports, the experiences of TANF program completers, and whether students who successfully completed the program saw academic training as useful.

The researcher used a mixed method design to answer the three research questions:

1. What were the experiences of TANF Program completers?
2. How did TANF recipients perceive the usefulness of program academic training?
3. What background characteristics influenced participation and program completion of Career Transitions participants?

A two phase, sequential explanatory design was used (Creswell, 1999, 2003). Phase I used a quantitative methodology and Phase II used a qualitative methodology to further explain and elaborate on the findings in Phase I (Tashakkori, &Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 1999, 2003).

In Phase I, descriptive statistics were used to analyze information obtained from a self-report survey completed by 35 successful participants. The survey was used to obtain information concerning background characteristics, barriers and support services

used by the students who successfully completed the program. Phase II obtained the in-depth perspective of program completers related to their experiences and training.

A summary of the survey results in Phase I showed a plurality of the participants were white and female. They were single parent TANF recipients, who were usually first generation college students. The median age was 34.3 years and 30.3 percent had completed a GED. Exactly 68.8 percent of the participants delayed college after high school and over half of the participants indicated that financial aid was used to fulfill family obligations. Most of the participants found academic training as useful. This is an indication that among successful students, academic training is very important in completing the program. Additionally, two other major findings were that older respondents tend to rate academic training as less useful than younger participants who had been in the program longer viewed academic training as more useful than those who were in the program for less time which is supported by the literature.

Phase II supported the findings in Phase I. All five participants interviewed were first generation college students and all participants stated academic training was very useful to their success.

Chapter I

Introduction

On August 22, 1996, then-President Bill Clinton signed into law a massive overhaul of the nation's welfare system, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). The new law was a comprehensive bipartisan welfare reform plan that dramatically changed the nation's welfare system as most Americans knew it, from the 1935 Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) entitlement program, in which recipients were guaranteed cash and other benefits based on need and eligibility, to one requiring work in exchange for time-limited assistance (PRWORA, 1996).

To move recipients into employment, PRWORA imposed a five-year lifetime limit on public assistance to all welfare recipients for cash assistance and limited training opportunities to move recipients into employment. In the State of Oklahoma and the rest of the nation, the policy imposed the five-year limit for cash and a one-year limit within the approved 60 months for educational and/or vocational training while receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The federal law also incorporated a work requirement. As a result of PRWORA, education, employment, and training programs were developed throughout the nation, including at every Career and Technology Education Center and community college in the State of Oklahoma to address this adult population. TANF to Work programs were established specifically to assist these adult learners.

Educational and credentialing opportunities help lead TANF recipients out of poverty, but there are challenges. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2009)

reported that 32% of students attending two-year public institutions have dependents and 61% of community college students who have children do not finish. Studying student parents who receive TANF is critical because they are rearing the next generation of wage earners, who need to be emotionally and economically stable. This allows their children to develop a future and potentially break the cycle of poverty. Many TANF recipients have backgrounds that include economic challenges, domestic violence, victimization, classism, racism, substance abuse and/or felony backgrounds. A major concern are felony issues. A felony background is a great challenge in Oklahoma, which is the number one incarcerator of women. According to the 2009 fiscal year Oklahoma Department of Corrections Female Offenders Operations report, Oklahoma incarcerated 134 women per 100,000 people compared to the national average of 69. Education and training has been used to assist students with background issues in obtaining employment. Although education and training alone cannot remove barriers to completion faced by TANF recipients, a lack of sufficient education can surely exacerbate the challenges that this population faces. Additionally, a number of TANF recipients do not graduate from high school and are not academically prepared for college level studies (Fein & Beecroft, 2006). There is a lack of knowledge about the postsecondary experience, and few have the emotional, academic, and/or intellectual support to help them through the demanding learning and training experience. Many TANF recipients are also first-generation college students. The United States Department of Education (1998) defined first-generation college students as students whose parents have never had any post-secondary education. In order for postsecondary institutions to understand the unique needs of adult learners with these multiple

challenges for completion, more must be known about who these adult learners are and their particular challenges for completion.

Because of their lack of knowledge about the postsecondary experience, many TANF recipients have enrolled in private trade schools hoping the training programs will allow them to have a living wage after completion. However, many who enrolled in these for-profit colleges not only do not receive an industry-recognized credential or degree, but they are also left with debt without employment. Iowa Senator Tom Harkin chaired hearings held by the United States Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP) on for-profit colleges in 2010. The hearings produced three reports (2010a, b, c) that found that the for-profit colleges were bringing in record profits, paid mostly by students using federal financial aid. Students in these institutions had high dropout rates. When leaving these institutions, the students did not have the skills or training to obtain employment, and many had to take out consumer bank or federal loans in addition to their Pell Grants and could not pay back the loans. The lack of completion, in addition to the heavy debt incurred from the training, was a major concern voiced at the hearings. Additionally, the debt incurred has kept students from continuing their education. According to Harkin's report (2010a, b, c), for-profit colleges are more expensive than comparable programs at community colleges or public universities, and the average tuition for a for-profit school is six times higher than a community college and twice as high as a four-year public colleges and universities. Additionally, TANF-eligible students can generally finance their entire educational training at a community college with a Pell Grant and, therefore, do not need to take out student loans they have to pay back.

Still, simply enrolling this population into postsecondary education cannot solve the challenges that hinder completion. Support systems are needed such as supportive advisement services, specialized training in either credit or non-credit courses, remediation support, work experience or internships related to areas of study. A better understanding of the unique challenges that these particular students face in their effort to obtain self-sufficiency through education is greatly needed. For example, PRWORA has provided opportunities for community colleges to provide short-term educational training and career pathways to assist TANF recipients in becoming more employable. However, many participants in these programs drop out before completing sufficient courses and/or training to become gainfully employed. Therefore, comprehensive student support services are needed.

According to Anderson, Halter, and Schuldt (2001), the delivery of quality support services has become a central theme in welfare reform debates. Support services on community college campuses for TANF recipients vary. Support services in the Program being studied include both traditional support services provided by the college, as well as program interventions such as comprehensive advisement services and classroom training related to the student's career pathway. Additional support services are curriculum development and design to include a special Employment Transitions credit class through the division of Business, and a Success in College class that is required of all degree-seeking students. Another support service provided for the studied population that is not a support service to the general college population is work experience related to each student's field of study. Work study will also be allowed as a support service to meet the welfare work requirements. Work experience and an

Employment Transitions class will assist in reinforcing classroom learning in the work setting. Some work experience positions can lead to unsubsidized employment and job development, and job placement services are included in this support service.

Another support service in this study is remediation support. Many community college students are enrolled in developmental (or remedial) coursework, and a majority of these students that require developmental (or remedial) classes have a very low pass rate. According to Bailey, Jeong, and Cho (2010), two-thirds of students assigned to developmental math never complete it, therefore support services should be provided for students in developmental courses.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to broaden an understanding of how program training and background characteristics influenced successful completers of "Career Transitions" a program to help adult learners obtain certification, degrees, and employment. The three research questions identified for this study included background characteristics, reported scales of usefulness and details on how program services assisted successful completers. This study, building on Tinto's (1975) model of retention and Metzner and Bean's (1986) model of non-traditional student attrition, examined single-parent TANF recipients in a training and employment program in a community college setting. Specifically, this research identified background characteristics, pre-college variables and collegiate barriers that were related to program completion by adult learners who were receiving public assistance while attending a community college training program. The challenge was to identify barriers faced by adult TANF recipients that hinder student achievement for successful completion of the education and training

program and, therefore, to identify strategies and interventions that may assist these adult learners in achieving their training and employment goals. As previously stated, the TANF recipients are faced with many barriers ranging from different types of oppression to lack of educational training.

Christopher (2005) stated that experiences of oppression and resistance associated with single motherhood, class, and welfare statuses emerge from women's narratives that she studied who were receiving TANF while attending college. Christopher's study utilized Collins's (1990) "both/and" conceptual framework to explore experiences of both oppression and resistance among welfare recipients attending college. These multiple oppressions can have an effect on training. According to Jones-DeWeever and Gault (2006), prior to TANF reform, states could allow welfare recipients to complete four-year degrees; however, in the current law, states narrowly interpreted TANF regulations as allowing 12 months or less of college training.

Despite these obstacles, many TANF recipients have learned to survive, but many have not learned how to attain goals set for training and employment that will assist them in becoming self-sufficient and no longer need TANF assistance. These adult learners with no previous exposure to college are asked to assimilate into this population of learners while simultaneously making the grade to succeed. Supportive program interventions are needed to direct services for transition and successful outcomes.

Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. What were the experiences of TANF Program completers?

2. How did TANF recipients perceive the usefulness of program academic training?
3. What background characteristics influence participation and program completion of Career Transitions participants?

The researcher used a mixed method design to answer the three questions. Researchers (Jick, 1979; Creswell, Clark, 2011) have argued that mixed methods provides strengths that offset weaknesses in quantitative and qualitative research and draws on strengths of both. To strengthen this study, a two phase, sequential explanatory design was used (Creswell, 1999, 2003). Phase I used a quantitative methodology and Phase II used a qualitative methodology to further explain and elaborate on the findings in Phase I (Tashakkori, &Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 1999, 2003). The study was more theoretically driven by the quantitative method than the qualitative method. The second phase assisted in obtaining supplemental information that supported information generated by Phase I.

Definitions

ACCUPLACER: College placement test. "A suite of computer-adaptive placement tests that quickly, accurately, and efficiently assess reading, writing, and math skills" (College Board, 2011).

Advisement: A systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the use of the full range of institutional and community resources (Winston, Enders& Miller, 1982).

AFDC: Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Career Transitions: An employment and training program that provides college access for Temporary Assistance to Needy Family (TANF) recipients, adult single parents, who desire to achieve Certificate of Mastery and/or Associate Degrees in Technical/Occupational Programs or approved transfer degree programs at a community college. The goal is to assist eligible participants in completing a college certificate and/or a degree related to an employment goal within 12 months or with an extension, up to 24 months. Career pathways are outlined and scheduled and Individualized Education and Employment Plans (IEEP) are developed for each student.

Classroom Training: Credit classes.

Community College: A two-year, comprehensive, accredited, public institution of higher education that grants certificates, credentials, and associate degrees.

CRC: Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) A national credential certifying workplace skills.

Dependent Child: a child under the age of 18 years living with a relative by birth, marriage, or adoption.

High School Preparation: High school diploma or GED

KeyTrain: Interactive training system to learn career readiness skills including programs for Applied Mathematics, Locating Information and Reading for information.

Mode of Transportation: Personal vehicle or public transportation.

Non-Traditional Student: students who have returned for educational training later in life generally older than students who are the traditional college age (18-23 years old).

Program Completion: Obtaining a college certificate, degree or employment.

PRWORA: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act.

Remediation: One on one self-paced work on academic deficiencies.

Retention: Continuation in training through completion of a prescribed program.

Sanction: Financial penalties for TANF program rules violations.

Self-Sufficiency: Employment with wages and benefits to make an employee independent of government financial assistance.

TABE: Test of Adult Basic Education

TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Workshops: Classroom training that does not cover college credit courses.

Significance of the Study

This study provided an understanding, from the perspective of first generation, low income, single parents who completed a training program designed to assist them in permanently exiting poverty. Many students do not complete these programs designed to provide education, training and employment services and therefore never exit the cycle of

poverty. This research is critical to understanding the importance of completion from the perspective of this population and the role postsecondary education can play in addressing the needs of this population. Prior to welfare reform in 1996, thousands of poor single parents entered postsecondary education and obtained certificates, degrees and obtained self-sustaining employment. The restrictive welfare policies since welfare reform have moved people off welfare rolls, but do not allow this population sufficient time to complete the credentials, degrees and eliminate barriers to higher education and employment. Community colleges have shifted their mission from access to completion. This study was needed to gain a better understanding of the obstacles faced from the experiences of low-income single parents, which will inform higher education institutions, government agencies and public policy on strategies to support these students. The changes in welfare reform policies discussed in this study and the findings from this study provide a framework to identify barriers and strategies to college success from the perspective of low-income, single parents. This study also provided an understanding of inadequately addressed issues related to the unique economic and academic supports needs of this population. This study will deepened the understanding of practitioners in adult and higher education, as well as inform public policy regarding barriers to completion for single parents in training programs at community colleges.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge related to student success factors that influence the persistence through program completion of students receiving public assistance while attending a community college. In Phase I, the researcher sought to discover which factors successful students viewed as more important in completing the Career Transitions Program.

Phase II sought to discover which factors successful students viewed as more important in completing the Career Transitions Program through individual interviews. This study is likely to show administrators how to develop strategies to assist students in being successful in a training program. The study considered total student integration of support services, including the importance of academic training which will open multiple career paths for future success.

Assumptions

In undertaking this study, the following assumptions exist:

1. All students receiving temporary public assistance (TANF) are similar in their economic status.
2. Sufficient training leads to gainful employment for TANF recipients.
3. Data were only collected from participants who completed the Program assuming that they would be better able to identify what support services or assistances was needed to succeed.
4. Experiences captured in the questionnaire reflect the experiences of TANF recipients in a community college setting.
5. First generation, low-income, single parents can provide detailed information of their experiences that assisted in completion at a community college program.
6. Students were forthcoming in their answer to questions in the interview.

Implication of the Study

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 has had several reauthorizations and extensions. A major part of the legislation is the attainment of self-sufficiency defined within that legislation as decrease in caseloads of

clients receiving cash assistance and increased employment of clients receiving public assistance. Credentials do lead to improve human capital. To identify challenges for this population in obtaining credentials and methods to address those issues will increase possibilities for positive economic outcomes and assist the population in becoming a more productive member in society.

Institutions can benefit from this study by incorporating more appreciative and intrusive advisement support systems for this population as noted by participants as being beneficial to their success. As noted in the open-end responses to the survey questions, this type of support from significant staff members assisted in completion efforts and supports the research on retention and completion. The Career Transitions Program developed the more intrusive, appreciative and developmental model of advisement for TANF recipients based on over a decade of attempting to find services that assisted students in completion. This blended method of advisement supports a more holistic approach to advising that has been found effective by other researchers (O'Banion, 1972, Crookston, 1972, Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008).

Intrusive or Proactive Advisement was first discussed in the literature by Glennen & Baxley (1985). The Intrusive Advisement model of advising is defined as action-oriented in involving and motivating students to seek help when needed, utilizing the good qualities of prescriptive advising (expertise, awareness of student needs, structured programs) and of developmental advising (relationship to a student's total needs). Intrusive advising is stated to be a direct response to an identified academic crisis with a specific program of action (Earl, 1987). According to the researcher, the theoretical framework of intrusive advising is based on three postulates from advising research.

First, professional academic counselors can be trained to identify freshmen students who need orientation assistance. The second postulate is that students respond to direct contact in which the potential problem in their academic life is identified and a resource of help offered, and third deficiencies in the necessary 'fit' of a student to his/her academic environment are treatable. Students can be taught to be successful students and they can learn orientation skills and other skills to assist them in persisting and completing. This concept was used to assist the successful students in this study.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

Due to financial constraints and family obligations, single parents that are college students often do not persist in post-secondary education and, therefore, do not complete the programs in which they are enrolled. Unlike other students in college, low income single parents face multiple barriers and challenges to completing their educational goals stemming from poverty and being the sole caretaker for their child(ren). According to the Center for Education Statistics (2002), 73 percent of all college students can be identified as nontraditional learners. One or more of the following characteristics defined non-traditional learners: delayed enrollment into postsecondary education, a nonstandard high school diploma, part-time attendance, dependents other than a spouse, being a single parent, financial independence, and having a full-time job. With the exception of a full-time job and financial independence, the population being studied possesses most of the other characteristics that identify nontraditional learners. However, in addition to the major challenges of other non-traditional populations, the population being studied has major financial constraints and is the lone adult provider for a minor child or children while pursuing a college degree, certification or employment. According to a recent government report, 1.9 million or twelve percent of undergraduate students are single parents. Additionally, 1.5 million or 78 percent of the undergraduate single parent population are low-income (U.S. Department of Education, 2009a).

Articles have been written and research projects have collected data for over 30 years (Astin, 1998), on the retention of adult learners in post-secondary education.

However, relatively little research has been conducted on persistence that differentiates adult learners who are single parents receiving public assistance from other non-traditional adult learners. Due to family responsibilities these single parents are not only required to navigate the system of government public assistance, they frequently need financial support for challenges they are frequently confronted with such as inadequate housing or homelessness and child care issues. They also need a substantial amount of financial aid that can be declined for not persisting to complete their degree. A new federal PELL regulation requires students to maintain a seventy-six percent completion rate or forfeit the financial aid, which does not allow for multiple withdrawals due to life situations. Students stop out oftentimes to take low paying jobs prior to completing a substantial amount of training due to child care issues, unreliable transportation and need for immediate income that TANF does not provide for these adult learners. Additionally, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office report (2001) TANF recipients reported having mental and physical impairments three times the rate of adults in the non-welfare population.

For the most part, early research on adult learners has categorized all adult learners as one group. This study targets a subgroup of adult learners who are single parents receiving public assistance who attended a community college training program. Early research has identified reasons for dropping out as the inability of college students to establish appropriate academic and social integration (Bean, 1982; Tinto, 1975). Tinto's extensive studies conducted over a twenty-year period continue to link persistence and learning experiences (Cullen & Tinto, 1973; Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1998). Much of the research is centered on retention and academic performance, even though

research has found that college student persistence occurs when a student successfully integrates into the institution socially and academically (Tinto, 1975). Social integration was influenced by pre-college characteristics and interactions with faculty, peers and out-of-classroom factors. However, the research was conducted on traditional college students in residential settings with selective admissions policies as opposed to a commuter institution with an open admissions policy, such as a community college. Additionally, the research was conducted on traditional aged college students and not TANF recipients who are primarily adult learners, who are single parents and the sole caregiver for a minor child or children. More emphasis is placed on academic integration for the population in this study, due to the need to complete enough training to obtain employment to support their family.

A recent study (Pascarella & Chapman, 2011) investigated the validity of Tinto's (1975) model of college withdrawal in different types of institutions, including four-year residential institutions, four-year commuter institutions, and two-year commuter institutions. The study supported the predictive validity of Tinto's model, but it suggested that interesting differences in the patterns of influence existed when the data were disaggregated by institutional type. The basic differences across institutional type concerned social and academic integration. Social integration played a stronger role in influencing persistence at four-year, primarily residential institutions, whereas academic integration was more important at two- and four-year, primarily commuter institutions. This is important to the current study because the population being studied is attending a two-year institution and all are commuter students. Academic integration is important, and Tinto (1998) argued for a greater educational community for faculty, staff, and

students to support both academic and social integration. Additionally, social integration may affect students at two-year schools according to some researchers including Ashar and Skenes (1996) and Okun and Benin (1996). These researchers found academic integration to be a very important retention issue, especially for community college students. Community college students, many of whom are also adult learners, have limited social interaction with the college. The researchers further postulated that social integration should take place in the classroom. Even though the population in this study received social support as belonging to an intact group, the focus of the program does not provide support for social integration; therefore, the study does not look critically at social integration.

Gibson (2000) further postulated that single parents in particular are not identified as a distinct group on campus and, therefore, have a low campus profile and are typically overlooked by researchers. Earlier research (Cross, 1981) classified three categories of obstacles that had an impact on the retention of this single parent population. The three categories were situational, institutional and dispositional obstacles. These obstacles separately and as a group affect the academic and social integration of adult learners.

Danziger and Sieefer (2000) stated that beyond the shared feature of welfare receipt, characteristics of TANF recipients and the factors associated with their being "hard to serve" are not well understood. According to the researchers, the phrase "hard to serve" entered the welfare reform vernacular as a way to categorize individuals who had difficulty in the post-PRWORA welfare system. Danziger and Sieefer (2000) referenced another study (Anderson, Derr, Dion, & Pavetti, 1999) stating "hard to serve" implied that the needs of some recipients may be beyond the scope of services that are typically

available in welfare or welfare-to-work offices. These under-resourced adult learners are hard to serve for many reasons, including federal work requirements placed on them, limited time to pursue a degree and/or certificate, lack of knowledge of the college environment, and expectations.

Additionally, the scope of services needed for TANF recipients is beyond the scope of general services provided by community colleges and other institutions of higher learning. This group has not been well studied or given the importance in research on adult learners. However, because of welfare reform, an increasing number of first-time college students have entered community colleges since 1996 and have become an important human resource development issue in the nation. Community colleges, with their open door policy, have allowed under-prepared and under-resourced students an opportunity to enter community colleges and this has brought retention and completion to the front as major issues. Ashar and Skenes (1996) stated that career advancement is the primary reason for adult learners to attend college. Okun and Benin (1996) stated that GPA upon entry to the institution and enrollment in several classes, as well as student characteristics, have a strong influence over retention at community colleges.

