2021

Using Student Complaints To Inform Structural Strategies For Retention And Inclusive Pedagogy In Community College Settings

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USING STUDENT COMPLAINTS TO INFORM STRUCTURAL STRATEGIES FOR RETENTION AND INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE SETTINGS

A Dissertation

Presented to

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Educational Administration, Higher Education Leadership

Indiana State University

Terre Haute, Indiana

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Tiffany Brewer

July 2021

Keywords: student complaints, equity-mindedness, retention, community college

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Curriculum Vitae

Career Objective

To obtain a position where I can contribute to the promotion and fulfillment of the institutions core mission, purpose and values. I possess 17 years of cross industry non-profit human services and education experience. I have over a decade of experience teaching college students and overseeing internship placements, community-based learning projects, and other co-curricular activities. I have a wealth of experience working with traditional students 18-24 as well as non-traditional adult learners.

Educational Background

Doctor of Philosophy	Indiana State University Higher Education Leadership
Education Specialist	Liberty University Educational Leadership
Master of Arts, Social Science	University of Chicago Psychology & Clinical Social Work
Bachelor of Science Major:	Howard University Psychology
Certificate(s)	Title IX Coordinator – level I
	Adult Career & Academic Advisor
	Direct Services & Support Professional Dept. Child and Family Services Illinois
	Domestic Violence Advocate/ Counselor

Employment History

Dean, Equity & Inclusion, Title IX Coordinator *Prairie State College*
February 2020- Present
My responsibilities include serving as the college's Campus Diversity Officer (CDO). I provide overall leadership and support to administrators, faculty and staff throughout each division of the institution. I lead 10 functional areas, which include, TRIO (SSS, ETS, & Upward Bound), Disability Services, Latinx Outreach, Male Success Initiative, Military Student Affairs Center, Title IX, and Student Complaint/ Ombudsman Services. I also act as the lead administrator for the college's federal compliance program. I lead the institutions training and development efforts related to diversity, equity, inclusivity, and Title IX training. I have nine direct reports, four of which are managers with their own teams of four or more. I manage several departmental budgets totaling greater than 2 million dollars. In addition to Student Affairs leadership, I work closely with faculty and Academic Affairs leadership to support them in their efforts to create a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment.

In this role, I take the lead in advancing the college's strategic diversity goals and objectives. I support and coordinate the college's efforts to maintain compliance with state and federal regulations (Title IX, Clery Act, DFSCA, Edgar 84, Title IV, FERPA, ICCB). I serve as the institution's Title IX Coordinator, managing all aspects of the college's sexual discrimination, harassment, & misconduct program, including policies, procedures, investigations, and trainings. I also serve as the college ombudsman, investigating and supporting the resolution of general student complaints and grievances. I monitor and manage regulatory, legislative, and policy matters that affect the college's compliance efforts. I establish and maintain compliance calendars and resource manuals and coordinate with various departments for timely report submission. I document compliance efforts, maintain related records, prepare and disseminate the results of compliance audits for all relevant stakeholders. I assist with internal and external reporting and audits related to compliance, regulations, and regional accreditation. I coordinate and support programs and services to further close the achievement gap for various identity groups on campus. I support the finance division in identifying and contracting with minority owned businesses consistent with college policy. I serve as college liaison with ICCB district 151 agencies and partners on matters of diversity equity, and inclusion. I also develop program budgets in order to insure good financial stewardship of the college's fiscal and personnel resources. Lastly, I coordinate with Human Resources to train search committees and support Affirmative Action and EEO work within the college.