According to a study for the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2003), a post-secondary credential makes a significant difference in potential earning power and in the quality of life of public assistance recipients. The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization, dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. Their report stated that education was critical to increasing earnings and improving social mobility and that over the course of a lifetime, the income and earnings for a college graduate are nearly twice that of a high school graduate. Additionally,

Smith, Deprez, and Butler (2002) found that former TANF recipients with a college education are more likely to stay employed and less likely to return to TANF for any length of time. The researchers also found that recipients pursuing post-secondary education significantly improved their self-esteem, economic stability, sense of accomplishment, and their children's aspirations to attend college.

In discussing the history of welfare reform and the benefits of postsecondary education for welfare recipients, Dann-Messier (2001) asserted that continued growth and expansion of the economy relies on an increase in the number of available skilled workers. The report mentioned a concern with groups like my population as not being able to take advantage of economic situations due to inadequate education and training. Again, education is the key, but not just attending training, completion is a major concern for the population being researched.

Many TANF recipients, due to their low basic skills are often placed disproportionately in developmental courses. Researchers have found low pass rates in developmental courses (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). The most problematic area is developmental math, in which two-thirds of the students assigned to it never complete it. Oftentimes adult learners are placed in developmental courses because they have been out of academic training for many years and have forgotten some of the basic math skills. To address this issue, Career Transitions participants refresh their skills in math, reading and location information skills before taking the college placement exam. Even if the preparatory work can assist in moving up one level in a developmental course it decreases the amount of time needed to complete a certificate, credential or degree.

In an August 2010 speech to the University of Texas at Austin, President Barack Obama stated that education "is the economic issue of our time." The President's statement is supported by a recent Harvard University study titled "The Pathways to Prosperity Project" (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011). The report stated that over the past third of a century, all of the net job growth in America was generated by positions that required at least some post-secondary education and that in 21st-century America, education beyond high school "is the passport to the American Dream."

In projecting earnings over a period of time, researchers found that during a worker's lifetime, earnings would increase nearly $500,000 with an associate degree than an individual with no education beyond high school (Carnavale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). Community colleges can assist in addressing the need for some post-secondary education.

Enrolling more than 8 million students each year, community colleges are the largest part of the higher education system in the nation. Community colleges were identified in the Pathway to Prosperity report as the key to any large-scale strategy to increase post-secondary attainment, but challenges exist, particularly for students with parenting responsibilities or from low-income backgrounds. To take advantage of the Pathways to Prosperity, students must seek the pathway out of poverty. Education and self-sustaining employment is the key. Educational attainment is particularly important for single parents with economic challenges. These adult learners cannot take advantage of the economic growth described in the Pathway to Prosperity report without educational attainment.

The Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University (2010) published "Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018", which stated

that 27 percent of people with post-secondary licenses, certificates, and/or credentials but short of an associate's degree earn more than the average bachelor's degree recipient. The Center projected that the U.S. economy would create some 47 million job openings over the 10-year period starting in 2008 and ending in 2018. Nearly two-thirds of those jobs, in the Center's estimation, will require that workers have at least some postsecondary education. The authors stated that community colleges are key to any large-scale strategy to increase post-secondary attainment and that every high school graduate should find viable ways of pursuing both a career and a meaningful postsecondary degree or credential. However, the nation will not be able to achieve the necessary jobs needed for the economy if the dropout rate in schools and community colleges persists.

In support of the new focus on community colleges, President Obama proposed the American Graduation Initiative, the first-ever Community College Summit led by Dr. Jill Biden, which was held at the White House on October 18, 2010. The Summit placed a spotlight on two-year institutions and was in response to the President's call for community colleges to produce an additional 5 million graduates by 2020 to address our nation's competitiveness. The ability to retain students to at least the first year of training and/or completion of a college certificate is the most important aspect of achieving the President's goal and the future workforce needs of our nation. Where will single parents from economically challenged backgrounds and those receiving temporary assistance fit in the nation's future workforce efforts? Current programs must address multiple pathways to assistance and empower these future workers through completion of an achievable goal toward academic achievement, certification, credentialing, and employment. Not addressing this issue could produce an ever increasing number of

individuals not qualified to support themselves and their families, increasing the probability of a continued need for public assistance for generations that follow.

Education has often been called "the great equalizer in our society." Higher education in particular has been associated with intergenerational status attainment and social mobility (Blau & Duncan, 1967). Whether as a part-time learner or full-time learner, all adult learners should be given the opportunity to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for entry-level employment and build upon current knowledge to be able to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Higher education is needed, and community colleges are the gateway to higher education and employment for a large number of non-traditional adult learners.

A 2011 study by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy (IHEP) at California State University, Sacramento, stated that nearly 70 percent of degree-seeking students who enrolled in community college during the 2003-2004 school fiscal year did not transfer or earn a degree or certificate by 2009. IHEP found that most of the students who did not complete degrees or transferred to other institutions, dropped out. The study, which tracked more than 250,000 students, also found a wide disparity along racial or ethnic lines in the percentage of community college students who earned degrees or transferred. The study found the rate was 37 percent for White students, 35 percent for Asian American, 26 percent for African Americans, and 22 percent for Latinos. The issue is not of race or ethnicity alone but how socio-economic issues associated with ethnicity affects these populations. The low rates of college completion could hurt California's economy as well as in other states as we send more people to college to increase their employment opportunities through education. This lack of completion hits

students with multiple barriers particularly hard. Barriers include the lack of academic preparation, financial challenges, and family responsibilities.

In addition to the aforementioned barriers, TANF recipients who are students must navigate through the non-academic world of TANF eligibility and continuation requirements to receive cash assistance. The process for those in Oklahoma starts at the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS). TANF intake is an initial meeting with the client and the case manager, where the participant is evaluated for eligibility for TANF and barriers to employment. Orientation is the first step toward training, which includes a variety of assessments and includes drug screening and testing, screening for learning disabilities and assessments to determine interest, aptitude and work values. After the OKDHS TANF orientation process, students are staffed. Staffings are conferences where the participants' assessment results are reviewed with the student and community partners, to assist the participants in finding a career pathway that matches their interest and ability and an academic or vocational program to complete the training. If a participant does not meet minimum reading and math requirements for training they are referred for more in-depth assessments, including screening for learning disabilities before being referred for vocational training. The participants' failure to comply with assessments, drug screening or testing or any other TANF requirement could cause the participant to lose eligibility for TANF. If a participant is not eligible for TANF they are also not eligible for the education support program developed for this at risk population.

Background Characteristics

Single parents receiving TANF are unique because of challenges they face with very basic needs in post-secondary education that many other adult learners do not need

to address such as adequate housing or homelessness, undependable child care and sufficient food and clothing for themselves and their child(ren). These obstacles also include working within the political constraints within TANF and PRWORA policy requirements, lack of academic preparation, ethnicity, age and family responsibilities. Working within the policy of time-limited training while simultaneously seeking to find a quality job that leads to self-sustaining employment is a challenge.

Gender

The majority of TANF recipients are women. Miller, Finley, and McKinley (1990) stated that women have a greater fear of failure and fewer education goals than men. Men experience difficulty most often because of attitudes of just getting by and of negative feelings about school. Women are more inclined to have negative feelings about themselves. For example, research has been conducted on how women experience stereotype threat. Stereotype threat, used by Steele and Aronson (1995), refers to being at risk of confirming, a self-characteristic that is a negative stereotype about one's group. The term was first used by the above researchers who showed Black students did not do as well on standardized exams as whites when race was emphasized. The results showed how individuals could be harmed by the awareness of their behavior when viewed through the lens of a racial stereotype. Stereotype Threat has been used to explain failure of oppressed groups, including women. Studies suggest stereotype threat is an issue making gender inequity a challenge. Stereotype Threat leads women to think negatively about their abilities and infer group stereotypes are valid for those people and their group (Shapiro & Nueberg, 2007). Steele and Aronson (1997) were the first to describe this

achievement barrier with African-Americans. It is applicable to other groups, such as the population being studied.

Additionally, Clance and Imes, (1978) noted how the phenomenon called Imposter Syndrome caused many women to question their abilities and how they experienced feeling of not deserving to be in the positions they held and/or deserved the achievements they earned; even when evidence showed them to have earned the achievements. The researchers found how Imposter Phenomenon, also termed Imposter Syndrome affected how people felt that they did not deserve the success they achieved. Women were found to be particularly affected by this phenomenon. The researcher has observed the persist belief in TANF recipients that they do not deserve what they accomplished even when they had been successful academically.

Another issue that affects program completion for female TANF recipients is health related issues. According to a 2003 brief from the Kaiser Family Foundation, low income, poor women have worse health than other women. Survey questions 1 and 20 address this issue.

Additionally, the TANF female recipients have primary responsibility for caring for a child(ren). Many are also first-generation college students who lack the knowledge about college expectations and or the confidence to succeed. These students often are more likely to enroll as part-time students due to the TANF constraints, and according to Somers (1995), women have a greater college departure rate than men. This could be related to the stresses of school and the work requirements of PRWORA. Pay inequity is another issue that affects gender and ethnicity for women receiving temporary assistance. The American Association of University Women (AAUW) has documented the persistent

pay gap between males and females, even among those with equal credentials. A report by AAUW (2007) controlled for factors known to affect earnings, such as education and training, parenthood, and hours worked, and found that college-educated women still earn five percent less than men one year out of college and 12 percent less than men 10 years out of college, even when they have the same major and occupation as their male counterparts. As previously stated, American women earn 77 cents for every dollar American men earn and according to a report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009), the ratio of women's and men's median annual earnings went down in 2007 from 78 cents on the dollar for full-time year-round workers to 77 cents in 2009. A more recent report by the National Women Law Center (2014) found that on the average, women earn 78 cents for every dollar earned by men in the United States even with equal credentials.

In addition to obstacles faced by TANF recipients, women is Oklahoma have had many equity challenges. In their 2014 best and worst states for women, Wallethub.com ranked Oklahoma the sixth worst state for gender equality in the workplace. Additionally, the study ranked the state as 32nd in workplace environment, 28th in education and health and 48th in political empowerment. These issues are particularly a challenge for women who are single parents and have the sole responsibility of supporting their family while trying to obtain a living wage.

Ethnicity

According to the Heartland Alliance (2008), there are considerable disparities in the rate of poverty across racial groups. Overall the majority of people who are poor are white individuals, but black individuals are much more likely to experience poverty than

those who are white. Heartland Alliance lists race as the foremost distinguishing characteristic with respect to a child's probability of experiencing poverty in Oklahoma.

Additionally, the lack of employment opportunities affects poverty. According to a three part series in 2010 by the Oklahoma Policy Institute (OK Policy), deeply entrenched racial disparities exist in Oklahoma unemployment. Black workers in the state were unemployed at more than twice the rate (13.1 percent) of white workers (5.9 percent) and the disparities were found to be persistent. Additionally, the report stated that Black workers also stayed unemployed longer and were underemployed at higher rates than their white counterparts. The institute stated that two explanations for which evidence seemed to converge was the higher incarceration rate among blacks and discrimination in the hiring process. The institute further pointed out that aggressive prosecutions for drug offenses increased incarceration rates for all races during the 1980s and early 1990s, but the effect on minority incarceration rates was wildly disproportionate. By 1992, African-Americans and Hispanics comprised nearly ninety percent of all those sentenced to state prison for drug possession offenses, despite comparable usage rates of illicit drug among whites and blacks. OK Policy Institute concluded by stating that if Oklahoma wants to achieve employment parity for all of its workers, more resources need to be allocated to reach out to the thousands of long-term unemployed and ex-offenders. These ex-offenders struggle to find permanent-paid work and according to OK Policy institutes, the loss of wealth and income associated with extended unemployment, whether because of incarceration or persistent joblessness devastates working families and disadvantages those workers in the job market for years to come. Several students in the TANF population have had issues related to completion

and employment attainment due to felony convictions. As Oklahoma continues to be the number one incarcerator of women, education and credentialing is even more needed to assist them in overcoming some of these barriers.

First Generation College Student

Research has generated a large body of knowledge about students who are the first in their families to attend college (Choy, 2001). These students receive very little guidance in their pursuit of an education because their parents have no education experience to assist them in understanding the college experience (Horn & Bobbitt, 2000). Most of the research related to first generation college students defined as those where neither parent obtained a post-secondary degree. However, the U.S. Department of Education has defined a second type of first generation college student as a student from single parent homes where the single parent has not completed a four year degree (United States Department of Education, 2010). Many of these students are the focus of this study. Survey question #6 in this study addresses first generation status. The pursuit of a college credential or degree is a challenge for most students but for students who are TANF participants, many of whom have been out of school for a number of years, or who did not complete a traditional high school diploma, and have the additional burden as the sole support for a child(ren), it is a particularly challenging undertaking. These students are under-resourced and under-prepared, many requiring remediation in basic academic skills necessary to satisfactorily complete college level courses. A major support mechanism in many colleges is the developmental education provided to these students. There has been a need for developmental programs to assist students with academic needs in institutions of American higher education since 1630 (Stahl & King, 2000).

Institutions have often lauded program successes, but they take time. TANF recipients do not have this additional time to complete due to government constraint for program participation. The open access model is incompatible with the limited access of TANF support. Additionally, a recent study (MDRC, 2011) has found that the most promising practices for academically underprepared student who are enrolled in developmental or remedial education, were those within a compressed time frame or that were linked to relevant vocational coursework. Survey questions 1 through 4 under remediation address the level of participation in remedial course for successful TANF participants.

Academic Preparation

Academic preparation is another challenge that affects college or certificate completion for TANF recipients. Many of these single parents had to complete a General Education Diploma (GED) before they would be allowed to enter into a college training program. The time working on the GED is subtracted from the sixty months of lifetime benefits while receiving TANF benefits. Additionally, several students who have completed the GED have challenges in passing college placement exams, such as the ACCUPLACER or COMPASS. When minimum requirements are not achieved, these adult learners are placed in remedial courses that do not count toward a certificate and/or a degree. These issues also utilizes the allowable time for training related to a career goal and employment. To address the remedial issue, all new program participants that were not previously enrolled, were assigned remedial work on the KeyTrain computerized academic support program, as well as training assignments in the Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC) learning labs prior to taking the placement assessments.

Family Responsibility

Family responsibilities are defined here as having the primary or total responsibility of caring for at least one minor child requiring participants to address childcare and transportation issues. Single parents receiving TANF are often required to stay home with a sick child because of the lack of childcare facilities that will accept a sick child.

According to Holyfield (2009), single parent families in the United States have almost tripled in the past few decades and a huge majority of these families are headed by females. An Arkansas program, the Single Parent Scholarship Fund (ASPSF) established in 1990, provides eligible TANF recipients scholarships to complete training. According to the 501 C-3 organization, nearly one in five Arkansas families are led by single parents, of which 80% are single mothers and an estimated 43% of single-parent families were officially below the poverty line. The program was created to address the many financial challenges faced by TANF recipients.

There are several programs throughout the United States that provide training for the adult learning population who are single parents, and many have major retention issues. Over a three-year period, Hamilton and Brock (1994) surveyed 40,000 welfare recipients in seven cities to determine strategies to assist those adult learners in leaving welfare. Their study defined two types of programs for their analysis, the Labor Force Attachment Programs (LFA) and the Human Capital Development Programs (HCD). LFA programs in each site emphasized immediately assigning people to short-term job search activities with the aim of getting them into the labor market quickly, and the

Human Capital Development (HCD) program in each site emphasized first enrolling people in education or training. The researchers emphasized that the LFA programs stressed the value of people taking any job, even a low-paying one, and later advancing into more stable, better-paying jobs, but the HCD programs emphasized education, primarily basic or remedial education or GED preparation (not college) before steering them toward the labor market. The LFA and HCD programs were designed expressly for the purposes of their research to magnify the differences between the employment-focused approach and the education-focused approach. They found that the Labor Force Attachment group and the Human Capital Development group both succeeded in increasing participation in the specific programs they promoted, but a combination of the education-focused groups with the HCD program led to significant positive effects on receiving any type of education or training credential. These educational and credentialing opportunities help lead TANF recipients out of poverty. The researchers noted that their analysis did not consider the education benefits that are not reflected in earnings or put a dollar value on families' or children's well-being. In a more recent report, Hamilton (2002) stated that TANF's focus on employment is well placed but does not encourage states to maximize the payoff that education and training can have. The researcher further stated that there is frustration for policymakers because the potential payoff to the flexible use of work-focused, short-term training and GED preparation leaves many questions unanswered in the research. According to Hamilton (2002), we know little about the success of more innovative pre- and post-employment training.

In general, researchers disagree over the major obstacles related to student retention. Astin (1996) postulated that financial reasons were major components of

student persistence. However, Tinto's (1998) theory found that multiple individual factors related to academic and social integration, such as attending college full-time, working part-time, interacting with faculty, and participating in curricular activities, most affected retention. Even though these studies are cited quite often in research literature on retention, Gibson (2000) pointed out that neither Astin nor Tinto conducted research on this sub-population of non-traditional learners. Bean and Metzner's (1986) model has been widely tested and has good applications in this study because their model incorporated variables and outcomes for non-traditional learners. However, more research with the targeted population of TANF recipients in community college settings needs to be conducted.

In addition to the many obstacles faced by this population, many are first-generation college students. McMillen (1995) conducted a retention study on first-generation college students and found that this subgroup at a community college setting had multiple barriers, such as being under-prepared and under-resourced, that needed to be addressed to promote retention. McMillen pointed out that Tinto acknowledged that his findings focused primarily on students in a traditional four-year educational institution with students under 24 years of age and might not be applicable in a two-year college setting.

Grosset (1992) conducted a retention study on community college dropouts and compared the needs of adult learners with the needs of traditional students, but the study did not address the subculture of adult learners who are confronted with even more challenges, such as being the sole support for one or more dependent children which is the population being studied.

Community colleges have become the higher education institutions of choice as people train or retrain for the ever-changing labor market. Institutions that are concerned about maintaining and/or expanding their enrollment should pay close attention to this subgroup of adult learners. For many community colleges, this subgroup is important because of their overall mission. Additionally, community colleges should want to know how to retain this invisible population of non-traditional, transitional learners on campus as these students seek to obtain educational training in their effort to secure employment.

Summary

The literature review indicated many factors affecting completion of student TANF recipients. The researcher used the literature to determine the factors that required close review in determining what background characteristic affected completion.

Gender issues as stated in the literature have hindered program completion for many TANF recipients. Women are disproportionately affected by obstacles that affect completion such as domestic violence (Rigor & Staggs, 2004) and feeling a lack of self-confidence that hinder completion (Steele, 1980). Research has also shown race to be a factor. In a recent report (2014) the American Association of University Women (AAUW) detailed how the gender pay gap in pay affects all women, but pointed out that for women of color the pay shortfall was much worse. Women generally earn from 77 percent to 78 percent of the wages earned by men. White men were used as the benchmark for earnings according to the report because they make up the largest demographic group in the workforce. Asian American women's salaries showed the smallest gender pay gap, at 90 percent of white men's earnings and Hispanic women's salaries showed the largest gap, at 54 percent of white men's earnings. The report stated

the benefit of education, but noted that black and Hispanic women earned less than their white and Asian peers even when they have the same educational credentials. The lack of credentials as stated in the literature will make the gap even greater. Equal pay was one of the issues that placed Oklahoma women as the third worst state in America for women by the Oklahoma Council for Women (OCW) in 2008. In 2014, the rating dropped to second worst state.

Other issues as noted in the literature review included the highest incarceration rate and high rates of women without health insurance or with health issues, and murders. Two former Career Transitions participants were murdered in a domestic violence situation during the last two years. The Institute for Women's Policy Research (2002) ranked Oklahoma 48th in an analysis on women's socio-economic and political circumstances. IWPR ranked Oklahoma 43rd of women's status on employment and earnings in a recent 2014 report.

It is not an easy decision for TANF participants to accept the small monetary benefits for an extended period of time to allow for completion of their plan of study. Decisions are made whether to accept welfare payments or child support. However, accepting or becoming ineligible for TANF due to insufficient child support payments can also change a participant's eligibility for subsidized child care. Several students in the Career Transitions program became homeless while attempting to obtain employment, certificates and/ or degrees.

Education is greatly needed and continued education is emphasized in the Program. Researchers have found that the lack of human capital development prevent low-income families from increasing earnings. The lack of education keeps individuals

from attaining higher paying jobs and increases the likelihood of experiencing poverty at some point during their lifetime (Hamilton, 2002; Carnevale & Rose, 2001). All participants in the qualitative study continued their education after completing the program.

This study sought to address these challenges of disparity through educational attainment and employment readiness training. OK Policy (2010) noted that the persistent inequality in the job market between whites and non-whites is a drag on economic growth. Investment in strategies that grow the economy equitably was especially needed due to the rapidly changing demographics in the state. The report pointed out that 39 percent of Oklahoma's children were children of color and the non-white population is projected to continue to grow. Left unaddressed, OK Policy stated that the disparities in employment among racial groups could also dim Oklahoma's prospect for future prosperity. Survey question #3 in this study addresses the ethnicity of participants.

National College Completion Movement

In order to move out of poverty achieving self-sustaining employment is a must. It has been pointed out that current and future jobs defined as middle class jobs are becoming less attainable without education or training beyond high school (Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2010), and completing additional credentials are a necessary.

There is a national college completion movement incorporating both educational organizations and national corporations, and the movement is strongly supported at the community college level. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) former President George Boggs signed the Democracy's Colleges: Call to Action

statement at AACC's national convention on April 20, 2010, supporting this movement. The AACC President was joined by leaders of other organizations to promote the national goal to increase the number of students who complete degrees, certificates, and other credentials. AACC represents the nation's 1,200 community colleges and asked them to join the call to action to engage community college institutions to advance the completion agenda by pledging to increase student completion rates by 50 percent over the next decade. According to AACC, the completion theme underlies all of the association's work in 2011.

AACC and leaders of the five other national organizations, as well as their governing boards, their faculty and their 11.8 million students, signed the pledge in support of the completion initiative. Leaders signing the pledge included representatives of the Association of Community College Trustees, League for Innovation, Center for Community College Student Engagement, National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, and Phi Theta Kappa. According to a 2011 report by AACC, completion rates are improving. The report stated that community college students earned 127 percent more certificates and degrees from 1989 to 2010, whereas enrollment grew by 65 percent, and transfer rates to four-year institutions increased by 11 percent. Additionally, the report stated that students of color did especially well. Hispanic enrollment grew by 226 percent, and earning credentials increased by 440 percent. However, despite the narrowing graduation gap, the report stated that black and Hispanic students graduate at about half the rate of white students. However, the increase in completion rates shows progress. According to O'Banion (2011), the National Completion Agenda has emerged as the overarching mission of the community college. Additionally, national foundations

have joined the movement. The Lumina Foundation, which addresses issues that affect access and educational attainment among all students, and particularly underserved student groups, was the founding investor with seven other founding Partners for the Achieving the Dream (ATD) Initiative. Partners included the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC); the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas-Austin (CCLP); the Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University (CCRC); Jobs for the Future (JFF); MDC; MDRC; and Public Agenda for the Achieving the Dream (ATD) initiative.

According to the Lumina Foundation, Achieving the Dream (ATD) was developed as a national initiative in 2004 with its partners in an effort to develop an evidence-based, student-centered initiative built on the values of equity and excellence. According to ATD, the initiative is the nation's leading community college reform network, serving 3.5 million students throughout 30 states and the District of Columbia, and it has contributed and will continue to contribute significantly toward the nation's goal of increasing the number of Americans with a college certificate or degree with marketplace value within the next decade. ATD stated that they are the largest non-governmental movement for student success in higher education history. According to the Lumina Foundation, Achieving the Dream is closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success nationwide by 1) improving results at institutions, 2) influencing public policy, 3) generating knowledge, and 4) engaging the public. ATD states that community colleges are a vital component in returning the U.S. to its place as a global leader in higher education degree attainment. The Lumina foundation has a goal to increase the portion of Americans with high-quality college degrees, certificates or other credentials

to 60% by 2025. Statistics from the Bureau of Census (2010) identified in a Lumina Foundation report (2010) on Oklahoma, reported that 31.72% of adults between the ages of 25 and 64 years of age hold at least an associate degree, making the state 43rd among states in terms of college attainment. The national average is 38.3%. In terms of ethnic breakdown, 50.86 were Asian/Pacific Islander, 34.31, were white, 26.14% were Black, and 24.5 % were Native American and 14.57% Hispanic. In order to meet the goal of for 2025, the Foundation projected that 414,415 degrees or credentials are needed to close the 23% projected gap in degree attainment in Oklahoma.

Additionally, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have been active in the national completion movement. The foundation published a white paper in 2010 on its investments and strategies and the ways that next-generation technology can improve college readiness and completion in the United States. The involvement of national foundations with the national completion movement will keep completion in the forefront of national discussions.

Largely due to welfare reform, the last decade has seen an increase in training programs specifically targeting single parents throughout the United States, yet there are many restrictions on allowable training. There is a special training and/or education program targeting single parents on public assistance at every community college and career technical education program in the State of Oklahoma. This study concentrated on one employment and training program at an urban community college in Oklahoma.

Other Programs

College completion has not been given much attention in research pertaining to single parents. The majority of the studies on single parents are concerned primarily with

retention. While students must be retained to complete, they can be retained for several years just by taking developmental courses without ever receiving any type of credential, certificate or degree. Additionally, many programs serving TANF recipients for years adopted the "work first" philosophy that had a major emphasis on employment but very little emphasis on education, training or degree attainment. Many work first programs had success in the beginning years of welfare reform moving people off welfare. One successful program was Marriott International's welfare-to-work program titled Pathways to Independence. Marriott started the six-week program in 1990 with emphasis on pre-employment, life and occupational skills training designed to help individuals receiving public assistance have an opportunity to transition to a productive career in the hospitality industry and to teach welfare recipients basic employment and life skills. This program however did not have an emphasis on obtaining credentials or degrees, but placed major emphasis on the attainment of soft skills needed to retain employees in the hotel industry. Other Welfare-to-Work programs focused on social supports and employment readiness training. Few programs like the program in this study have had a major emphasis on education and the completion of credentials and degrees as well as employment.

However, those programs emphasizing basic skills development have also had success. One such initiative started in 2004. This model initiative addressed at-risk student populations and was operated by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) offices of Adult Basic Education and Workforce Education. SBCTC began the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (I-BEST) as a demonstration project involving ten community colleges in Washington State. The I-BEST approach created classroom teams of English as a second language (ESL), adult

basic education (ABE) instructors and professional-technical instructors, who co-taught an integrated course of language and vocational skills training at the same time. The program was designed to reach students with limited English proficiency who were seeking the skills that lead to higher wage and higher skill jobs. This new teaching style was developed to address an influx of non-English speaking immigrants to the state. According to the SBCTC report the adult population of non-English speakers more than doubled within ten years, growing from 117,000 to 261,000 between 1990 and 2000. According to SBCTC (2005), state and national research revealed that low-skilled adults often began their educational process in either ESL or ABE courses, and few made the transition to workforce skills training programs that allowed them to reap the benefits of higher wage and higher skill jobs. The goal of the demonstration projects was to test the widely held belief that students must first complete all levels of basic education before they could begin workforce training.

The requirement by some colleges that under-resourced students with inadequate high school preparation take adult basic education classes before taking credit-bearing courses is a challenge for many students, but it is a major challenge for single parents seeking credentials for employment. Many colleges require non-credit basic skills instruction prior to placement in academic college coursework. This delay in taking college level courses has great effects on many students, but it is particularly problematic for student TANF recipients attending college due to the time limitation placed on them to receive benefits. Most training programs only allow twelve months of training. The (I-BEST) team-teaching approach reduces barriers between credit and non-credit coursework according to SBCTC (2005), and I-BEST participants were more likely than

non-participants to move from basic skills to credit-bearing coursework and to successfully complete credits, earn certificates, and make gains on basic skills tests.

In two Ohio community colleges, Scrivener and Weiss (2009) found as part of the MDRC Opening Doors initiative that low-income students who were just starting college and who had histories of academic difficulties showed positive program effects while special services were being provided. Services included additional counseling and a small stipend of $150, for each semester when services were used. Counselors had smaller-than-usual caseloads to enable them to give more time for students, and students were given a designated contact in the financial aid office. According to the researchers, the colleges provided Opening Doors counseling services that were more intensive, comprehensive, and personalized than the colleges' standard services. The researchers also found that students receiving the intervention used financial aid and counseling services at greater rates than the control group of students who had access to standard campus services. The researchers did note that the initial effects diminished over time.

Summary

The literature indicates many challenges for low income students in dual roles as student and a parent having family responsibilities. Additional challenges of being a first generation college student were noted. As stated earlier, education is the great equalizer and it is needed to help students develop, thrive and obtain a living wage to support their families. Additionally, a good education prepares these adult students to solve problems encountered in their personal and interpersonal relationships, to support their families and to become a contributing member of a democratic society.

Many policy makers have no expertise in poverty or working in programs with populations similar to the TANF recipients in this study. Understanding Stereotype

Threat (Steele & Aronoson, 1995) and Imposter Syndrome (Clance & Imes, 1978) as discussed in the literature, as well as the unique challenges of TANF recipients previously discussed in this chapter is needed. As one researcher has stated (Comer, 2001), many successful people are inclined to attribute their situations to their own ability and effort, making them, in their minds, more deserving than less successful people. They ignore the support they received from families, networks of friends and kin, schools, and powerful others.

Many first generation students in this study lack the support stated by the researcher. Still, the misperceptions of academic administrators and policymaker influence many education policies and practices. When crafting policy, most do not involve the stakeholders that these policies affect. Rarely are these policies guided by what we have known from years of research and education with this population. Legislators continue to be pressured to cut funding to safety net programs and services for the poor such as the funds that allow participants in this study to complete adequate training to obtain a living wage. PELL and other financial supports are being cut back requiring students to depend increasingly on loans to support their education.

Welfare reform through TANF is almost 20 years old and despite the push to increase educational opportunities for these low-income adult learners who are entering college in increased numbers, funding for the program has decreased. The program has been enormously successful in leveling the playing field for access to higher education, but according to a report of the Education Trust (2011) the maximum Pell awards initially covered about three-fourths of college costs, now only covers about one-third of the cost. Students therefore are more dependent on loans and part-time employment to have

sufficient funds to finance their college experience. That however creates a TANF policy conflict. Part-time paid employment while attending school and receiving TANF can result in the student case closure for being over income. The part-time job could also eventually jeopardize other safety net supports needed for low income single parents such as food stamps, subsidized child care, low-income energy assistance and Section 8 housing.

If we do not provide adequate supportive services for this population and cut some of the limitations placed on training, fewer students will complete and more families will continue to be dependent on government aid and support. Most federal and state supported programs still focus on short-term training and employment when additional training is needed for students to successfully leave public assistance.

Additionally, TANF organizations that don't meet set benchmarks don't receive incentive funds. Sanctions, as a result of not attaining set benchmarks, are used to measure and motivate students. However, as stated in the literature review, increased sanctions affect student persistence and completion. The training program in this study attempted to not only inspire and support students to complete enough education to become employed, but self-sufficiency training was provided through support services needed to deter sanctions.

Chapter III

Research Methodology

Introduction

This is primarily an ex post facto study with an overall purpose of identifying selected variables related to successful program completion of student TANF recipients at a community college. According to Kerlinger (1973) ex post facto research is defined as:

> empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulable. Inferences about relations among variables are made without direct intervention, from concomitant variation of independent and dependent variables (p. 379).

Using this definition this study meets the criterion of the researcher not having control of the independent variables since they occurred prior to the study being conducted. The mixed method approach is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and integrating both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the research problem (Tashakkori &Teddlie, 2003).

In Phase I of the study, data were obtained using a survey instrument designed by the researcher. The questions were developed in a way to address each research question. After approval by the University of Oklahoma Institutional Research Board, revisions were made to the questionnaire following a pretest of the instrument on recent program completers. The survey was then administered by the researcher through the Oklahoma

City Community College Institutional Research Department where the training program is housed. A copy of the instrument is in Appendix A. Eighty program participants who had completed the Program between 2009 and 2011 were identified and sent the survey instrument through Survey Monkey. Participants were asked to respond anonymously to the questions on the survey. The surveys were completed anonymously to be sure there was no potential effect on participation in completion of the survey. A thirty-five percent response rate occurred after four administrations. TANF participants are generally difficult to survey because the population changes location and telephone numbers frequently due to their financial situations. Based upon the transitory nature of the population, a 35% percent response rate was adequate and the anonymous survey method was regarded as the only way to collect the data. Even though this study was primarily ex post facto, there was a qualitative sub-part carried out to supplement the information generated from the quantitative method.

Phase II consisted of a qualitative case study conducted to obtain additional information from successful participants to further ascertain the supports needed to assist the population in successful transitions and completion. The phenomenological approach was used to describe the meaning of the lived experiences of the participants. The phenomenological research method tries to understand the essence of an experience; to describe the essence of the lived phenomenon. It studies a number of individuals who have shared the experiences using primarily interviews with individuals. The data is analyzed for significant statements, meaning and description of the essence (Moustakas, 1994, Creswell, 2006). The purpose of the qualitative case study was to explore and understand through the obtaining of information from key participants in an employment

and training program what they believe contributed to their successful completion. The overall aim of this study is to identify the characteristics of successful completers of "Career Transitions" a program to help adult learners (TANF recipients) obtain certification, degrees, and employment. The three research questions identified for this study include background characteristics, reported scales of usefulness and details on how program services assisted successful completers.

The philosophical assumptions of the phenomenological case study were used with a descriptive and exploratory type of analysis (Yin, 2003). The researcher explored the individual lived experiences and expertise of the key participants through a questionnaire and structured interviews. The participants were chosen because of their unique status, experience, and knowledge of their lived experience while receiving TANF. This research design was appropriate because the responses of the participants were shared and used in the development of a more effective education and training model for TANF recipients.

As the research has illuminated, there are many obstacles faced by TANF recipients that hinder completion of training programs. Why do some participants persist through completion of training and others do not? In Phase II narrative analysis was used to answer the research questions related to background characteristics and experiences of participants while attending the training program. The life-story method as described by Riessman (1993) adds analytical elements to events, which, in this study helped to explain why successful students completed the program. As explained by Reissman (1993) narrative analysis gives voice to participants to articulate their own viewpoints. This allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding of the obstacles and challenges

faced by this low income, first generation population on what assisted them in completing. Interviews are far more personal than the surveys conducted in Phase I of this study and interviews allowed for additional probe and follow-up questions.

The researcher in this study acknowledged the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the beginning of the study. The researcher is the director of the program being studied and had a unique understanding of the experiences student encountered as they navigated through training program. She believes her experiences, educational background and being a first generation college student all increase her knowledge and sensitivity to the population being researched. Every effort was made to ensure objectivity. The researcher's personal bias may have shaped understanding of the data collected.

Participants were purposefully selected because of their unique expertise in understanding their lived experiences receiving temporary assistance while attending a training program. The researcher initially conducted a pilot study using a questionnaire (Appendix A) with some open-ended questions sent anonymously to former program participants. The second part of the study consisted of unstructured interviewing techniques; asking-open-ended questions of the participants about their unique expertise in the training program and how it contributed to the completion of training. An e-mail was sent to prospective participants asking them whether they would be interested in participating in a research study about successful completion. Each participant who responded was contacted and a convenient location and time was determined for the interview. Prior to the interview the researcher asked the participants to sign a consent form and complete a demographic form of relevant background data. In qualitative

research purposeful sampling is commonly used. The selection criteria for inclusion were students who successfully completed the program and could articulate their experiences as they relate to the phenomena being investigated. The qualitative inquiry method using Narrative analysis was used in Phase III of this study which allowed for an examination of TANF College program completers. Narrative analysis assisted the researcher in creating a written detail of the phenomena of single parents' persistence towards college completion and to investigate and identify barriers and support systems identified by program participants. The researcher interviewed participants to hear the obstacles, struggles and strategies used that assisted them in persisting through completion. Participants were interviewed and audio recorded to obtain data from participants that were coded and analyzed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis strategy by which qualitative data are segmented, categorized, summarized, and reconstructed in a way that captures the important concepts within the data set. Thematic coding is the strategy by which data are segmented and categorized for thematic analysis. (Ayres, 2008). The researcher used Microsoft Word's Insert Comment reviewing tool option to assist in sorting information for recurring themes. Participant information was transcribed and reviewed line by line to obtain common themes that contributed to their successful completion. Results related to the study research questions are discussed in Chapter IV.

The protocol for data collection consisted of a written questionnaire in Phase I and personal interviews in Phase II. The interview was conducted to ask the participants to explain their ideas in detail and elaborate on issues stated. The researcher used a non-directive style of interviewing using open-ended questions allowing the participants the

freedom to control pacing and subject matter of the interview. Additionally, more directive questioning was used for more clarification of information that the participants provide. The researcher recorded the information by making hand-written notes and a recording. Additional sub-questions were asked as needed.

The researcher initially "field tested" a sample questionnaire with 3 key participants to assess the type of questions for use throughout the study and to ensure that the data from the questions are valid and reliable. Reliability was assessed through asking some participants to review the answers to the personal interview. Qualitative validity was determined through the use of strategies to check the accuracy of the findings. Triangulation from different data sources (quantitative study) was used to build a coherent justification for the outcomes. With specific descriptions from participants to determine accuracy (Creswell, 2009). Trustworthiness is determined by credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Credibility was established through member checking, sending participants their transcript for review, and verification. Each participant agreed with his or her transcript. Purposeful sampling in this case will increase the in-depth understanding by selecting information rich experiences from participants who have experienced the need for TANF while attending school.

Safeguards were used to protect the participant's rights: First, participants were advised in writing of the voluntary nature of their participation and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants were advised that at any time during the process they could decline to answer any question. Second, the research objectives were clearly delineated in writing and articulated to the participants. Third, a written consent form was obtained from each participant. Fourth, the

participants was informed in writing of all data collection methods and activities. Fifth, provisions were made for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the written transcriptions and interpretations of the data was made available to the participants.

Interviews were conducted with 5 participants who completed the program. Face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to discover additional factors successful students viewed as most important in completing the Program. A chart of the background characteristics of participants in this phase of the study is in Figure 3.

Participants

The study consisted of students who completed the Career Transitions Program. All participants met a low socioeconomic level requirement, which is 200 percent below the poverty level. Program participants are referred to Oklahoma City Community College for training and employment by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS).

In Phase I, 35 participants responded to the anonymous survey administered by the Institutional Research division at Oklahoma City Community College. The results of the survey participants consisted of thirty-five completers of the Career Transitions Program. All respondents were single parents, TANF recipients, and first generation college students while attending the program.

In Phase II, 5 study participants consisting of four females and one male completed interviews. All respondents were single parent, TANF recipients while attending the program and all were first generation college students and the sole supporters of a minor child(ren). The participants were identified through the recruitment process, which consisted of a recruitment flyer distributed by the division of Community

Development at Oklahoma City Community College. Participants were asked to contact the researcher by telephone or by e-mail if they had an interest in participating in the study. After being contacted, the researcher asked permission to interview and audiotape the interview. After the interviews, the audiotapes were transcribed for analysis. Each participant was sent an e-mail responding to their volunteer participation.

The purpose of this study was to identify the Program interventions that were most useful in the successful completion of "Career Transitions" and to identify characteristics that may influence program completion. The three research questions are described below.

Research Questions

1. What were the experiences of TANF Program completers?
2. How did TANF recipients perceive the usefulness of program academic training?
3. What background characteristics influenced participation and program completion of Career Transitions participants?

Setting for the Study

The setting for this study was a large, urban, comprehensive community college in the southwestern United States. In 2012, Oklahoma City Community College had an annual enrollment of approximately 22,000 students in credit classes and 11,500 in non-credit community education classes (Professional Development Institute, GED, and ESL). The institution, established in 1972 as a coeducational public two-year college, was the fifth-largest state supported higher education institution in the Oklahoma at the time of the study behind the University of Oklahoma (OU), Oklahoma State University

(OSU), Tulsa Community College (TCC) and the University of Central Oklahoma UCO). OCCC passed UCO in attendance in 2014. The college awards Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees, as well as Associate of Applied Science degrees and certificates. Additionally, the college offers transfer degree programs and offers allied health, public and technical and occupational programs as well as cooperative alliance programs with area Career Technology Centers.

The student population at the college has a median age of 23 and a mean age of 26.1. Forty-one percent of the students are over 25 years of age. Forty-one percent of students are enrolled full-time with 12 or more credit hours, and 59% of students are enrolled part-time. In terms of ethnicity, the institution reports that 57.8% of students are Caucasian, whereas 42.2% of students represent ethnic minority populations. Fifty-nine percent of students are female, and 41% are male. Fifty-eight percent were identified as first generation students, with 27% having one parent who attended college and 41% of the students were awarded Federal Title IV financial aid for the academic year (Oklahoma City Community College, 2010). The college is fairly typical of other community colleges of its size. The college is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The accreditation was renewed in November, 2011.