Title IX Coordinator, Manager of Compliance & Effectiveness *Prairie State College*
November 2016- February 2020
My responsibilities include developing and implementing procedures to ensure the prompt, effective, equitable investigation and timely resolution of all student inquiries regarding rights and responsibilities concerning harassment or other discriminatory behavior in violation of Title IX. I conduct and manage Title IX investigations of student complaints. I respond to and resolve issues, including conducting interviews and

gathering evidence as necessary. I prepare the final investigative summaries with findings of fact and recommendations for remediation of complaints and corrective actions. I conduct credibility assessments in the determination of possible violations of student code of conduct. I conduct program gap analysis to determine institutional liability risk and I oversee the entire student training program for Title IX and DFSCA compliance. I identified, contracted with, customized and deployed the EVERFI-Haven and Alcohol EDU training platforms.

I collaborate with appropriate Prairie State College (PSC) administrators, (Chief of Police, VP of Academic Affairs, VP of Student Affairs, Executive Director of Human Resources, Director of FYE) to conduct regular training, programs and events for students, and in-service training for faculty and staff, on topics relating to sexual misconduct and discriminatory behaviors, the prevention of sexual harassment/sexual violence, and other Title IX presentations. I am the first point of contact for responses to Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requests for information. I work directly with legal counsel to prepare response documentation. I provide ongoing consultation regarding Title IX requirements, grievance issues, and compliance programs to Prairie State College executive leadership including the Office of Human Resources.

I work with the Director of Athletics to oversee and ensure Title IX gender equity compliance in PSC athletics programs. I develop, oversee, and coordinate the college-wide communication strategy and outreach efforts (in-person, electronic, digital, print, web-based) to inform PSC community of Title IX rights and responsibilities. I have lead the efforts to create such collateral materials such as; “Informed Student” allegation letters for complainants and respondents, the respondents rights info sheet, pregnant and parenting info sheet, the Title TX Health and Safety website and consistent updates to the sexual misconduct handbook.

I function as the Student Affairs liaison whom coordinates with PSC Campus Police, Human Resources, and the Director of Financial Aid to coordinate College-wide compliance with the Clery Act, including reporting and training. I advise students, faculty and staff about options for initiating formal/ informal or confidential reports alleging violation of Title IX. I refer inquiries that are not appropriate for investigation under Title IX to other institutional resources, such as the PSC Threat Assessment Team. I respond to inquiries from students, faculty, staff and administrators regarding rights and responsibilities concerning harassment or other discriminatory behavior in violation of Title IX.

I monitor PSC’s discrimination and sexual harassment policies to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and regulations. I conduct regular compliance audits and manage the Title IX Compliance Committee, as the Committee Chair. I remain abreast of current Title IX investigative standards, and continuously identify and integrate best practices as they relate to PSC’s Title IX program and compliance efforts. This includes monitoring the implementation of OCR Interim Guidance under the Trump/DeVos Administration. I identified changes to policy, implemented necessary compliance efforts and presented a

College wide Brown Bag lunch to inform the campus community of changes to legislation.

I maintain records regarding complaints of sexual misconduct including number, nature and disposition of complaints filed. Then prepare annual statistical reports on Title IX complaints and investigations for submission to appropriate State and Federal Agencies, including the Illinois States Attorney office.

Additional compliance responsibilities include overseeing, facilitating, and supporting the implementation of compliance, effectiveness and re-accreditation efforts for state, federal and third party regulatory agencies. I assist in the implementation, coordination and adherence of annual contracts, grants and reporting compliance. I conduct extensive quality improvement and quality assurance activities by providing technical assistance to support departmental assessment efforts, projects and initiatives. I manage quality improvement efforts by helping administrative leadership meet program productivity goals, objectives and report submission deadlines. I also interpret, relay and communicate numerous federally mandated Institutional responsibilities to key stakeholders.

I coordinate compliance efforts for multiple state and federal regulations, such as Title IV, Clery Act, Edgar 86, DFSCA, Gainful Employment, Title IX, and ICCB self-study. I also coordinate institutional strategic planning efforts and manage college wide re-accreditation efforts by assisting in the development of the assurance argument, including monitoring adherence to and completion of the Federal Compliance, Filing by Institutions report. I established and manage the College compliance calendar, as well as monitor and document numerous interdepartmental compliance efforts. Lastly, I support the development of college wide policies, procedures, and practices related to compliance adherence, including writing the Pregnant and Parenting policies for the institution.