The college was established based on beliefs that are very much aligned with the needs of the current economic environment, that everyone deserves an opportunity to pursue a college education, career training or professional certification. It is governed by a seven member Board of Regents appointed by the governor of the state of Oklahoma.

Membership consists of five males and two females; and has one African American and one Native American member and five white males.

Oklahoma has been selected as a national leader in the Complete College America Initiative and the college participates in the Achieving the Dream Initiative. Achieving the Dream (ATD) is a multiyear national initiative to help more community college students succeed (earn degrees, earn certificates or transfer to other institutions to continue their studies). The initiative is particularly concerned about student groups that have faced the most significant barriers to success, including low-income students and students of color (ATD, 2008).

The mission of Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC) is "to provide broad access to learning that empowers students to complete a certificate or degree and that enriches the lives of everyone in the community." OCCC "aspires, through bold and transformative action, to significantly raise the educational achievement of all our students and to be an indispensable pathway to a more prosperous and fulfilling future. (OCCC Roadmap 2018, page 6-7).

The Career Transitions Program rated high on being aligned with all five key outcomes critical to achieving significance for Oklahoma City Community College in 2012. (OCCC catalog, 2011). The Program has a focus on not only access for the diverse population of student TANF recipients, but graduate and employment success is a major goal.

According to a Oklahoma "QuickFacts from the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), Oklahoma's demographics consisted of the following: 67.9 % White, 9.3 % Hispanic or Latino, 9 % American Indian and Alaska Native, 7.6 % Black or African-American,

5.8 % two or more races, 1.9 % Asian-American and .2 % Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. QuickFacts shows 50.5 % of Oklahoma residents to be female, and 86.2 % of those residents 25 and over had a high school diploma and 23.2 % had a bachelor's degree as compared with 28.5% in the nation.

According to 2007 U.S Census Bureau estimates, Oklahoma's poverty rate for all ages was 15.8% compared to a national average of 13%. Recent data show that the nation's poverty rate is close to 50%. In describing the urban central state workforce, poverty rates must be examined. In general, the state has a poverty rate higher than the national average.

Study Variables

As discussed in the review of the literature, the background variables used in this study have been judged or shown in previous research studies to be closely related to academic achievement, which leads to student retention and educational attainment. The following student background variables were analyzed:

- Academic Preparation – GED, High School diploma or some college
- Ethnicity – For the purposes of this study, five categories of ethnicity will be identified, including Native/American Indian, Asian American, African American/Black, Hispanic, White, and Multi-Racial.
- Gender
- Age
- Family Responsibility – number of children in household
- First Generation College Student – College students who had neither parent obtain a college degree.

Program Interventions

Program Interventions used in this study follow:

- Program Advisement: Purposeful guidance and intervention by dispensing information to aid students in course selection including the traditional functions of questioning and planning with students toward a career pathway through completion of the plan.
- Work Experience: Application of knowledge to real situations through active engagement in meaningful learning activities in an employment setting.
- Remediation: The act or process of correcting a deficiency to succeed in college-level courses.

Program Advisement

Both academic and personal advisement are extremely important and are intrusive in assisting TANF recipients in navigating through college and TANF policies related to their participation. Not adhering to set guidelines could force students to be sanctioned by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS). Being sanctioned would cause a cut in a student's monthly stipend and potentially cause them to be dropped from the program.

Program staff provide direct personal and academic support services, addressing issues directly and openly. When necessary, program staff direct students to other professional staff within the institution. Intrusive advisement is the most utilized method of working with students in the program being studied. Intrusive advising (Upcraft & Kramer, 1995) is being very much involved in the day-to-day academic life of students. It is more intensive, comprehensive, and personalized than other college support services.

Intrusive advisement assists students in reference to their specials needs on campuses and helps them stay connected and in compliance with OKDHS rules and guidelines. However, intrusive advising is not "hand-holding" or parenting, but rather active concern for students' academic preparation; it is a willingness to assist students in exploring services and programs to improve skills and increase academic motivation (Upcraft & Kramer, 1995).

Program participants have three core classes that are needed as part of the Program: Success in College and Life (SCL), Employment Transitions, and Personal Finance. SCL is an orientation class that is required of all degree seeking students at the college. Employment Transitions is a three credit hour business course that prepares students for the world of work. Personal Finance is a business and finance class to assist students in understanding the dynamics of their personal finances and the importance of financial planning. Students unable to complete the Personal Finance class due to conflicts with other career path courses participate in personal finance workshops. Some remedial coursework has been waived for students to enroll in these core classes because additional academic support is provided by the Program. Again, showing success in a college level course early in training is important. The courses and intrusive advisement assist first generation students in becoming more knowledgeable about the college experience including learning how to study and use resources available. Career Transitions staff are coaches to help students through the challenges of college, and life.

Participants are pre-advised before they are referred to regular college advisement services. Students are also not allowed to drop a class without permission from the director. These regulations are in place to ensure participants understand the

repercussions of decisions made and stay on track toward their career pathway. Additionally, withdrawing from a class may affect financial aid.

Remediation

Many program participants test into remedial or developmental courses and are in need of additional support to be eligible for college-level courses. The longer it takes students to complete remedial or developmental classes the longer it takes them to complete the Program. Students may give up before they are eligible to take the first college level course.

To address this issue, the Career Transitions Program developed a three-step process. First, once admitted to the college all participants discuss the importance of the Accuplacer (college entrance exam) with the Career Transitions Director. The regular process is students are referred to the Test Center to take the Accuplacer after admittance. Second, participants are provided college learning lab assignments based on TABE scores received during the referral process. Third, participants take an academic locater assessment on KeyTrain a self-paced assessment that builds skills in Reading for Information, Locating Information and Applied Mathematics. After a review of the assessments and feedback from the learning lab study assignments, the participant is allowed to take the Accuplacer and MyMath assessments. If after a thorough practice and review, the participants still score low on the assessments they are enrolled in a remedial course. Also, if enrolled in a developmental course, participants are re-assessed toward the end of the developmental course to determine if skills have improved to test out of further developmental courses. The program found that students were not doing as well if they took the Accuplacer on the same day they made application to the college and

as first generation college students, they were not aware of many college processes and procedures. Students may bypass a number of developmental classes by utilizing this process.

The Program set these steps in place after finding that many of these adult learners did not understand the importance of the assessment tests and others only needed to brush up their skills in some areas to score higher on the assessments. Additionally, the KeyTrain assessments are not only a program that builds academic skills, but also assist participants in working toward a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) that is signed by the Governor of Oklahoma and recognized by industry. Sponsored by American College Testing (ACT), NCRC is a portable credential that demonstrates achievement and various levels of workplace employability skills in Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, and Reading for Information. The job-related credential is important to the mission of the Program.

Work Experience

The NCRC and work experience are part of the employment readiness plan for Career Transitions Program participants as well. Federal and state policy requires students receiving temporary assistance to participate in a twenty hours of work experience each week in addition to their classroom training if they have been in any TANF training program over 12 months.

As part of an Individualized Education and Employment Plan, Program participants are engaged in job readiness and work experience activities related to their career path as time allows during breaks during the first year as well. Employment readiness and life skills learning activities are on-going throughout training. Employment

readiness and the related work experience assisted all five participants in this study obtain employment.

Data Analysis

In Phase I, the researcher first created a descriptive model of study variables (see Figure 1). The data was analyzed using percentages and means from questions on the academic readiness scale.

Research Design

A descriptive ex-post-facto study design was used that focused on answering the research questions related to the generalized intent of the study, which was to discover the characteristics of successful program completers and what program interventions these successful students viewed as useful. A survey instrument was developed by the researcher based on over a decade of working with the student population. Descriptive data analysis was used to gain a better understanding of the unique population of adult learners being studied. There are several studies on the challenges of first generation college students, older students who have delayed their education and those pursuing a better life through educational attainment. The population being studied includes challenges from all the previously mentioned groups plus the very challenging obstacle of raising children while facing major economic situations. Astin's (1991, 1993) input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) model is often cited as an important framework for studying academic outcomes in higher education and was applied in this study. In this framework the personal characteristics were the initial student demographics brought to the situation (input) and the program intervention (environment) that produced the desired outcome (student successful completion). The background variables and level of

usefulness variables are identified and explored and discussed from the self-reported data obtained from the questionnaire.

Initial Study Variables

A descriptive model was used to examine possible relations between variables. Figure 1 provides an overview of the initial variables.

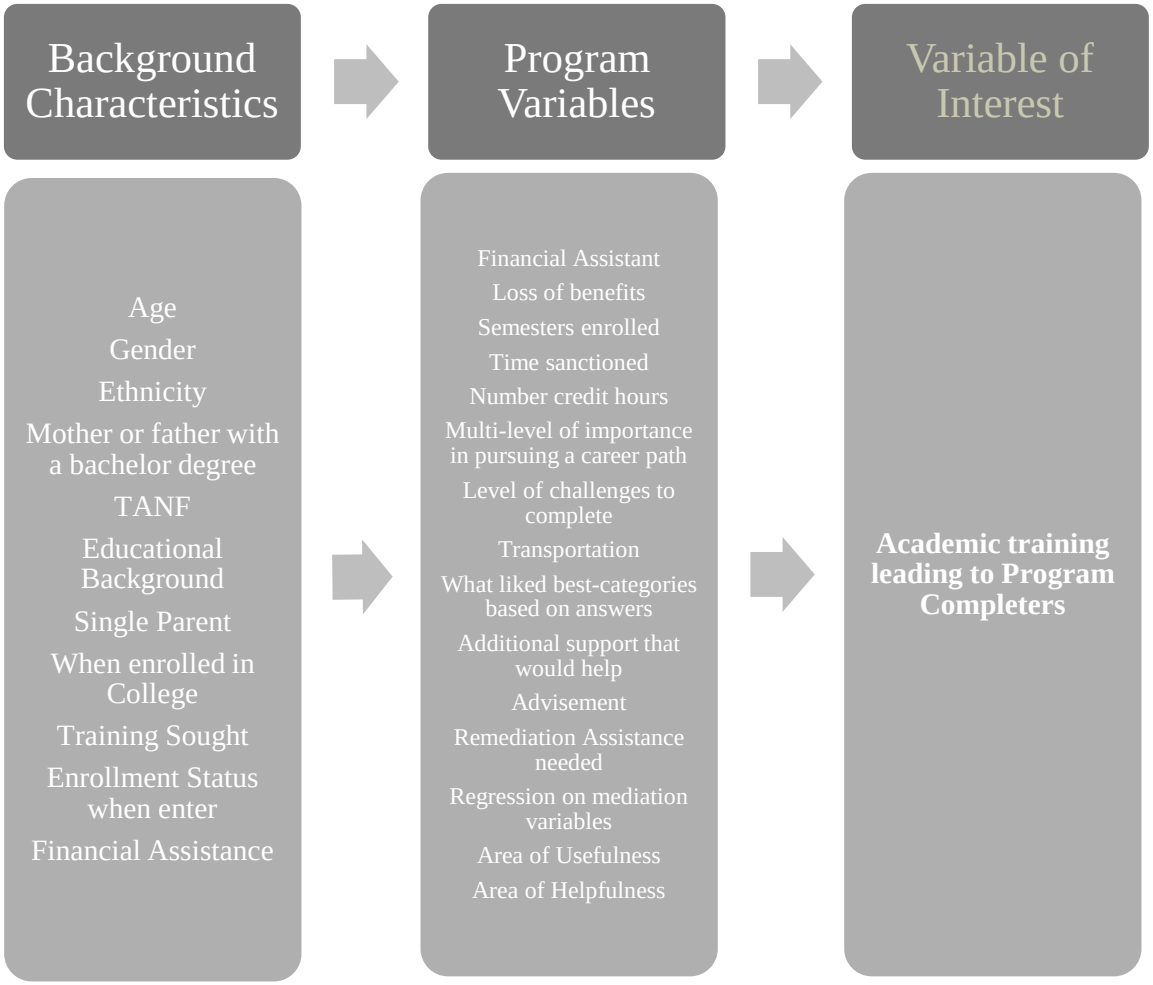


Figure 1. Model for self-reported level of usefulness of academic training leading to completion

Limitations

There are a number of limitations that must be taken into consideration. The first limitation is the number of participants in the study. Even though there was over a 35 percent response rate, the population of program completers was small with 33

participants of the possible 80 responding. However, due to the transitory nature of the TANF population, this was considered a good rate.

Two other limitations to the study effect its generalizability. First is the inability to generalize to other populations due to unique institutional factors at Oklahoma City Community College. Every TANF-to-Work training program is unique. While all programs attempt to address the multiple challenges of the student TANF population, services provided and institutional supports for the population are different, and the second is that there is no gender differential. The study is almost exclusively women. However, as stated in the literature, most TANF recipients are women.

A final limitation is the forty-five students who were no longer in the Program may have had limited access to computers or change of e-mail accounts. After the second and third administration of the survey, students e-mailed the researcher that they received the request to complete the survey, but could not complete the form using their smart phones, which was one of probably many factors students did not respond. Still, using the online form was the best way to obtain anonymous information from former students who completed the program.

Chapter IV

Analysis and Discussion of Data

As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to explore and investigate the characteristics of successful program completers of "Career Transitions," a program to assist non-traditional adult TANF recipients in obtaining college certificates, degrees, and/or employment. This study guided by the research questions explored how single-parent college students' background characteristics and experiences in a TANF training program in a community college setting affected program completion.

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What were the experiences of TANF Program completers?
2. How did TANF recipients perceive the usefulness of program academic training?
3. What background characteristics influenced participation and program completion of Career Transitions participants?

This research was conducted in two phases. Phase I attempted to identify participant experiences, program interventions and background characteristics related to the self-reported level of usefulness of academic training for successful program completers. Phase II examined background characteristics that influenced participation and program completion. An examination of how background characteristics and life experience influence participation and completion of five program completers were noted. Hearing first hand from program completers helped to gain a better understanding of challenges and obstacles faced by this population of adult learners in their pursuit of training and employment in a living wage.

The focus of my study was single-parent TANF recipients who met federal TANF guidelines and completed their academic and employment goals while participating in a TANF-to-Work program at Oklahoma City Community College. The following is a general description of the population used for this study in terms of their responses to the demographic related items on the survey instrument used in Phase I of the study.

The background characteristics with corresponding item number on the survey, examined in the study include:

- Gender (#1)
- Age (#2)
- Ethnicity (#3)
- Educational Background (#4)
- Whether or not respondent was a single parent (#5)
- Age of respondent's child(ren) (#6)
- Whether or not either of the respondent's parents completed a bachelor's degree (#7)
- Whether or not respondents received TANF (#8)
- When respondent enrolled in college (#9)
- Training Sought (#10)
- Enrollment Status (#11)
- Financial assistance received (#12)
- Financial aid challenges in the program (#13)
- Whether or not financial support was lost during training (#14)
- Enrollment status while in training (#15)

- Sanction status while in training (#16)
- Need for remediation (#17)
- College credit hours needed to complete training. (#18)
- Level of importance of various factors on their decision to pursue a career path (#19)
- Level of challenges of various factors (#20)
- Transportation utilized while in the program (#21)

Figure 2 is primarily concerned with relaying which variables are expected to have what effects. The + and - signs denote the hypothesized effects. From this diagram, receiving TANF, age, and being a single parent were hypothesized to have a positive impact on the reported importance of salary projection for single students in pursuing a career path. All three of these factors were likely to carry a monetary expectation, which should have led to an increased importance of salary.

Academic training was hypothesized to have a negative effect. The number of semesters enrolled in the program and whether a participant's mother or father had a bachelor's degree (used as a proxy for parent education level) were expected to have a negative effect on importance of salary. As students work through the program, they should understand the program as not only a way to get a higher salary but also to become a better-rounded and grounded individual. Participants whose mother had a bachelor's degree might come from a higher SES or view education as a positive in and of itself, not just a way to get a higher salary. Those who reported greater importance of salary projection were hypothesized to be less concerned about the usefulness of academic training, thereby indicating a negative effect.

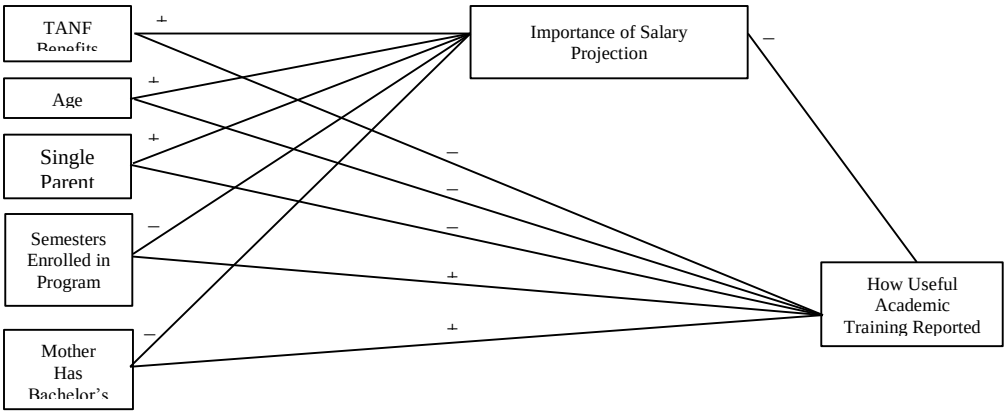


Figure 2. Hypothesized effects in the model.

Data Analysis

In Phase I, analysis was conducted with a refined model (see salary projection paths, Figure 3 and Figure 4). The expected direction of the effects in the first step regression was met. The hypothesized directions of the effects on salary projection were as expected. However, only the coefficients for single parent and semesters enrolled in program were significant. In the second step regression, the hypothesized effect for salary on academic training was in the opposite of predicted direction, but the effect was not significant. Age was significant, as older respondents tended to rate academic training as less useful. Last, those who have been in the program longer tend to view academic training as more useful than those who were in the program for less time. The models that included academic advisement and interest assessment as the treatment variables yielded no theoretically justifiable results. The model cannot be generalized to the entire population but can be generalized to those who successfully completed the program at Oklahoma City Community College where the participants attended.

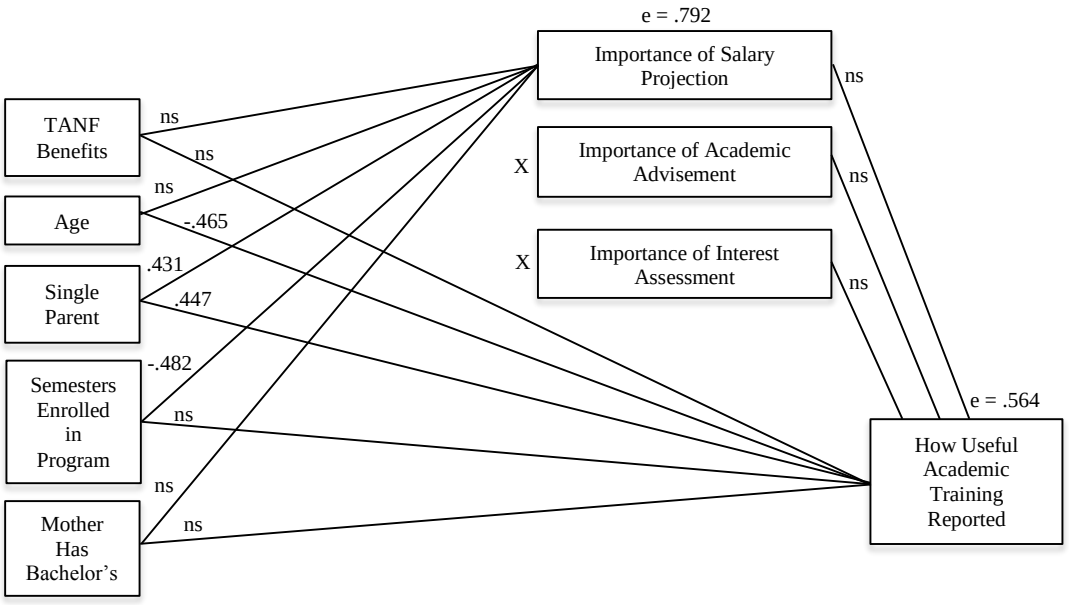


Figure 3. Model for salary projection.

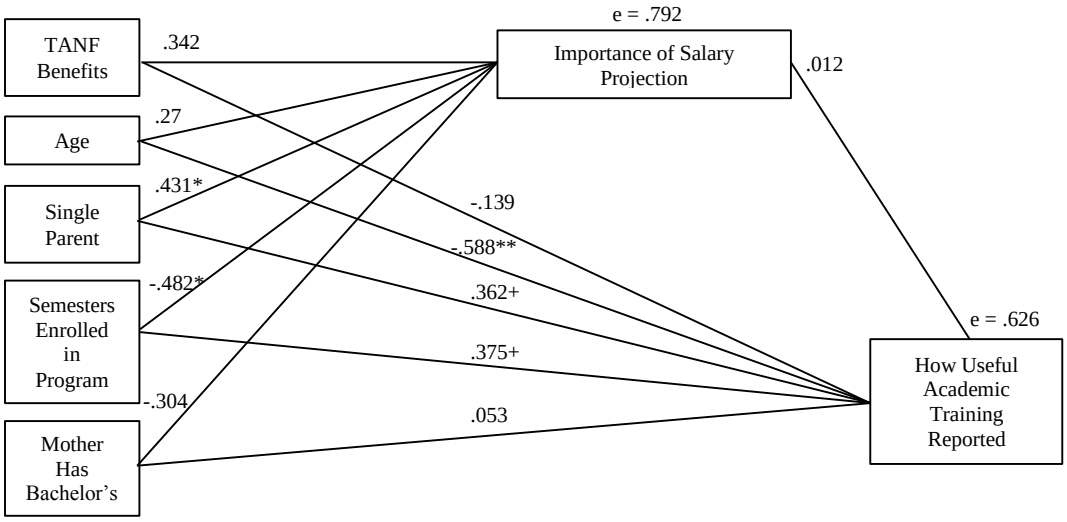


Figure 4. Modified model for salary projection.

The respondents were 84.8 percent female and 15.2 percent male. The age range varied, but the sample was relatively young with 57.6 percent of the respondents falling between the ages of 24 and 34. The average age was 34.3 years. In addition, there were two outliers (two 53-year-olds). The ethnicity (Native American, African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, White, Hispanic, and Multi-Ethnic) of respondents also varied in

the study, and the majority were white. Nearly 85 percent fell into one of two groups: White and African-American. In terms of education at program entry, over 60 percent of respondents had at least some college education when they started the program. Since welfare reform became law in 1996, an increasing number of welfare recipients enrolled in college classes. These students did have previous college experience, but many did not finish enough hours to get a credential or degree or obtain employment related to their training, and many incurred debt in their effort to obtain training. These students need support services to reconnect with their career and employment goal. Thirty percent of the sample had received only their GED, and six percent had attended a private trade school prior to program entry. The sample was almost exclusively composed of single parents. First-generation status, defined as not having a parent who completed at least a bachelor's degree, has been identified as a barrier to completion for students pursuing a degree (Choy, 2001). In this study, the vast majority of respondent were first-generation college students.

All respondents received TANF benefits when they entered the program. The majority of the respondents (75 percent) received TANF benefits or some type of transitional services at the time of the survey; however, the remaining 25 percent were no longer eligible for any type of TANF benefits or government services.

In reference to when students participated in college, the majority of the respondents (65.6 percent) took at least one year off between high school and entering college for the first time. Twenty-five percent of the respondents entered college immediately after high school, with the type of training or credentials sought, 22 participants (68.8 percent) indicated the desire to complete an associate degree, a further

indication that they were going for a college certificate (for a total of over 93.8 percent of respondents decided to pursue a college certificate or degree). All students who enter TANF–to-Work training programs were not eligible to complete two years or more of training. Therefore certificate programs are often their best option. The responses seem to indicate the importance of educational attainment among students who successfully completed the program.

The enrollment status of respondents in the study varied. Many respondents (42.2%) indicated they were full-time students. According to a study by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2012) students enrolled fulltime have a better chance of completing.

Financial support was a type of intervention utilized in the program. The type of financial assistance received by respondents while in the program varied. Over a quarter of the respondents (25.8 percent) reported that they received TANF only because they were not eligible for financial aid. Twenty-five and eight tenths percent reported they received TANF and Pell; 16.1 % reported they received TANF, Pell, and work-study; and 16.1 % reported they received only financial program support. Student loans were strongly discouraged by the Program, and students who receive loans were generally not eligible for work-study because their financial aid need are met with the loan. The researcher observed many students who were ineligible for work study status due to student loans accepted. Students who have only program support are not eligible for financial aid due to previous training experience and defaults, and they are on sanction from TANF cash benefits. Sanctioning occurs due to violation of TANF rules. Financial aid challenges were an issue for all TANF recipients.

Of those who responded, 26.1% reported student aid debt; 39.1% were on financial aid probation; 8.7% had their financial aid suspended; and 52.2 % used financial aid to meet family obligations. Not using financial aid correctly or not showing academic progress can result in probation or suspension from federal financial assistance. Over 50% of respondents stated that financial aid assistance was used to meet family obligations, which was part of the pressure that TANF recipients felt when attending post-secondary education. Additionally, student aid debt is growing. Many students entered training programs with debt from other training experiences. As first-generation college students, many stop attending courses without dropping the course(s) because of life challenges and lack of college knowledge. They therefore incur debts that make it difficult to return to a college training program. Ninety-three percent of the respondents were enrolled for four or fewer semesters.

Another challenge for completion is sanctions from the Department of Human Services (OKDHS). Sanctions occur when students do not meet participation rates because of illness, childcare, transportation, or other issues that cause them to be absent. Cash benefits to TANF recipients are stopped until sanctions have been corrected through several weeks of being in compliance. Students who have been sanctioned several times are less likely to complete their programs. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2002) found that a large number of families who were sanctioned for failing to comply with program activities also experienced barriers to employment. In the current study, for the item on the self-reported number of times sanctioned for attendance, 73.3 percent of respondents were never sanctioned, 10% were sanctioned once, 3.3 % were sanctioned twice, 3.3% were sanctioned three times, and 3.3% were sanctioned six or more times.

The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund reported (2002) on what they titled the sanction epidemic in TANF programs and how the more sanctions a TANF participant has, the less able they are to complete training. There was a low rate of sanctions with the sample of completers in this study.

Developmental education, or the need for remedial courses, is another reason found to delay completion. 87.9% of respondents were not enrolled in developmental courses. The number of credit hours to complete a degree or certificate was greatly varied among the participants who responded. As previously stated, there were different credit requirements for different career pathways.

The mean score for the item on the importance of interest in pursuing a career path was 4.33 on a 5 point scale and 63.3 percent of the respondents listed this item as very important (see Appendix B). Among successful students, student interest seems to be an important factor in pursuing their career path. For the item on the importance of salary projection in pursuing a career path, the mean response was 3.97 on a five point scale. According to 73.3 percent of the respondents, salary projection was important or very important in pursuing their career path. For the item on the importance of personal fulfillment in pursuing a career path, 96.7% of respondents reported that personal fulfillment was important or very important in pursuing their career choice. The mean response for this item was 4.57.

The importance of family recommendations in pursuing a career path was not as important as other factors when deciding on a career. The mean response value for this item was 2.79 and 58.5 percent stated that family recommendation was not important or marginally important, and 41.3 percent stated that family recommendation was not

important. This low rate is supported by previously cited research that stated, first-generation college students do not receive the same level of support for college from their families as students who have had parents with college experience (Choy, 2001). The importance of friends in pursuing a career path was similar to that of the family. The mean response value for this item was 2.10. Among successful students, friends do not affect their decisions to embark on a certain career path.

The mean value for importance of other factors on pursuing a career path was 2.89. The primary factors leading to the pursuit of a particular career path are, in order of importance: (a) personal fulfillment: (b) interest assessment; and (c) salary projection. Recommendations from friends and family members were among the least important factors leading to the pursuit of a particular career path.

The mean for the level of challenge of child health and childcare on program completion was 3.07. The responses varied widely. TANF recipients obtained subsidized childcare and medical care while participating in the program, but they often lost time from the program due to their children's illnesses.

The mean for the level of challenge of financial problems on program completion was 3.63. This value indicated that overall, financial problems were somewhat important as a challenge to program completion.

The level of challenge that transportation had on program completion was divided. Thirty-five and seven tenths percent of respondents reported that transportation was not an important challenge to program completion and forty-six and four tenths percent stated that the issue was not important or marginally important to program completion. Forty two and nine tenths percent stated that it was important or very

important. The rest of the sample fell in between these two response categories. For some participants, transportation was a non-issue; for others, it was a major challenge to program completion. Respondents in this study identified type of transportation used with 63 percent of respondents identified as having used their personal vehicle to commute.

The mean for the effect of a lack of family support on program completion was 2.57; nevertheless, over 43 percent of the respondents reported that the lack of family support was not an important challenge.

The mean for the challenge of time constraints to program completion was 2.79. Exactly, 37.9 percent of the respondents reported that time constraints were not important, but 38 percent of participants listed time constraint as an important or very important challenge to program completion.

The mean for the challenge of the difficulty of coursework to program completion was 2.03, only marginally important. Forty-four and eight tenths percent reported that coursework difficulty was not an important challenge to program completion. Overall, it does not appear that coursework posed a serious challenge to program completion for those who successfully completed the program.

The challenge of substance abuse to program completion has been reported by Danziger & Pollack (2000) as one of the more intractable, disabling barriers to work success for TANF recipients. In this study, the mean reported value for the item is 1.14. No respondents reported substance abuse as an important or very important challenge to program completion. Among successful students, substance abuse does not seem to be a challenge to program completion. Among the challenge to program completion measures, only financial problems really stood out as an issue with a mean value of 3.63. The other

measures hovered around marginal importance to being neither important nor unimportant.

Interventions

The following is a general description of the interventions respondents used. The mean for helpfulness of weekly advisement was 3.80, and over 63 percent of respondents reported that weekly advisement was helpful or very helpful. Weekly advisement assisted with not only academic support but personal advisement with unexpected issues that arose which could affect retention. Respondents reported advisement was helpful to them after completion. The mean for this item was 3.90, which is close to the prior item. Respondents reported that advisement was important (a score of 4). This type of advisement kept students on the correct academic pathway. Financial advisement was rated helpful. The mean for this item was 3.83 with 21 of 30 respondents reporting.

Academic advisement was rated helpful. The mean for this item was 3.90. Over 75 percent of respondents reported that academic advisement was either helpful or very helpful. The mean for personal advisement was 3.93, the highest of the measures gauging helpfulness. Nearly half of the sample, 46.7%, reported that personal advisement was very helpful. For the items measuring helpfulness of advisement, respondents viewed advisement as more helpful than not.

Remediation has been cited as a barrier to college completion (Choo, 2010). Half of the respondents did not need remediation in math (item #37). However, 19.2 reported that they needed quite a bit to a lot of remediation. The mean was 2.31. While the majority of respondents needed no remediation to very little in math, those who did seem to have been remediated successfully. The mean for the level of remediation needed in

writing was 1.52. Eighty percent of the respondents did not need any remediation. The mean for the level of remediation needed in reading was 1.36. The highest measure of reported remediation was in mathematics, and only a few participants required remediation in that subject.

Usefulness of Remediation Support

A few items covered the usefulness of various remediation strategies. The mean for the usefulness of remediation tutoring was 2.32, and only 6 respondents indicated that tutoring was beneficial. For the usefulness of remediation learning labs, the mean was 3.77, and well over half of the respondents thought the learning labs were very useful. Learning labs seem to be quite helpful for successful students. For the usefulness of remediation with Key Train, the mean was 2.71, and there was no clear trend of responses for this item. KeyTrain is a comprehensive learning system for common skills required by all jobs, based on ACT's WorkKeys assessment system. Basic skills include Reading for Information, Applied Math and Locating information. Key Train is an interactive training system for the WorkKeys basic workplace skills assessment that earns participants a National Career Readiness Certificate (CRC). This certificate is signed by the governor of the Oklahoma when a bronze, silver, gold or platinum level is achieved.

For the usefulness of remediation in general, the mean was 3.16. Again, there was no clear pattern of responses. Successful students reported learning labs as the most helpful form of remediation. Learning labs are all equipped with tutor assistance as well as online programs. For the helpfulness of community work experience, the mean was 3.85. Half of the respondents reported that community work experience was very helpful.

For the helpfulness of work study, the mean was 3.88. Half of the respondents reported work study experience as very helpful. For the helpfulness of an academic internship, the mean was 3.80. Fifty-two percent of respondents reported that academic internship experience was very helpful. For the helpfulness of work experience in general, the mean was 4.32. Almost 65 percent of respondents rated work experience in general as very helpful. Overall, work experience was viewed as more helpful than not. However, we must remember that some of the response rates for these items were relatively low.

The next few items covered work experience. The mean for the helpfulness of work experience in developing skills was 3.96. Over 50 percent of respondents reported that work experience was very helpful in developing skills. For the helpfulness of work experience in understanding the work world, the mean was 3.48. Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported that work experience was very helpful in understanding the work world. How much work experience helped build confidence, the mean was 3.48; however, half the sample reported that work experience was not useful or neither useful nor harmful in building confidence. For helpfulness of work experience in testing career options, the mean was 3.46. The response pattern was such that 50 percent of the sample considered work experience as not useful or neutral and that the other 50 percent saw it as either useful or very useful. For how helpful work experience was in getting a job, the mean was 3.58. Nearly half of the sample (46.2 percent) reported that work experience helped them get a job. Overall, the mean values for the work experience battery were between 3.46 and 3.96. Work experience was more helpful for those having it in gaining work skills according to the self-reported scale of program completers.

The mean for the usefulness of academic training was 4.26. Among successful students, the academic arena is considered quite important. The usefulness of job readiness training had a mean was 4.00. Over 50 percent of respondents rated job readiness training as very useful. The usefulness of soft skills training had a mean of 3.79. Soft skills training was considered largely helpful. Soft skills assisted participants in managing their reaction to adverse situations. Training included financial management time management, communication skills, interpersonal skills, resume preparation, stress management, relationships, dress for success and interviewing skills.

Several items covered aspects of the helpfulness of job readiness training. The mean for the helpfulness of job readiness training in how to apply for jobs was 3.59, so respondents felt that this training was more helpful than not. The mean for the helpfulness of job readiness training when applying for jobs was 3.45. The mean for the helpfulness of job readiness training in résumé writing was 4.27. Eighty percent of the respondents reported that job readiness training was helpful or very helpful for writing résumés, which indicates that résumé writing was a very important aspect in job readiness training. The mean for helpfulness of job readiness in interview skills was 4.11. Over 78 percent of respondents reported that job readiness training was helpful or very helpful in developing interview skills, which appeared to be another important aspect to successful students. The mean for the helpfulness of job readiness in soft skills was 3.74. Nearly 50 percent of respondents reported that job readiness training was very helpful for developing soft skills. The mean for the helpfulness of training in updating skills was 3.93. There was not a strong response pattern for this item.

The last item on the self-report survey covered the importance of formal

education in obtaining a living wage. The mean for this item is 4.55, the highest of the sample means. Finding such a high rating aligned with expectations for this sample, which provided above average reported means for questions measuring academic importance. It is important to remember that this sample is made up of students who successfully completed the program; therefore, it is possible that they put a premium on formal education.

Summary

Results of the surveys in Phase I show that most participants were white and female, first generation college students with some exposure to college through TANF training programs. A third of the participants had dropped out of high school, but had completed their GED prior to program entry. All participants received TANF cash benefits, subsidized childcare and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps). A majority of the participants received some of these benefits as transitional services after completion, but later were not eligible due to income. Educational attainment was very important to participants but most had financial challenges even with subsidized childcare and SNAP from the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. The amount of time allowed for training is twelve months without an approved extension. Unfortunately, many participants were not able to enroll as a full-time student initially due to family obligations and financial support and needed intrusive advisement to stay on a career path toward completion of a certificate and then a degree.

Stress over financial obligations effect the participants' ability to concentrate on academic pursuits. Students often drop out not because they are not able to do the

academic coursework, but because of financial issues. Additionally, over a quarter of the participants in Phase I was either on financial aid probation or suspension. Over fifty percent stated that they used financial aid to meet family obligations. Also, even though they were highly discouraged in taking out student loans, loans were taken out to pay living expenses.

Participants in Phase II

Personal fulfillment was noted by participants as being very important in their career path, while family recommendation was not very important in reference to their career path. This could be due to the lack of family involvement and knowledge about their educational experience. For instance, Tonya in Phase II of this study stated that her parents did not care whether she completed high school or not. She tried to encourage her other siblings to "just get up and go." June stated that she wanted to go to college right after high school, but life happened and she enrolled, went one day and never returned. With new financial aid policies attending one day and not withdrawing would not only leave her with a debt for the full semester, it would be a semester of "F" grades. Through the program she was able to start with a clean slate and reconnect to college after twelve years.

As stated earlier, single parent TANF participants obtained subsidized childcare, medical and food assistance, but when issues occurred that causes them to lose participation time, those benefits were in jeopardy. June and Sam stated that their transportation situation could have caused them to be sanctioned for participation, but they got the situations resolved. Sam purchased a car and June exchanged a contracted transportation service that was often late for the more dependable public transportation.

In summary financial problems were found to be a major issue for participants and some may have chosen to enter shorter term training programs because of the financial obligations. Janice stated that if her Pharmacy Technician certificate had been a longer training program, she would not have been able to complete it due to financial issues.

The majority of the completers needed little or no remediation, and the community work experience and /or internships were viewed as very helpful. Over half stated that the experience assisted them in obtaining employment and academic training was seen as very important to participants in the reason why they completed.

To assist these adult learners in persisting through completion community colleges need to be aware of the concerns noted by these successful participants. Additionally, policy makers should be aware and concerned about how some policies not only restrict this population from completing, but can restrict their participation in higher education altogether. The new financial aid policy that requires a 67% completion rate, that includes the number of class withdrawals, penalizes students that have to drop out of school due to life situations that cannot be resolved by the program and other support services. Additionally, limiting the amount of time TANF recipients are allowed to count higher education as an approved activity for training limits completion. Mandatory drug testing deters participants due to the fear of being referred to child welfare and the potential of losing their children are keeping potential TANF recipients from even applying for benefits. As Sam stated in his interview, his substance abuse issue brought him to the training program. If the Oklahoma drug testing policy had been in place when he applied for TANF, he may not have been allowed to enter the training program and

complete his first degree. Now he has completed a college certificate, associate degree and a bachelor's degrees. Additionally, if the policy had been in in place when he entered the program there is a possibility that he would not have completed the program and could have been connected with child welfare services instead of receiving counseling and treatment while in the program.

Phase II addressed research question number three and found some similarities with the survey results in Phase I.

Figure 5

Phase II Participant Background Information at time of program entry

Participant	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Age of child(ren) (in years)	Mode of Transportation	Substance Issue	Educational background
Janice	White	Female	23	0,2,3,4	Personal Vehicle	Yes	GED
Sam	White	Male	24	8	Grandmother/ During the Program purchased a car	Yes/ Alcohol	H.S diploma
Mary	White	Female	39	12	Personal vehicle	No	No H.S. Diploma or GED
Tonya	Bi-Racial Native/African American	Female	27	2 and 4	family	No	H.S. diploma
June	African-American	Female	30	13	Bus	No	H.S. diploma

All respondents were single parents and TANF recipients while attending the program and all were first generation college students and the sole supporter of a minor child(ren). The participants were identified through the recruitment process, which consisted of a recruitment flyer distributed by the division of Community Development at Oklahoma City Community College. Participants were asked to contact the researcher by

telephone or by e-mail if they wanted to be interviewed and audiotaped. After the interviews, the audiotapes were transcribed for analysis and each participant was given the opportunity to review the transcripts. Each participant was sent an e-mail responding to their volunteer participation. A summary description of each participant using pseudonyms follows. In compliance with University of Oklahoma Institutional Research study requirements, none of the participants' real names are used.

Janice is a white female who cared for four young children from birth to four years of age. She was seeking a short-term certificate program. Janice had been abandoned by her mother who had issues with substance abuse. Janice stated that she was involved with drugs for a while, but decided that she did not want to go down the path that her mother went. She dropped out of high school, but completed her GED before she entered the Program.

Sam is a white male who cared for an eight year old son while in the Program. A high school graduate, Sam had attempted to attend college several years before his son was born, but was told by his parents that they could not afford to send him to college. He received substance abuse counseling through the Department of Humans Services for alcohol abuse.

Mary is a white female who cared for a twelve-year-old terminally ill son with a disability while in the program. She did not have a high school diploma and was referred initially to the program to complete her GED. She later completed a college certificate after being placed on a job with the skills she obtained in the program.