Regional Manager, BIH, North County *Family Health Centers of San Diego, May 2013 through June 2015*

My responsibilities included overseeing, facilitating, and directing the implementation of the Black Infant Health program in North San Diego County. I directed the daily operations of program activities throughout the County. I assisted in the implementation of annual contracts, grants and contract compliance reporting. I conducted extensive quality improvement and quality assurance activities. I supported quality improvement efforts by meeting program productivity goals and objectives. I also interpreted, relayed and communicated the role of program services to clients, staff, volunteers, and community partners.

Another primary responsibility was fiscal management, I participated in budget preparation, management and monitoring of annual contract spending. I also worked to ensure high levels of patient engagement and initiated ongoing community partnerships. I also worked within the community to increase program visibility by strategically hosting community events in targeted areas, and maintained community involvement by attending numerous collaborative network meetings. Lastly I recruited, hired and trained the North County region workforce.

Associate Director of Client Services *Community Resource Center*
November 2008 through December 2012
I was responsible for directing the daily operations of a multidivisional DV program overseeing the daily program monitoring of a 24 bed emergency shelter, a 15 bed transitional housing program and a Therapeutic Children's center, as well as a 150 person off site rental assistance program funded through the County of San Diego. In my tenure I created, implemented and enforced policies and procedures for stream lining program processes and systems. I was responsible for the training of staff and orchestrating multi-annual Domestic Violence compliance certification training. I worked to insure the consistent programmatic compliance and optimal utilization of federal and state grant dollars, for FESG, Health and Human Service Agency, and HOME Tenant Based Rental Assistance Programming. I also insured the clear and open communication across all departments and divisions of programs. I have implemented quality assurance and auditing practices for contractual compliance, to promote quality care and insured continued cost effectiveness to minimize program waste and inefficiency. I am well experienced at conducting utilization reviews in the health care setting. I have also implemented evaluation, monitoring and quality assurance training tools for staff.

I developed and maintained business relationships with Community partners such as North County Health Services, Women's Resource Center, CDI Headstart, Magdalena Ecke YMCA, and North County Lifeline, as well as with numerous affordable housing communities across North County.

I prepared required documentation, including preparation of reports, insured collection, coordination and integrity of statistics data for agency wide program funding, oversaw budgeting and proposal process for all programs. Monitored and managed department compliance with ethical and other legal responsibility including confidentiality and informed consent policy compliance. Other responsibilities included supporting the continued fiscal solvency of the departments, participated in advocacy for policy reform and coordinated additional cross trainings for community partnerships.

Economic Development, Research Program Specialist *City of Oceanside*
December 2006 though November 2008
My responsibilities ran the gambit of development services. There was a large research and analysis component to this position which consisted of me performing statistical and numeric analysis of labor market data as well as the interpretation of data to gauge the city's economic growth as well as market saturation and competition. Other Duties included the maintenance of numerous databases including the contact database ACT. I utilize ACT to create numerous mailing lists for large scale marketing campaigns as well as to create invite lists for special events, I coordinate and ultimately execute. I also play a large role in special event budgeting and vendor contract negotiation and management. I utilize and maintain several different web based databases to generate demographic reports as well as monitor and update the retail inventory database for the city of Oceanside's Economic Development Dept. Along with managing the retail portion of the department database I also worked with the department graphic designer to publish a monthly electronic newsletter. The third large component to this position was program

management. I was the Business Outreach/ Retention Program Manager as well as the Volunteer/Internship program coordinator for the department. I contacted local community leaders and business owners to schedule economic gardening and public relations visits amongst the business community, local officials and decision makers and connected teenagers and young adults with department personnel whose jobs align with the interests of the student. Aside from program management and coordination I also sat on several different committees within the city and department. I was a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee and I wrote the Economic Development Update for Oceanside Magazine. I was a key member of the Economic Sustainability Committee, acting as one of the primary authors of the City of Oceanside's Economic Sustainability Study released in March of 2008.