Tonya is a biracial African-American/Native American female who cared for three minor children while in the program. She possessed a high school diploma, but

stated that education was not valued in her home. She completed training toward a certificate program before obtaining employment.

June is an African-American female who cared for a 12 year old daughter while a participant in the Program. She had never attended college although she did enroll after she completed high school, but she never attended.

In Phase II, five major themes were found; first, being a first generation college student meant having many challenges trying to navigate through the college training experience and developing a school/life balance while caring for a minor child(ren). Second, transportation and child care were major challenges; third, lack of financial support for life situations were a challenge; fourth, child(ren) were both major challenges and the greatest motivator to compete training; and fifth, little to no family support was available.

Balancing school and life were difficult for all participants. Financial challenges forced students to make decisions that they would not normally make. For instance participants used funding received from PELL grants to assist in paying for daily expenses, childcare, housing and transportation issues. Utilizing federal funding for life situations as opposed to academic purposes can adversely affect future assistance, but as with a lot of other issues faced by first generation college students, students don't know what they don't know. Placing students in work study or internship positions at the college assisted with social integration as well as provide opportunities for future job placement.

Conclusion

Based on the survey in Phase I and the interviews in Phase II of the study, the

researcher found that having program support positively affected persistence and completion. Not having family or program supports as identified in this study could have a major negative impact on program completion. Lack of support leaves a major void for these adult learners with the identified challenges listed. Showing success through of completion of certificates, degrees and/or obtaining employment in a field of study also builds self-confidence. All five participants in Phase II saw themselves as an exception to the "regular" TANF participants because they completed the program. This research has shown that with support, single parents receiving public assistance can persist and complete their education despite the number of barriers faced. Institutions concerned about this population and should assist in putting support systems in place to address their complexities and challenges. For some students completing any type of training is their first experience with academic success and the key to independence is developing the self-confidence and credentials needed to obtain a living wage or better.

Results of the surveys and individual interviews show that most participants had limited formal education and challenges with transportation and child care issues. Other studies have had similar findings on barriers for single parents (Zedlewski, 2003), but none have shown how work experience and the influence of their child(ren) has motivated the participants to persist through completion. The lack of funds to support their family was shown to be one of the reasons participants utilized financial aid for issues other than school related experiences.

The research found program participants greatly believed the training program and their academic training would assist them in no longer needing public assistance. Two found however that some assistance continued to be needed until they further

transitioned into better jobs and/or obtained additional educational training. Sam did quite well in obtaining a college certificate and a job with benefits while completing his associate degree. With his first job he was still eligible for a short time for transitional assistance until his wages increased. He stated that he could have stayed in the program longer, but getting the first job made him ineligible for benefits and participation in the program due to income. He is now a candidate for his bachelor's degree at the University of Oklahoma.

All participants were highly motivated by the desire to be a role model for their children, and wanting more than a job, but a career using training and internships obtained through the Program. All participants in the study gained initial employment through the internships assigned by the Program and felt their needs were met through training provided through the Program. June stated: "I had everything I needed." However, Sam stated that the program was beneficial, but he felt he was treated better than other participants because he is white and male. Nevertheless, he thought the program was more geared toward the needs of single mothers and did not have as many supports and referrals in place, such as career clothing referrals for men.

All participants were able to make advances on their jobs, except one participant who was employed less than three months before the interview. Childcare, financial challenges and transportation were major issues for all participants. Transportation was stated to be a major determining factor for continuation in the program and completion. Four of the five had developed creative ways to meet program attendance requirements due to transportation issues. Children were both a major motivator and challenge for completion for all participants. Mary lost her son due to prolonged medical issues. She

had missed a lot of training due to his medical situation and had been placed on sanction twice because she was not meeting the attendance requirement for training. Mary stated that despite all the challenges, "I had to complete it for him."

The lack of quality childcare for a sick child is a major reason TANF recipients who are single are often sanctioned for not attending training. Sanctioning means a reduction or loss of the limited financial and medical support received from the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. In order to end sanction status, a participant is usually required to meet all attendance and participation requirements without support for two or more weeks, this is basically doing without financial support to address the issues that they had challenges with that placed them on sanctions in the first place, such as child care and transportation issues. Finally, work experience or internships are very important to these types of training programs. Programs that are established with an internship that allows students to experience the job market can increase the participants' chances of becoming employed as stated by all students interviewed. All five participants obtained their initial employment directly related to their work experience position.

Through directing the Career Transitions Program the researcher is aware that there is an increasing confluence of individual student challenges in higher education. TANF recipients have more challenges due to their low income status, single parent status, and having additional responsibilities to participate in work related activities while pursuing their education. Colleges, universities, community support agencies, and other stakeholders need to be aware of these issues that are not addressed in the traditional support services provided at most institutions. One-on-one case management is

necessary for many first generation TANF recipients to not only ensure they are prepared for their career pathway, but to ensure collaborations are done with community agencies to ensure basic needs are met. As the research noted, participants sought grants and loans not just to finance their education but to meet daily living needs and expenses. These first generation adult student parents need appreciative and intrusive advisement to assist them in making informed decisions so they can get on the right career pathway and complete their education in a reasonable time. Internships and other creative ways to connect students to the workforce are needed. As previously stated, all participants in Phase II of the study obtained their first entry level job as a result of an internship placement by the Career Transitions Program. The credentials and college credit assisted them in continuing their path out of poverty. Moving closer to completion by seeing a clear path to their goal assisted students in completing. The career goal instilled within them the "can do" attitude that was needed to persist. One student stopped twice, but kept coming back until she finished her plan. Creating the plan and assisting students in this manner is not hand holding, but it is making sure that everyone connected with the student is aware of their plan and career path and keep their focus on completion. Additional research is needed from TANF completer to articulate how recent federal and state policies are affecting their success.

Researcher's Background

The researcher has worked with the population in this study for over a decade. This section on the background of the researcher provides an understanding of why the researcher has a passion for working with the population and to clarify any potential

researcher bias and experience working with low income TANF recipients who are single parents.

I am the daughter of sharecroppers, born into a large family that was financially challenged. Therefore, as a researcher, I can personally relate to the financial struggles of my researched population in their desire to pursue their education despite their circumstances. Additionally, since my father passed away early in my life, I also observed the struggles of a single parent raising young children on her own. Later in life, when my older sister became a single parent, I moved in with her to help support the family, which extended my time to complete my degree. Therefore, addressing the challenges single parents encounter has always been of interest to me. I have always believed that the path out of poverty was through educational pursuits.

I started my formal education in a segregated school system in a small rural Oklahoma town, despite the fact that *Brown vs. the Board of Education* had declared separate school systems unconstitutional many years earlier. The school systems were later forced to integrate, but only after the Black school was burned down. Integration happened gradually, first by integrating the high schools and later the two room black elementary school was combined with the white school. Despite the times and circumstances, it was my mother's expectation that I would complete some form of post-secondary education because of my successful primary and secondary school experiences. However, it was not certain what type of school I would attend and/or how I would be able to attend. Still, attending college remained a goal.

With little to no direction, I had to build resiliency in order to maintain this goal due to financial obstacles, as well as negative micro-messages that had been received

over the years from others related to attending college, I was faced with many challenges In my current role as the Director of the Career Transitions Program, I have observed similar negative micro-messages that have been told to participants of the Program. They tell me stories about how others have told them that they are not good enough to succeed, or that they come from the wrong background. I have seen the daily struggles of single parents in their pursuit of a better life for themselves and their families. Whether it is the challenge of dealing with the stigma of being poor or, in their case, the stigma of receiving public assistance, micro-messages are often received that they will not be able to achieve their goals because of their circumstances. According to Rowe (1973, 2008), Micro-Messages and Micro-Inequities are cumulative, corrosive effects of many inequities that have been a principal scaffolding for discrimination in the United States. According to the researcher, Micro-inequities appear to be a serious problem since much of this bias is unconscious and unrecognized—and even harder to believe when described. Having worked in higher education most of my adult life, with the majority of those years working with diversity issues and/or with people in poverty, I am keenly aware of how the views in this dissertation are seen through the prism of race, class, poverty, and gender issues. As a researcher, I have attempted to understand challenges to completion based on my knowledge of the population and from the perspective of single parents to gain a better understanding of what helps students with similar challenges achieve completion.

Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between program interventions, background variables and program completion of student TANF recipients in a TANF-to-Work program in a community college setting. This was accomplished by using a self-reported, anonymous survey developed by the researcher specifically for this study. The survey instrument was designed to identify issues that hinder completion of TANF recipients in community colleges. Oklahoma City Community College administered the instrument in the spring, 2012. A model was developed that includes background variables and intervention measures hypothesized to influence the dependent variable. The statistical method of analysis, consisted of percentages and means, was selected to address the research questions and to develop a model of background characteristics and interventions of completers. Using the information from the survey, an in-depth interview using a qualitative approach with a small sample was also completed. Background characteristics deemed relevant to this study were developed through a review of the literature.

The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze information obtained from a self-reported survey in Phase I of the research project. The survey was used to obtain information concerning barriers and support services used by the students who successfully completed the program over a three-year period.

A summary of the survey results showed that: the average completer in this study was a single parent TANF recipient, white and female. The median age was 34.3 years and 30.3 percent had completed a GED. Exactly 78.08% of the participants' mothers and

93.8 % of participants' fathers had not obtained a bachelor's degrees and 68.8 % of the participants delayed college after high school. Additionally, 52.2 % of respondents indicated that financial aid was used to fulfill family obligations, 13 percent were on financial aid probation, and 8.7 percent were on financial aid suspension. Academic training was found useful by 85.2% of participants and 63% of the respondents reported academic training to be very useful. This is an indication that among successful students, academic training is very important in completing training. Additionally, two other major findings were that older respondents tended to rate academic training as less useful and those participants who had been in the program longer viewed academic training as more useful than those who were in the program for less time regardless of age.

An application of these results at the program was to provide Career Transitions participants with the knowledge to navigate the systems of higher education and the world of work. Innovative programs were developed with other college divisions to address the special needs of the population being served. One such innovation was a three credit hour Employment Transitions class, developed by the program and the Division of Business to address employment issues and the personal, academic and career coaches in the program assisted participants in completing the program. Students were directed toward stackable degrees, and received strength-based models of both intrusive and appreciative advisement. Program coaches assisted students in navigating the community college and life situations. Since support for participants were time limited due to TANF guidelines, remedial academic support was provided prior to and after college placements assessments. Wraparound services were provided through not only traditional retention services but through the more involved retention coaching and

intrusive advisement methods as needed for situations that arose such as housing issues, childcare, transportation and other non-academic issues. Because funding was limited, the program worked in cooperation with other community organizations through a community collaborative committee, and an advisory board of administration and business partners to advise the program and provide additional program services. These types of services support the research that the common denominator for successful student retention and completion in the development of positive relationships, such as those developed through intrusive and developmental advisement and coaching. Attending a community college or university alone is not enough. Completing the degree or credential needed to move out of poverty is necessary and these types of supports, as identified by program completers, are needed for program completion. Targeted services, alignment and cooperation between college departments as well as working cooperatively with external community partners are needed to address student dependency on public assistance as well as assist them in navigating through the college training experience.

This study was concerned about how students who were formerly in poverty identified training and programmatic supports that assisted them in completing the training program. Hearing from the student's perspective was the goal. The program used a strengths-based model to move participants out of poverty, being fully aware that socio/political structure as well as participant behaviors and methods of coping to life situations affect their ability to complete training and move out of poverty. Therefore, both soft skills and hard skills career training workshops and credit classes are incorporated as part of program training. Additionally, short and long-term academic career goals are sought with a major emphasis on completing a credential, certificate

and/or degree, and obtaining employment. An example of a coping mechanism utilized by students that needs to be continually addressed by the program was the use of financial aid. In this study 3 participants identified financial aid as a source for meeting family obligations rather than for the purpose of paying for books, tuition and fees. These types of decisions that have to be made are based upon the financial struggles for this population that generally are not as substantial an issue for traditional or other first generational, low-income students that are not single parents. Additionally, financial aid regulations have changed in the two years that will limit students who are not showing academic progress or who withdraw from classes, and don't show at least a 67% completion rate.

Administrators and college advisors will learn from this study the importance of addressing these types of policies issues that could affect personal decisions early in affected students' academic training. Not doing so will cause students who are economically challenged and otherwise eligible for aid to lose federal financial support due to the issue of just dropping too many classes (for any reason) that will bring participants below the 67% completion rate. The researcher is aware as a first generation college student and having worked with the population in the study over a decade, that life happens and the student drop rate has always been a challenge due to life situations of single parents. As of July 1, 2012, newly enrolled students without a high school diploma or General Educational Diploma certificate (GED) are no longer eligible for federal financial aid. This new policy has placed more challenges on completion rates not only for the general low-income student population, but especially for single parent, TANF recipients.

Implications

As complex as the lives of single-student-parents in college may be, this study does not pretend to be a systematic assessment, but rather a starting point for studies that need to be done. Also, even though all participants in the study were below the poverty rate, policy makers should be careful not to classify or define challenges noted as a result of a particular culture of poverty that prohibit success. Rather we must assess the root causes when possible in addressing the issues that keep students from persisting through education completion. The lack of positive relationships or role models was found to be a factor. The relationship with support services staff provided to first generation TANF participants were a necessary component as stated by participants in the study. However, it is important to note that students must feel that they are empowered to create their own success. For many students, support services are the extended family of advisors both academically and personally that they have never had. Confidence is built though these relationships that make students believe they can do the work on their own. Imposter Syndrome as discussed in the literature is a major obstacle for many TANF recipients in college. Once the confidence is built, however, the dependency is broken. These relationships and keeping the focus on their children as a primary motivating factor for completion, were demonstrated throughout the study.

College administrators should know that providing the necessary information and education about college and university processes and policies that adversely affect student continuation is a must. Success in College and Life (SCL) classes early in their college experience is very beneficial. A study at Oklahoma City Community College,

where this study was conducted, has shown SCL classes to be related to student success and completion. The college orientation class is also important for this special population of primarily first-generation, college students. The orientation class at Oklahoma City Community College has been documented to show student success and assist in completion efforts. All degree seeking students at OCCC are required to take the class as well as participants in the Career Transitions Program regardless of career pathway.

Additionally, in my experience with this population for over a decade, I have found many instances where funds as small as a $50 to $200 dollars financial aid payback for dropping out of classes, have kept students from re-enrolling and becoming eligible for over $4,000 in financial aid and other financial support. Few support programs allow cash supports to address these types of dilemmas. Federal policies related to financial aid or having to drop a class or classes due to life's issues one semester and not being able to re-connect due to financial holds on transcripts in many cases, have prohibited students from persisting and graduating. Students often feel a sense of despair because they try so hard and then a financial issue, a sick child, the loss of a living situation and/or transportation issues force them to stop out. Federal polices need to change to support this population. PELL grants for full-time students are now not available during the summer term. Students receiving TANF must attend training year round. Not receiving these benefits during the summer term can affect continuation and completion. Community colleges need to improve their alignment with training and workforce, and education programs like the Career Transitions Program. To assist this growing population of adult learners in higher education, the issues identified by program participants in this study need to be addressed.

Imposter Phenomenon, as discussed in the literature review is a major hurdle as well. Participants initially encountered the success of getting accepted into college and with a minor challenge experience the Imposter Phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978) and believe that they were not college material anyway, thus affecting completion. Returning to college after a stop out then becomes even more difficult after life events and reinforces the negative belief. Having a level of success and then having to drop out is devastating. As one participant stated, she enrolled and then she never returned until she entered the Career Transitions Program, 12 years later. If she did that today, with current federal financial aid policies, she would not only be in a payback status to financial aid, but the situation could possibly make her ineligible for financial aid prior to completing an associate degree. This is due to a federal policy change in 2010 that requires a 67% retention rate to continue being eligible to receive aid. That rate is for a lifetime. Therefore, if a student had a few semesters in their past with multiple withdrawals or bad grades due to dropping out and/or not officially withdrawing, their financial aid could be affected for years. Not officially withdrawing is common for students who are first generation college students and do not know college procedures and processes.

The Program has assisted and encouraged TANF recipients to seek their life's passion, seek credentials, degrees and obtain livable wages that lead to good jobs. Still, as one participant stated, there is a big difference between life's circumstances and life's passion. Educators, human services professionals and workforce professionals should be aware of these unique challenges faced by this population and attempt to help these students to continually seek their passion through education, training and self-sustaining employment.

Recommendations

1. All training programs should have a comprehensive orientation to ensure financial aid policies and all academic policies are understood.
2. Programs should incorporate academic and life skills training as well internships related to the participant's employment goal.
3. A focus on the educational benefits of college credentials and degrees to both the participant and their family should be maintained throughout training.
4. Connection and awareness of wraparound support services after completion should be provided.
5. With the focus on completing college certificates and degrees, college administrators need to understand the special challenges of this population and ensure support systems are in place for them and not just relegated services to traditional student services or student support areas, because their issues are very unique.
6. Intrusive Advisement is necessary because students do not know what they do not know.

College policies should be sensitive to mistakes made by this population and other first generation populations who are not familiar with college procedures. For instance June, in Phase II of my study, first enrolled in college shortly after high school, but she had only attended one day of college classes after enrolling. As she stated "life happens." With current financial aid policies, attending one day of the semester and not dropping would make her liable for a full semester of tuition and fee charges and a full semester of "F" grades on her transcript since she did not withdraw after attending that first day. The

burden of the repayment for tuition and fee costs as well as repercussions of not showing academic progress, could affect her both financially and academically. She would be placed on financial aid probation or suspension due to her lack of support, child care issues, uncertainty about school expectations, and not knowing she needed to withdraw.

TANF policies and goals and educational policies conflict at times. For instance there are time limits placed on participants for training. College certificate and degrees do not always fit the schedule needed for participants to complete a credential, certificate or degree within the timeframe allowed by TANF. When life situations happen, multiple withdrawals occur. Current higher education policies can cause a low-income student with a perfect academic record to lose financial aid due to two or more withdrawals during the first year or two of training. These and other issues have a particular effect on TANF participants pursuing a college certificate, degree or employment.

Conclusion

Welfare reform and the resulting TANF policies have a major impact on achieving education, training, and employment completion goals for low-income single-parent adult participants. Ethnic and gender background were investigated in this study because it is important to note the racialization and feminization of welfare as most people know it. According to Gatta (2014), we cannot understand the workforce system without recognizing the gendered and racialized history of welfare (p.108).

Researchers (Piven & Cloward 1994; Gatta, 2014) have noted how the history of the welfare system dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century has affected how we think about welfare today. Gatta (2014) noted that by signing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996, the

newly designed "work first" model of welfare removed any notion that welfare was a social entitlement and severely restricted access to education and skills training (Gatta, 2014). The researcher explained how the initial image of the typical welfare recipient was considered to be the "deserving poor" such as a White, widowed mother. It was the belief at the time that women staying at home would cut down on child delinquency. According to Gatta (2014), the image of the welfare mother changed in the mid-1960s to a never-married, Black mother with multiple children or the undeserving poor, even though the majority of welfare recipients were still White women. Gatta (2014) explained how both the marital status associated with single mothers and the racial composition changed over the century.

Additionally, the researcher pointed out how the Mother's Pensions and the early Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) programs were directed to white, middle-class widows and how this group made a transition to Social Security as a result of a 1939 amendment. Other single mothers had few resources or little recourse other than ADC or AFDC that replaced it. The researcher used the example of African-American women who moved from the South to the North displaced by farm work who would be eligible for ADC, but not eligible for social security. Gatta stated:

"By the middle of the twentieth century, a two-tiered system was firmly in place in the United States. "Respectable" White, middle-class widows were able to access Social Security supports, and "undeserving" single mothers, often poor and of color, collected ADC" (p 111).

This cultural shift in seeing welfare mothers as either the deserving or the undeserving poor continues today and reinforces the social conditions and political

attitudes affecting TANF training opportunities. Also, the emphasis on employment over education and training remain. In addition to the limitations in monetary resources due to the racialization of welfare, researchers have found welfare reform to limit access to post-secondary education (J. Peterson, X. Song & A. Jones-DeWeever, 2002). The researchers found after the implementation of TANF, the proportion of low-income single parents with some college education declined from 24 % to 17 %.

Child care and the number of children were also investigated in this study due to the needs identified in the research (Youcha, 2005). The research explained how the mother's pensions were designed initially to allow widowed mothers to support their children and stay in their homes. Child care continues to be a challenge for student TANF recipients in college, and children who are ill are a particular challenge for TANF participants due the TANF participation requirement taking them away from home between thirty to thirty-five hours each week. Additionally, not being able to stay in compliance due to a ill child can cause participants to be placed on sanction, which requires participants to forfeit monetary support until the sanction is cleared by two or more weeks of participation without missing a day. As stated in the literature review, the number of sanctions obtained is a major obstacle to completion. Social services support as well as educational training is needed.

In summary, education is the great equalizer for college TANF participants, but only if efforts are made to assist them in addressing barriers and negative micro-messages faced that keep from persisting and graduating. Coaching assistance in navigating through higher education and social services support systems are needed.

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Appendix A: Survey of Successful Students

Part I: A Survey of Single Parent TANF Recipients at Oklahoma City Community College

Background Data Questionnaire

You have been asked to participate in this survey because you were a successful program completer in a program that provided support services for students receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) at Oklahoma City Community College. This survey is designed to help program staff, instructors and staff at the college understand the unique background and challenges faced by single parents receiving TANF in their pursuit of a college certificate, degree and/or employment. Please answer all of the questions. This survey is being sent anonymously (you do not need to put your name on it).

1. Gender
    a) Male _____
    b) Female _____
2. Age _____
3. Ethnicity (Check one)
    a) American Indian _____
    b) African-American _____
    c) Asian-American/Pacific Islander _____
    d) Hispanic _____
    e) White _____
    f) Multi-Ethnic _____
    g) Other (please specify) _____

4. Educational Background when you entered the Program

   a) High School Graduate _____

   b) GED (General Education Diploma) _____

   c) Some College _____ (number of hours)

   d) Associate Degree or higher _____

   e) Private Trade School _____Completed Yes_____ No

   _____

5. Were you a single parent while attending the program? _____Yes _____No

   Please state the age of your child(ren) during your training.

   _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

6. Did either of your parents complete a bachelor's degree?

   _____Yes _____No _____Do Not Know

7. Are you receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families(TANF)

   _____Yes _____No

8. I enrolled in college: (Please check which apply)

   a) Right after high school _____

   b) Attended a trade school then attended college _____

   c) Delayed education for at least a year after high school _____

9. Training Sought

   a) College Certificate _____ (list field of

   study_____)

b) Associate degree _____ (list field of study_____)

c) Credential _____ (specify _____)

d) Other _____

10. Enrollment Status when I entered the Program:

a) Part time: (less than 3 hours) _____

b) Part time: (3-9 hours) _____

c) Full-time: (twelve or more hours) _____

d) Do Not Know _____

Financial Support

11. I received the following assistance while in the Program.

Receive TANF only _____

Receive TANF and PELL Grant _____

Receive TANF, PELL Grant and a Loan _____

Receive TANF, PELL Grant and Work Study _____

Receive Program support not eligible for PELL _____

12. Other forms of financial support while in the program (please specify)

_____

13. Financial aid challenges in the program were:

I had student aid debt when I entered the program _____

I was on financial aid probation when I entered the program _____

I was on financial aid suspension _____

I utilized financial aid to meet family obligations _____

14. Did you lose any of the following benefits while attending training?

(Check all that apply).

a) Welfare Payment or portion of the monthly payment _____

b) Participation payment _____

c) Medical card _____

d) Other (please specify) _____

Training

15. I was enrolled in the program for _____ semesters

16. How many times were you sanctioned for attendance? _____

17. I was enrolled in remedial/developmental classes Yes_____

No_____

If yes how many semesters_____ (list

class(es)_____

_____

18. The number of credits I need or needed to complete my certificate or degree while in the program were _____ credit hours.

19. Please rate the level of importance of these items on your decision to pursue your particular career path using the scale below:

Not important Very Important

		1	2	3	4	5
a)	Interest Assessment	1	2	3	4	5

b)	Salary projection	1	2	3	4	5
c)	Personal fulfillment	1	2	3	4	5
d)	Family recommendation	1	2	3	4	5
e)	Friend	1	2	3	4	5
f)	Other (Please Specify)	1	2	3	4	5

_____

20. Please rate the level of challenges the following had on your completion of the program.

None Greatest Challenge

1 2 3 4 5

a)	Child(ren) sickness/daycare	1	2	3	4	5
b)	Financial Problems	1	2	3	4	5
c)	Transportation to and from school	1	2	3	4	5
d)	Lack of family support	1	2	3	4	5
e)	Time constraints	1	2	3	4	5
f)	Difficulty of the coursework	1	2	3	4	5
g)	Substance Abuse	1	2	3	4	5

You are free to add any additional information below.

_____

21. What type of transportation did you use while attending training?

a) Public Transportation (Bus) _____

b) Carpool _____

c) Personal Vehicle _____

d) Other (specify) _____

22. What I liked best about the Program:

_____

_____

23. Additional support that would have helped me complete the program:

_____

_____

_____

_____

24. If there were factors not asked of you in previous questions, please list below:

_____

Part II: A Survey of Single Parent TANF Recipients at Oklahoma City Community College

Throughout this part of the questionnaire you will find rating scales from one to five. The information is based upon support you received while in the program. Please respond to each statement based the level of helpfulness the following activities have had on your success:

Not Helpful Very Helpful

1 2 3 4 5

Advisement

1. Advisement received each week

   1 2 3 4 5

2. How helpful was the advisement in reference to where you are now?

   1 2 3 4 5

3. How helpful was the financial advisement assistance you received?

   1 2 3 4 5

4. How helpful was the academic advisement you received?

   1 2 3 4 5

5. How helpful was the personal advisement you received?

   1 2 3 4 5

Remediation

Oklahoma City Community College requires completion of an assessment called the ACCUPLACER to place students in credit classes. It is not a pass/fail test but unfamiliarity with the assessment or failure to meet the prerequisites for some credit

classes may require students to be placed in remedial/developmental courses (support classes that do not count for credit toward a certificate or degree) to meet credit class entrance requirements.

Please rate the amount of remediation assistance you received in order to enroll in credit classes. If you did not receive any assistance please move on to the next question.

None Lots

1 2 3 4 5

1. What area did you need remediation assistance?

   a) Math 1 2 3 4 5

   (arithmetic, college level math, pre-algebra)

   b) Writing (sentence structure) 1 2 3 4 5

   c) Reading Comprehension 1 2 3 4 5

2. What aspect of remediation help was most useful? (Please check only one).

   a) Tutoring 1 2 3 4 5

   b) Learning Labs 1 2 3 4 5

   (Math Labs, Communication Lab, Computer Lab and etc.)

   c) KeyTrain 1 2 3 4 5

   (self-paced basic skills assessment)

3. In terms of usefulness how helpful was the remediation help received?

   1 2 3 4 5

Work Experience

Please rate how the following work experience was helpful to your success.

None Lots

1 2 3 4 5

1. How helpful was the following:

a)	Community work experience	1	2	3	4	5
b)	Work Study	1	2	3	4	5
c)	Academic Internship	1	2	3	4	5
d)	Did not participate in work experience?	1	2	3	4	5

2. In terms of usefulness how helpful was the work experience?

   1 2 3 4 5 NA

   What aspect of work experience was most useful to you?

Gave me a chance to develop my skills.	1	2	3	4	5
Helped me to better understand the world of work and expectations	1	2	3	4	5
Helped me to build confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Helped me to test my career options	1	2	3	4	5
Helped me get a job	1	2	3	4	5

Training

1. While a student in the program how useful was the following training in your success?

   Academic training (credit classes toward a certificate or degree)

   1 2 3 4 5

   Job Readiness Training (such as how to apply for a job, application for a job, resume writing and interview skills).

1 2 3 4 5

Soft Skills (Training on time management, work ethic, professionalism, problem solving and etc.).

1 2 3 4 5

2. In terms of helpfulness how helpful was the training?

Academic training (credit classes)

1 2 3 4 5 NA

Job Readiness Training

How to apply for a job

1 2 3 4 5 NA

Application for a job

1 2 3 4 5 NA

Resume Writing

1 2 3 4 5 NA

Interview skills

1 2 3 4 5 NA

Soft skills Training

1 2 3 4 5 NA

3. How helpful was training in updating your skills?

1 2 3 4 5 NA

4. How helpful do you feel formal education is to obtain a job with a living wage?

1 2 3 4 5 NA

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

Appendix B: Results of Descriptive Analysis

B1) Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	5	14.7	15.2	15.2
	female	28	82.4	84.8	100.0
	Total	33	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.9		
Total		34	100.0		

The sample is heavily weighted towards females with 84.8 percent of the sample being female and 15.2 % male.

B2) Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	24	1	2.9	3.0	3.0
	25	3	8.8	9.1	12.1
	27	1	2.9	3.0	15.2
	28	2	5.9	6.1	21.2
	29	4	11.8	12.1	33.3
	30	3	8.8	9.1	42.4
	31	1	2.9	3.0	45.5
	33	1	2.9	3.0	48.5
	34	3	8.8	9.1	57.6
	37	5	14.7	15.2	72.7
	38	3	8.8	9.1	81.8
	39	1	2.9	3.0	84.8
	44	1	2.9	3.0	87.9
	45	2	5.9	6.1	93.9
	53	2	5.9	6.1	100.0
	Total	33	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.9		
Total		34	100.0		

57.6 % are between the ages of 24-34. Ages varied, the mode is 37 and the average respondent age is 34.3 years. There appears to be two outliers (the two 53 year olds).

B3) Ethnicity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Native-American	2	5.9	6.1	6.1
	Arican-American	13	38.2	39.4	45.5
	Asian/Pacific Islander	1	2.9	3.0	48.5
	White	15	44.1	45.5	93.9
	Hispanic	1	2.9	3.0	97.0
	Multi-Ethnic	1	2.9	3.0	100.0
	Total	33	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.9		
Total		34	100.0		

While there are a number of ethnic groups represented in the study, the vast majority of respondents were either African-American or White (45.5% white; 39.4% African American; 6.1% Native American; 3.0 Hispanic, Multi-ethnic and Asian/Pacific Islander.

B4) Education at Program Entry

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	GED	10	29.4	30.3	30.3
	High School Grad	1	2.9	3.0	33.3
	Some College	17	50.0	51.5	84.8
	Associate or Higher	3	8.8	9.1	93.9
	Private Trade School	2	5.9	6.1	100.0
	Total	33	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.9		
Total		34	100.0		

- 51.5% had some college at program entry; 30.3% had a GED; 3.0% had a high school diploma; 9.1% had an associate degree; 6.1% private trade school; 6.5% had an associate degree.

B5) Single parent or not

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	31	91.2	96.9	96.9
	no	1	2.9	3.1	100.0
	Total	32	94.1	100.0	
Missing	System	2	5.9		
Total		34	100.0		

This sample is almost exclusively composed of single parents. 96.9% were single parents and 3.1% were not.

B6) Mother has bachelor's degree?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	7	20.6	21.2	21.2
	no	26	76.5	78.8	100.0
	Total	33	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.9		
Total		34	100.0		

The vast majority of respondents' mother's do not have a bachelor's degree (78.8%). 21.2 % of respondents' mothers do not have a bachelor's degree.

B7) Father has bachelor's degree?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	2	5.9	6.3	6.3
	no	30	88.2	93.8	100.0
	Total	32	94.1	100.0	
Missing	System	2	5.9		
Total		34	100.0		

93.8 % of the subject's fathers do not have a bachelor's degree and 6.3% do have a bachelor's degree.

B8) Do you currently receive TANF benefits?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	8	23.5	25.0	25.0
	no	24	70.6	75.0	100.0
	Total	32	94.1	100.0	
Missing	System	2	5.9		
Total		34	100.0		

75% received TANF benefits at the time of the survey; 25% did not receive benefits.

B9) When did you enroll in college?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	After High School	8	23.5	25.0	25.0
	Attended Career Tech After High School	3	8.8	9.4	34.4
	At Least One Year After High School	21	61.8	65.6	100.0
	Total	32	94.1	100.0	
Missing	System	2	5.9		
Total		34	100.0		

65.6% delayed college after high school; 25% attended college after high school and 9.4 attended CareerTech training after high school.

B10) Type of training/credentials sought

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	College Certificate	7	20.6	21.9	21.9
	Associate Degree	22	64.7	68.8	90.6
	Credential	1	2.9	3.1	93.8
	Other	2	5.9	6.3	100.0
	Total	32	94.1	100.0	
Missing	System	2	5.9		
Total		34	100.0		

- 68.8 % of respondents indicated the desire to complete an Associate degree; 21.9% indicated they were seeking a credential; and 6.3% other.

B11) Enrollment status in program

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Part Time (less than 3hrs)	3	8.8	9.1	9.1
	Part Time (4-8hrs)	5	14.7	15.2	24.2
	Three Quarter Time (9-11hrs)	7	20.6	21.2	45.5
	Full Time (12hrs or more)	14	41.2	42.4	87.9
	Do not know	4	11.8	12.1	100.0
	Total	33	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.9		
Total		34	100.0		

- 42.4% of the respondents indicated they were full-time students; 21.2% were three-quarter time (9-11 hours); 15.2% were part time; and 9.1% were less than part-time.

B12) Type of assistance while in program

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	TANF Only	8	23.5	25.8	25.8
	TANF and Pell	8	23.5	25.8	51.6
	TANF, Pell, and Loan	5	14.7	16.1	67.7
	TANF, Pell, and Wk Study	5	14.7	16.1	83.9
	Received Program Support (not eligible Pell)	5	14.7	16.1	100.0
	Total	31	91.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	8.8		
Total		34	100.0		

1. 25.8% received TANF only as financial assistance;
2. 25.8% received TANF and PELL grants; 16.1% received TANF, PELL, and a loan; 16.1% received TANF, Pell, loan, and work study; and 16.1% only support received program support.
3. 52.2% of respondents indicated that financial aid was necessary to fulfill family obligations; 26.1% of respondents stated student aid debt was a substantial challenge in terms of financial aid; 13% of the respondents were on financial aid probation; and 8.7% of the respondents were on financial aid suspension.

B13) Financial aid challenges while in program

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	student aid debt	6	17.6	26.1	26.1
	financial aid probation	3	8.8	13.0	39.1
	financial aid suspension	2	5.9	8.7	47.8
	financial aid for family obligations	12	35.3	52.2	100.0
	Total	23	67.6	100.0	
Missing	System	11	32.4		
Total		34	100.0		

Over half of the valid indicated that financial aid was necessary to fulfill family obligations. Student aid debt was also a substantial challenge in terms of financial aid with over 25 percent reporting.

B14) Number of semesters enrolled in program

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	8	23.5	27.6	27.6
	2	6	17.6	20.7	48.3
	3	3	8.8	10.3	58.6
	4	10	29.4	34.5	93.1
	6	1	2.9	3.4	96.6
	8	1	2.9	3.4	100.0
	Total	29	85.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	14.7		
Total		34	100.0		

Over 93 percent of the respondents reported four or fewer semesters. 34.5% of respondents enrolled in four semesters of college; 27.6% respondents enrolled in one semester; 20.7% respondents enrolled in two semesters; 10.3% respondents enrolled in three semesters and 6.8% of respondents enrolled in six or more semesters. This

may be related to student goals as the majority of respondents stated that they were going for an associate's degree or college certificate.

B15) Self-reported number of times sanctioned for attendance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	22	64.7	73.3	73.3
	1	3	8.8	10.0	83.3
	2	1	2.9	3.3	86.7
	3	1	2.9	3.3	90.0
	6	1	2.9	3.3	93.3
	15	2	5.9	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

Over 83 percent of respondents were sanctioned once or less. 73.3% of respondents were not sanctioned by the Department of Human Services for cash payments; 10% of respondents were sanctioned once; 3.3% were sanctioned twice; 3.3% of respondents were sanctioned three times; and 10% of respondents were sanction four or more times.

B16) Were you enrolled in developmental courses?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	4	11.8	12.1	12.1
	no	29	85.3	87.9	100.0
	Total	33	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.9		
Total		34	100.0		

Nearly 90 percent of R's were not enrolled in developmental courses. This could evidence the possibility that successful students may come in to the program with a better skills set.

B17) Number of credit hours needed to complete degree/certificate

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	2.9	3.8	3.8
	3	2	5.9	7.7	11.5
	9	1	2.9	3.8	15.4
	12	1	2.9	3.8	19.2
	14	1	2.9	3.8	23.1
	18	2	5.9	7.7	30.8
	20	2	5.9	7.7	38.5
	21	1	2.9	3.8	42.3
	24	1	2.9	3.8	46.2
	28	2	5.9	7.7	53.8
	30	2	5.9	7.7	61.5
	33	1	2.9	3.8	65.4
	40	1	2.9	3.8	69.2
	45	2	5.9	7.7	76.9
	50	1	2.9	3.8	80.8
	61	4	11.8	15.4	96.2
	72	1	2.9	3.8	100.0
	Total	26	76.5	100.0	
Missing	System	8	23.5		
Total		34	100.0		

The responses for this item vary widely.

B18) Importance of interest assessment in pursing career path

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	2	5.9	6.7	6.7
	neutral	3	8.8	10.0	16.7
	important	6	17.6	20.0	36.7
	very important	19	55.9	63.3	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported response for this item is 4.33. This average is rather high, the maximum response for this item is "very important" (a reported 5). Over 63 percent of the respondents listed this item as very important. Among successful students, the interest assessment seems to be an important factor in pursuing their career path.

B19) Importance of salary projection in pursuing career path

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	1	2.9	3.3	3.3
	marginally important	1	2.9	3.3	6.7
	neutral	6	17.6	20.0	26.7
	important	12	35.3	40.0	66.7
	very important	10	29.4	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean response for this item is 3.97. This is essentially a mean response of important. Over 70 percent of the respondents listed salary projection as important or very important in pursuing their career path.

B20) Importance of personal fulfillment in pursuing career path

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	neutral	1	2.9	3.3	3.3
	important	11	32.4	36.7	40.0
	very important	18	52.9	60.0	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

All but one of the respondents reported that personal fulfillment is important or very important in pursuing their career choice. The mean response for this item was 4.57, this is quite high. Personal fulfillment seems to be relatively important in respondents' decisions in pursuing their career paths.

B21) Importance of family recommendations in pursuing career path

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	11	32.4	37.9	37.9
	marginally important	3	8.8	10.3	48.3
	neutral	3	8.8	10.3	58.6
	important	5	14.7	17.2	75.9
	very important	7	20.6	24.1	100.0
	Total	29	85.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	14.7		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean response value for this item is 2.79; this is a mean response of less than neutral. Nearly 60 percent of the respondents rated family recommendations as not important, marginally important, or neutral. Apparently, family recommendations are not as important as other factors when deciding on a career path for successful students.

B22) Importance of friends in pursuing career path

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	14	41.2	48.3	48.3
	marginally important	4	11.8	13.8	62.1
	neutral	7	20.6	24.1	86.2
	important	2	5.9	6.9	93.1
	very important	2	5.9	6.9	100.0
	Total	29	85.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	14.7		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean response value for this item is 2.10. Nearly half of the sample (14 of 29 respondents) listed the importance of friends in pursuing their career path as "not important." Among successful students, friends do not impact their decisions to embark on a certain career path.

B23) Importance of other factors on pursuing career path

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	4	11.8	44.4	44.4
	important	3	8.8	33.3	77.8
	very important	2	5.9	22.2	100.0
	Total	9	26.5	100.0	
Missing	System	25	73.5		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 2.89. It seems that the primary factors leading to pursuit of a career path are identified as: 1) personal fulfillment 2) interest assessment 3) salary projection, in that order. Among the least important factors leading to pursuit of career path are: 1) friend recommendations 2) family recommendations 3) other factors,

in that order. Although, it should be noted that the mean reported values for family and other factors were similar at 2.79 and 2.89 respectively.

B24) Level of challenge of child health and daycare on program completion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	5	14.7	17.2	17.2
	marginally important	6	17.6	20.7	37.9
	neutral	7	20.6	24.1	62.1
	important	4	11.8	13.8	75.9
	very important	7	20.6	24.1	100.0
	Total	29	85.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	14.7		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.07, close to a neutral response. The responses vary widely. This leads us to the conclusion that, in this sample, child health and daycare was not an important challenge but also not unimportant overall.

B25) Level of challenge financial problems on program completion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	3	8.8	10.0	10.0
	marginally important	5	14.7	16.7	26.7
	neutral	5	14.7	16.7	43.3
	important	4	11.8	13.3	56.7
	very important	13	38.2	43.3	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean response value for this item is 3.63; this response value indicates that overall financial problems rated important to neutral as a challenge to program completion.