Clinic Manager, *Community Health Services*
June 2005 through June 2006
My responsibilities included managing all personnel as well as daily fiscal operations. I conducted interviews for potential staff as well as performed monthly staff meetings. Monitored and tracked all clinic revenue, continuously exceeding required weekly and monthly sales projections. I consistently doubled the participant numbers and clinic revenue through the execution of increased marketing campaigns and product and service promotions. I conducted monthly audits to ensure compliance with organizational policy and procedure. I compiled monthly statistics and organized information into clear and coherent reports. I conducted and processed monthly orders for stationary materials, medical supplies, as well as performed corresponding inventory. I also performed routine diagnostic testing. In my capacity as a counselor, I conducted daily counseling and educational interviews with diverse clientele. Identifying problem behaviors and worked collaboratively with the client to find attainable goals for changes in behavior.

Child Welfare Specialist (Masters Level) *Lutheran Social Services of Illinois*
September 2004 through May 2005
My responsibilities included performing clinical assessment of client needs and services, and preparing service plans. I facilitated correspondence between service providers, clients, and management team. I performed client advocacy in family court, testified, produced written documentation, monitored and reported client therapeutic progress, and made necessary referrals for services. I monitored participant compliance with state and federal child care guidelines as well as acted as a client advocate and agency liaison at medical and educational compliance reviews.

Adjunct Faculty, *Prairie State College, Chicago Heights, Illinois*
August 2017 through December 2019.
My responsibilities include classroom instruction for Social Science 101. The two courses covered the range of social sciences from History to Economics as well as psychology and sociology. I taught several different sections through the course of the academic year. I conducted classroom lecture, designed and assigned research papers, exams multiple choice as well as essay questions and issued group projects. My overall approach to teaching is that the classroom is a collaborative effort between students and teachers. The information should be relayed in the clearest most concise manner, learning

should be made as easy and as possible and communication should flow freely in both directions in a symbiotic relationship.

Associate Faculty, University of Phoenix, Chicago & San Diego Campus
November 2011 through Present
My responsibilities include classroom instruction and facilitation for Human Services, Psychology and Masters in Counseling courses. The courses cover the range of Human Service delivery from assessment to management and organizational administration. I taught numerous sections through the course of the academic year. I conducted classroom lecture, designed and assigned research papers, exams multiple choice as well as essay questions and issued group projects. My overall approach to teaching is that the classroom is a collaborative effort between students and teachers. The information should be relayed in the clearest most concise manner, learning should be made as easy and as enjoyable as possible and communication should flow freely in both directions in a symbiotic relationship.

Adjunct Faculty, Malcolm X City Colleges of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
August 2004 through December 2004.
My responsibilities include classroom instruction for Social Science 101. The two courses covered the range of social sciences from History to Economics as well as psychology and sociology. I taught several different sections through the course of the academic year. I conducted classroom lecture, designed and assigned research papers, exams multiple choice as well as essay questions and issued group projects. My overall approach to teaching is that the classroom is a collaborative effort between students and teachers. The information should be relayed in the clearest most concise manner, learning should be made as easy and as possible and communication should flow freely in both directions in a symbiotic relationship.

Adjunct Faculty, Malcolm X City Colleges of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
January 2005 through May 2005.
My responsibilities include classroom instruction for Social Science 101 and 102. These courses covered the range of social sciences from Psychology, and Sociology to Geography. I taught several different sections through the course of the academic year. I conducted classroom lecture, designed and assigned research papers, exams multiple choice as well as essay questions and issued group projects. My overall approach to teaching is that the classroom is a collaborative effort between students and teachers. The information should be relayed in the clearest most concise manner, learning should be made as easy and as possible and communication should flow freely in both directions in a symbiotic relationship.