B26) Level of challenge transportation on program completion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	10	29.4	35.7	35.7
	marginally important	3	8.8	10.7	46.4
	neutral	3	8.8	10.7	57.1
	important	1	2.9	3.6	60.7
	very important	11	32.4	39.3	100.0
	Total	28	82.4	100.0	
Missing	System	6	17.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.00. However, this does not accurately capture the response distribution. Nearly 36 percent of respondents reported that transportation was not an important challenge to program completion. Over 39 percent of respondents reported that transportation was a very important challenge to program completion. The rest of the sample fell in between these two response categories. It is concluded that, for some, transportation was a non-issue, for some, it was a major challenge completion.

B27) Lack of family support challenge to program completions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	13	38.2	43.3	43.3
	marginally important	3	8.8	10.0	53.3
	neutral	5	14.7	16.7	70.0
	important	2	5.9	6.7	76.7
	very important	7	20.6	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 2.57; although, over 43 percent of the respondents reported that lack of family support was not an important challenge.

B28) Time constraint challenge to program completion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	11	32.4	37.9	37.9
	marginally important	2	5.9	6.9	44.8
	neutral	5	14.7	17.2	62.1
	important	4	11.8	13.8	75.9
	very important	7	20.6	24.1	100.0
	Total	29	85.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	14.7		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean response value for this item was 2.79. Nearly 38 percent of the respondents reported that time constraints were not important. Although, nearly 38 percent of respondents listed time constraint as an important or very important challenge to program completion. Overall, the sample reported that time constraint was a neutral to marginally important challenge to program completion.

B29) Course work difficulty challenge to program completion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	13	38.2	44.8	44.8
	marginally important	8	23.5	27.6	72.4
	neutral	4	11.8	13.8	86.2
	important	2	5.9	6.9	93.1
	very important	2	5.9	6.9	100.0
	Total	29	85.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	14.7		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 2.03 or marginally important, nearly 45 percent of the sample reported that course work difficulty was not an important challenge to program completion. Overall, it does not appear that coursework posed a serious challenge to program completion for those who successfully completed the program.

B30) Substance abuse challenge to program completion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important	26	76.5	89.7	89.7
	marginally important	2	5.9	6.9	96.6
	neutral	1	2.9	3.4	100.0
	Total	29	85.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	14.7		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 1.14. No respondents reported substance abuse as an important or very important challenge to completion. Among successful students substance abuse does not seem to be a challenge to program completion. Among the challenge to program completion measures, only financial problem really stood out as an issue (mean value of 3.63). The other measures hovered around marginal importance to neutral importance.

B31) Type of transportation used

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Public Transit	5	14.7	16.7	16.7
	Carpool (with friend)	1	2.9	3.3	20.0
	Carpool (relative)	4	11.8	13.3	33.3
	Personal Vehicle	19	55.9	63.3	96.7
	Other	1	2.9	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

Over 63 percent of respondents used their personal vehicle to commute.

B32) How helpful was weekly advisement

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	4	11.8	13.3	13.3
	marginally helpful	1	2.9	3.3	16.7
	neutral	6	17.6	20.0	36.7
	helpful	5	14.7	16.7	53.3
	very helpful	14	41.2	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.80, and over 63 percent of respondents reported that weekly advisement was helpful or very helpful (with over 46 percent reporting that it was very helpful). This would seem to indicate that weekly advisement was deemed helpful by successful students.

B33) How helpful advisement in ref to now (when the survey was taken)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	4	11.8	13.3	13.3
	neutral	5	14.7	16.7	30.0
	helpful	7	20.6	23.3	53.3
	very helpful	14	41.2	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.90. This value is relatively close to the prior item. In reference to the time the survey was taken respondents think advisement was important (a score of 4).

B34) How helpful was financial assistance advisement

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	3	8.8	10.0	10.0
	marginally helpful	1	2.9	3.3	13.3
	neutral	5	14.7	16.7	30.0
	helpful	10	29.4	33.3	63.3
	very helpful	11	32.4	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.83 with 21 of 30 respondents reporting that the advisement was helpful or very helpful. This is quite close to a raw value of 4, or helpful.

B35) How helpful academic advisement

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	3	8.8	10.0	10.0
	marginally helpful	1	2.9	3.3	13.3
	neutral	3	8.8	10.0	23.3
	helpful	12	35.3	40.0	63.3
	very helpful	11	32.4	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value of this item is 3.90, close to a raw value of 4. over 75 percent of respondents reported that academic advisement was either helpful or very helpful. This is telling when compared with other questions relating to the academic arena. Relatively high reported values are seen for items that have an academic focus. Perhaps we should

not be surprised by this; this sample represents those individuals who successfully completed the program.

B36) How helpful personal advisement?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	3	8.8	10.0	10.0
	marginally helpful	1	2.9	3.3	13.3
	neutral	5	14.7	16.7	30.0
	helpful	7	20.6	23.3	53.3
	very helpful	14	41.2	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

The reported mean value for this item is 3.93, the highest of these measures gauging helpfulness. Almost 50 percent of the sample (46.7%) reported that personal advisement was very helpful. Even among students who successfully completed the program personal advisement seems to be beneficial. In terms of the helpfulness measures all measure means show that respondents viewed these operations as more helpful than not (all means were well above 3.5).

B37) Level of remediation needed in math

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	none	13	38.2	50.0	50.0
	very little	4	11.8	15.4	65.4
	some	2	5.9	7.7	73.1
	quite a bit	2	5.9	7.7	80.8
	a lot	5	14.7	19.2	100.0
	Total	26	76.5	100.0	
Missing	System	8	23.5		
Total		34	100.0		

Half of the respondents reported that they needed no remediation in math. However, nearly 27 percent of the respondents reported that they needed quite a bit to a lot of remediation. Indeed, 2.31 is the mean reported value for this item, this is fairly low closer to very little remediation than some remediation. This is interesting, while the majority of respondents needed no or very little remediation in math those who did seem to have done so successfully.

B38) Level of remediation needed writing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	none	20	58.8	80.0	80.0
	very little	2	5.9	8.0	88.0
	quite a bit	1	2.9	4.0	92.0
	a lot	2	5.9	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	73.5	100.0	
Missing	System	9	26.5		
Total		34	100.0		

The reported mean value for this item is 1.52, this is quite low. 80 percent of the respondents did not need any remediation.

B39) Level of remediation needed reading

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	none	22	64.7	88.0	88.0
	very little	1	2.9	4.0	92.0
	a lot	2	5.9	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	73.5	100.0	
Missing	System	9	26.5		
Total		34	100.0		

The reported mean value for this item is 1.36, this is very low. A value of 1.36 is closer to no remediation than very little remediation. In terms of the remediation measures this sample required and partook in very little remediation. The highest measure of reported remediation was in mathematics, and even that mean vale hovered around very little remediation.

B40) How useful remediation tutoring

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not useful	12	35.3	54.5	54.5
	marginally useful	1	2.9	4.5	59.1
	neutral	3	8.8	13.6	72.7
	useful	2	5.9	9.1	81.8
	very useful	4	11.8	18.2	100.0
	Total	22	64.7	100.0	
Missing	System	12	35.3		
Total		34	100.0		

As a result of our smaller sample size our conclusions are unreliable. However, the mean reported value for this item was 2.32, and only 6 respondents indicated that tutoring was beneficial (to varying degrees).

B41) How useful remediation learning labs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not useful	3	8.8	13.6	13.6
	marginally useful	3	8.8	13.6	27.3
	neutral	2	5.9	9.1	36.4
	useful	2	5.9	9.1	45.5
	very useful	12	35.3	54.5	100.0
	Total	22	64.7	100.0	
Missing	System	12	35.3		
Total		34	100.0		

However, the mean reported value for this item is 3.77, and well over half of the respondents thought the learning labs were very useful (54.5 percent). Learning labs seem to be quite helpful when evaluated by successful students.

B42) How useful remediation KeyTrain

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not useful	8	23.5	33.3	33.3
	marginally useful	5	14.7	20.8	54.2
	neutral	2	5.9	8.3	62.5
	useful	4	11.8	16.7	79.2
	very useful	5	14.7	20.8	100.0
	Total	24	70.6	100.0	
Missing	System	10	29.4		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 2.71, and the response breakdown is quite varied. There is no clear trend in this item.

B43) How useful remediation in general

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	6	17.6	24.0	24.0
	marginally helpful	3	8.8	12.0	36.0
	neutral	5	14.7	20.0	56.0
	helpful	3	8.8	12.0	68.0
	very helpful	8	23.5	32.0	100.0
	Total	25	73.5	100.0	
Missing	System	9	26.5		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean response value for this item is 3.16; the distribution breakdown varies widely. There is no clear pattern. In terms of remediation, learning labs were reported as the most helpful form of remediation by successful students.

B44) How helpful community work experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	3	8.8	11.5	11.5
	marginally helpful	2	5.9	7.7	19.2
	neutral	4	11.8	15.4	34.6
	helpful	4	11.8	15.4	50.0
	very helpful	13	38.2	50.0	100.0
	Total	26	76.5	100.0	
Missing	System	8	23.5		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.85. This is relatively high, this represents a mean helpfulness score of more helpful than not. Indeed, half of respondents reported that community work experience was very helpful.

B45) How helpful work study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	3	8.8	11.5	11.5
	marginally helpful	1	2.9	3.8	15.4
	neutral	5	14.7	19.2	34.6
	helpful	4	11.8	15.4	50.0
	very helpful	13	38.2	50.0	100.0
	Total	26	76.5	100.0	
Missing	System	8	23.5		
Total		34	100.0		

The sample size is 26 and the mean reported value for this item is 3.88. Again this is a relatively high value and half of respondents reported work study experience as very helpful.

B46) How helpful academic internship

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	4	11.8	16.0	16.0
	neutral	6	17.6	24.0	40.0
	helpful	2	5.9	8.0	48.0
	very helpful	13	38.2	52.0	100.0
	Total	25	73.5	100.0	
Missing	System	9	26.5		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.80, again a high value. 52 percent of respondents reported that academic internship experience was very helpful.

B47) How helpful was work experience in general

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	1	2.9	3.6	3.6
	neutral	6	17.6	21.4	25.0
	helpful	3	8.8	10.7	35.7
	very helpful	18	52.9	64.3	100.0
	Total	28	82.4	100.0	
Missing	System	6	17.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 4.32. This is a very high value, this corresponds to a mean helpfulness score of helpful to very helpful. Almost 65 percent of R's rated work experience in general as very helpful. Overall work experience was viewed as more helpful than not (with mean values in the range of 3.80-3.88). This is further evidenced by the 4.32 mean score reported for work experience in general. However, we must remember that some of the response rates for these items are relatively low.

B48) How helpful work experience in developing skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not useful	2	5.9	7.4	7.4
	marginally useful	2	5.9	7.4	14.8
	neutral	5	14.7	18.5	33.3
	useful	4	11.8	14.8	48.1
	very useful	14	41.2	51.9	100.0
	Total	27	79.4	100.0	
Missing	System	7	20.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.96; again this is rather high and over 50 percent of respondents reported that work experience was very helpful in developing skills.

B49) Work experience helped in understanding the work world

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not useful	3	8.8	11.1	11.1
	marginally useful	5	14.7	18.5	29.6
	neutral	5	14.7	18.5	48.1
	useful	4	11.8	14.8	63.0
	very useful	10	29.4	37.0	100.0
	Total	27	79.4	100.0	
Missing	System	7	20.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.48; this corresponds to an average score between neutral and helpful. However, 37 percent of respondents reported that work experience was very helpful in in understanding the work world.

B50) Work experience help build confidence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not useful	5	14.7	18.5	18.5
	marginally useful	1	2.9	3.7	22.2
	neutral	7	20.6	25.9	48.1
	useful	4	11.8	14.8	63.0
	very useful	10	29.4	37.0	100.0
	Total	27	79.4	100.0	
Missing	System	7	20.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.48, and 37 percent of respondents reported that work experience was very helpful in building confidence. Nearly half the sample reported not useful to neutral usefulness.

B51) Work experience helpful in testing career options

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not useful	3	8.8	10.7	10.7
	marginally useful	4	11.8	14.3	25.0
	neutral	7	20.6	25.0	50.0
	useful	5	14.7	17.9	67.9
	very useful	9	26.5	32.1	100.0
	Total	28	82.4	100.0	
Missing	System	6	17.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.46, but the distribution of responses is varied. 50 percent of the sample considers work experience as not useful or neutral while the other 50 percent responded useful to very useful.

B52) Work experience help get job

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not useful	6	17.6	23.1	23.1
	marginally useful	1	2.9	3.8	26.9
	neutral	3	8.8	11.5	38.5
	useful	4	11.8	15.4	53.8
	very useful	12	35.3	46.2	100.0
	Total	26	76.5	100.0	
Missing	System	8	23.5		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.58; this corresponds to a score between neutral and useful. Nearly half of the sample (46.2 percent) reported that work experience helped them get a job. Overall, in terms of the work experience battery we see that the mean values are between 3.46 and 3.96. We can deduce that again work experience was more helpful than not in gaining work skills and other work related aspects.

B53) How useful academic training

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not useful	3	8.8	11.1	11.1
	neutral	1	2.9	3.7	14.8
	useful	6	17.6	22.2	37.0
	very useful	17	50.0	63.0	100.0
	Total	27	79.4	100.0	
Missing	System	7	20.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 4.26, this is a very high value. Indeed, 63 percent of the respondents reported academic training to be very useful. This may indicate that, among successful students the academic arena is considered quite important.

B54) How useful job readiness training

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not useful	3	8.8	10.7	10.7
	marginally useful	2	5.9	7.1	17.9
	neutral	2	5.9	7.1	25.0
	useful	6	17.6	21.4	46.4
	very useful	15	44.1	53.6	100.0
	Total	28	82.4	100.0	
Missing	System	6	17.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 4.00 a raw score of useful. Again, this is a high sample mean. Over 50 percent of R's (53.6 percent) rated job readiness training as very useful.

B55) How useful soft skills training

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not useful	3	8.8	10.7	10.7
	marginally useful	2	5.9	7.1	17.9
	neutral	4	11.8	14.3	32.1
	useful	8	23.5	28.6	60.7
	very useful	11	32.4	39.3	100.0
	Total	28	82.4	100.0	
Missing	System	6	17.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.79; this is a relatively high value when compared to other items in this instrument. Over 65 percent of respondents reported that soft skills training was either helpful or very helpful. Soft skills training is considered by successful students (this sample) as largely helpful.

B56) How helpful job readiness training in how to apply for jobs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	4	11.8	13.8	13.8
	marginally helpful	4	11.8	13.8	27.6
	neutral	5	14.7	17.2	44.8
	helpful	3	8.8	10.3	55.2
	very helpful	13	38.2	44.8	100.0
	Total	29	85.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	14.7		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.59 and about 45 percent of the respondents rated training as very helpful in knowing how to applying for jobs. The mean reported value indicated that overall respondents felt that this training was more helpful than not.

B57) How helpful job readiness training when applying for jobs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	5	14.7	17.2	17.2
	marginally helpful	4	11.8	13.8	31.0
	neutral	5	14.7	17.2	48.3
	helpful	3	8.8	10.3	58.6
	very helpful	12	35.3	41.4	100.0
	Total	29	85.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	14.7		
Total		34	100.0		

Again we reach 29 valid responses. The mean reported value for this item is 3.45; this would indicate that respondents felt that this training was neutral to helpful. However, over 40 percent of the respondents reported that this training was very helpful.

B58) How helpful job readiness training in resume writing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	3	8.8	10.0	10.0
	marginally helpful	1	2.9	3.3	13.3
	neutral	2	5.9	6.7	20.0
	helpful	3	8.8	10.0	30.0
	very helpful	21	61.8	70.0	100.0
	Total	30	88.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	11.8		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 4.27, this is very high and 80 percent of the respondents reported that in terms of resume writing job readiness training was helpful or very helpful. Resume writing seems to be a very important aspect in job readiness training.

B59) How helpful job readiness in interview skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	3	8.8	10.7	10.7
	marginally helpful	2	5.9	7.1	17.9
	neutral	1	2.9	3.6	21.4
	helpful	5	14.7	17.9	39.3
	very helpful	17	50.0	60.7	100.0
	Total	28	82.4	100.0	
Missing	System	6	17.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 4.11, this is another high mean value and over 78 percent of respondents reported that in terms of interview skills job readiness training was helpful or very helpful. Interview skills appear to be another important aspect to successful students.

B60) How helpful job readiness in soft skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	4	11.8	14.8	14.8
	marginally helpful	3	8.8	11.1	25.9
	neutral	2	5.9	7.4	33.3
	helpful	5	14.7	18.5	51.9
	very helpful	13	38.2	48.1	100.0
	Total	27	79.4	100.0	
Missing	System	7	20.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.74 (or more helpful than not) and nearly 50 percent of respondents reported that in terms of soft skills job readiness training was very helpful.

B61) How helpful training in updating skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not helpful	2	5.9	7.1	7.1
	marginally helpful	2	5.9	7.1	14.3
	neutral	6	17.6	21.4	35.7
	helpful	4	11.8	14.3	50.0
	very helpful	14	41.2	50.0	100.0
	Total	28	82.4	100.0	
Missing	System	6	17.6		
Total		34	100.0		

The mean reported value for this item is 3.93, again a very high mean score. Half of the respondents reported that training was very useful in updating their skills. However, over 35 percent of the respondents reported that training was not helpful to neutral in terms of updating skills.

B62) Importance of formal education in getting living wage

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	marginally helpful	1	2.9	3.4	3.4
	neutral	3	8.8	10.3	13.8
	helpful	4	11.8	13.8	27.6
	very helpful	21	61.8	72.4	100.0
	Total	29	85.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	14.7		
Total		34	100.0		

There were 29 valid responses for this item. The mean reported value for this item is 4.55, the highest of the sample means. This corresponds to a rating of very important to important. We should not be surprised by this high rating. We repeatedly see above average reported means for questions measuring academic importance. We should remember this sample is made up of those who successfully completed the program; therefore, it is possible that successful students put a premium on formal education.

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

University of Oklahoma
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title:	BEYOND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE: FACTORS AFFECTING COMPLETION OF ADULT COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE CAREER TRANSITIONS PROGRAM
Principal Investigator:	Nora Pugh-Seemster
Department:	Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted at Oklahoma City Community College. You were selected as a possible participant because you successfully completed a certificate, associate degree or obtained employment after participating in a training program at Oklahoma City Community College.

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study
The purpose of this study is to identify how background characteristics influenced participation and program completion of Career Transitions participants.

Number of Participants
About 10 people will take part in this study.

Procedures
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an one-on-one interview.

Length of Participation
The interview will take approximately 90 minutes.

Risks of being in the study are
None.

Benefits of being in the study are
None

Compensation
You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this study.

Confidentiality
In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you "without your permission" Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers will have access to the records.

There are organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis. These organizations include the OU Institutional Review Board.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time. Waivers of Elements of Confidentiality
Your name will not be retained or linked with your responses unless you specifically agree to be identified. The data you provide will be destroyed unless you specifically agree for data retention or retention of contact information beyond the end of the study. Please check all of the options that you agree to:

I consent to being quoted directly. ___ Yes ___ No

I consent to having my name reported with quoted material. ___Yes ___ No

I consent to having the information I provided retained for potential use in future studies by this researcher. ___Yes ___ No

Request for record information
If you approve, your confidential records will be used as data for this study. The records that will be used include name, demographic and background information from the Career Transitions Program. These records will be used for the following purpose(s): to describe how background characteristics and experiences assisted in program completion.

_____ I agree for my records (Career Transitions database and/or student file. to be accessed and used for the purposes described above.

_____ I do not agree for my (Career Transitions database and/or student file. records to be accessed for use as research data.

Audio Recording of Study Activities
To assist with accurate recording of your responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. Please select one of the following options:

I consent to audio recording. ___ Yes ___ No

Contacts and Questions
If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at 405-682-7831 and npseemster1@ou.edu or 405-325-4202 tedancy@ou.edu
Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions, or if you have experienced a research-related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Participant Signature Print Name Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

Print Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Division of Community Development
Oklahoma City Community College

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH ON COLLEGE COMPLETION IN

CAREER TRANSITIONS

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study of *students who successfully completed the Career Transitions Program.*

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to participate in an interview.

Your participation would involve *one* session, which will be approximately 60 minutes.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact: *Nora Pugh-Seemster*
Career Transitions Department
at
682-7831 or
Email: *(npseemster1@ou.edu)*

This study is being approved by the
University of Oklahoma Institutional Research Board.

IRB NUMBER: 3570 IRB APPROVAL DATE: 11/01/2013