Technical Services Coordinator, University of Chicago, Harper Library,
September 03 through November 2004.
My responsibilities included the processing, and inputting of all new library materials for collections; books, magazines, and periodicals. I was also responsible for processing patron requests and overseeing student circulation staff; Other duties included timesheet processing and payroll disbursal.

Senior Seminar Student Instructor, *Howard University,*
August 2000, through May 2003.
My responsibilities included designing a weekly lecture with complete outline for a 16- week course. I was also responsible for teaching different subject matter to a class of my peers. Other duties included peer assessment and grading of papers.

Early Learning Program Assistant, *Howard University*
December 2002, through May 2003.
My responsibilities included performing clinical observation of children with behavioral problems, conducting play therapy, as well as academic instruction. Other duties included coordinating recreation activities and designing instruments for children. I also acted as a tutor, mentor and chaperone for different field trips and various other enrichment activities.

Research Efforts

Doctoral Dissertation: Using Student Complaints to Inform Structural Strategies for Retention and Inclusive Pedagogy in Community College Settings.
Indiana State University, Bayh College of Education

Research Assistant for Dr. Linda Berg-Cross, "Envirosations" Study
August 2002, through May 2003. Psychology Department, Howard University. My responsibilities include coding conversations for later analysis. I was also responsible for using Statistical program SPSS, to analyze and report the data at Howard University's Spring Graduate Research Symposium. March 2003.

Research Assistant Dr. Kellina Craig, "Hate Crime content Analysis, Pre and Post September 11th". August 2001, through, May 2002.
Psychology Department, Howard University.
My responsibilities included, collecting data, (library searches etc.), data analysis for a content comparison. The utilization of Microsoft office applications.

Research Assistant Dr. Stefanie Gilbert, "Eating Attitudes in Black Women, A Comparative Study of Women of color". August 2001, through May 2002.Psychology Department. Howard University. My responsibilities included administering inventories, collecting data, (library searches etc.), coding data, and inputting data.

Research Assistant Dr. Stefanie Gilbert, " The Utilization of Mental Health Services by African American Students at a predominately black University". August 2000, through May 2001. Psychology Department, Howard University.
My responsibilities included administering inventories, collecting data, (library searches etc.), coding data, and inputting data.

Committee/ Task Force Participation

Title IX Compliance Committee - Chair
Gainful Employment Task Force

Strategic Enrollment Management Committee
Student Conduct Judicial Panel – Chair
Frequent Candidate Search Committee – Chair/ member

Professional Affiliations and Honors

NASPA
NASFAA
ATIXA
Trustee scholarship recipient,
(NIMHCOR) scholar
Golden Key Honor Society
Psi Chi,
Phi Beta Kappa
Magna Cum Laude Graduate
NAACP Award Recipient

Civic, Religious, Service Activities

NSDCAC Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated, Public Service Sorority, Chapter Charter member

Qualifications:

Proficient in Budget coordination, execution and management
Proficient in the practice and execution of program management
Experienced in special event planning and coordination
Proficient in supervisory and management roles
Proficient in effectively maintaining positive working relationships with internal and external customers
Experienced development liaison, navigating between multiple parties, including local, state and county agencies
Proficient in implementing systems to increase revenue
Proficient conducting community outreach and program marketing
Proficient in conducting large scale training efforts

Skills:

Excellent written and verbal communication skills
Ability to problem solve
Ability to successfully work independently and within a team environment
Results Oriented with a tremendous work ethic and strong initiative
Ability to prioritize, meet deadlines and work within time constraints
Excellent organizational and time management skills
Ability to multitask and handle multiple projects simultaneously
Focus on productivity and efficacy
Organization before Individual mentality

Computer Skills:

Proficient in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, PeopleSoft HRIS applications SPSS, Statistical Program for Social Sciences, Costar, Xceligent, Quark Express, GIS, Claritas, Numerous online databases ACT contact database, Kronos, BlackBoard, Ellucian-Colleague, Canvas, Survey Monkey, Desire 2 Learn - LMS

Courses Taught

Case Management, Advocacy & Mediation
Building Community in Organizations
Historical Development in Human Services
Diversity & Special Populations
Administration and Management of Human Service Programs
Research Methods & Statistics in Human Services
Intervention, Direct Service Delivery and Case Management
Capstone Course: Advocacy and Creating Social Change
Psychological Tests and Measurement
Introduction to Human Services, Working with groups
Models of Effective helping, Child Development
Human Services Program Design and Proposal Writing
Psychology 101
Social Science 101& 102

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Kandace Hinton, Ph.D

Program Coordinator, Higher Education Leadership Program

Indiana State University

Committee Member: Mary Howard-Hamilton, Ph.D

Department Chair, Educational Leadership Program

Indiana State University

Committee Member: Michael D. Anthony, Ph.D

Vice President of Student Affairs & Institutional Effectiveness

Prairie State College

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to extend knowledge regarding the nature of student complaints in community college settings. It describes the characteristics of complaints at a two-year institution and explores pedagogical practices intended to support student success and persistence. Qualitative content analysis of the institutions comprehensive complaint database was performed to understand student dissatisfaction and identify areas for improvement in organizational function. The study concludes with a discussion of how continuous quality improvement and culturally relevant pedagogy could be utilized to improve the collegiate experience for marginalized student groups.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am so incredibly humbled and overjoyed to be completing this process. I thank God for allowing me to be at this point today. The submission of this manuscript marks the end of an all-consuming labor of love that began so many years earlier. I had originally planned to pursue a doctoral degree when I graduated from my undergraduate institution in 2003. Life happened, I pursued a master's instead and decided to "work for a while" and think about if I "needed to get a doctorate." I worked for some time, revisited the decision and applied to several programs in 2007. This time around I was still on the fence and received several interview invitations but again decided I wasn't really interested and "just didn't really want to do it." Fast forward 10 years, a marriage, three children, and a momentous career change from one industry to another and I was finally "ready" to pursue the terminal degree.

Like my mother always says, "It will happen when it is time," she couldn't have been more right. This was the perfect time, place, and space to complete this arduous process. I could not have been more nurtured, prepared, mentored and supported through the process, and for that I am eternally grateful. It is a wonder that this jewel of a program is discretely nestled within the small town of Terre Haute, Indiana.

To my committee members, if I wrote an acknowledgement 100 pages it still would not truly express the depth of my gratitude for your continuing support and encouragement. To my chair Dr. Kandace Hinton, thank you for your time and attention. Thank you for your constant demonstration of the ethic of care within the classroom and the dissertation journey. I also want to thank you for your patience with my obsessive

adherence to self-imposed timelines. Lastly, I want to thank you for growing my appreciation for the importance of history, in higher education and beyond.

To Dr. Mary Howard-Hamilton, thank you for your constant demonstration of brilliance, ingenuity and grace. It has been an honor and a privilege to watch you simultaneously navigate multiple roles, faculty member, Department Chair, and Project Manager on countless initiatives. It has been a pleasure to be in the presence of such an accomplished scholar. I also want to acknowledge your modeling of kindness and understanding as our cohort explored extremely sensitive and emotion invoking subject matter. You masterfully facilitated potentially divisive conversations about race, class, and privilege with an empathy and expertise unlike anything I had ever witnessed.

To my external committee member Dr. Michael Anthony, thank you for your uncanny ability to provide the supportive "check-in" every time I needed it most. I appreciate your constant modeling of effective leadership within the field of student development and student affairs. Thank you for single handedly shaping my professional trajectory within our institution. Your arrival at our institution has been one of the best things to happen to me personally and to the college as a whole. Your strategic thinking, interpersonal skills, and unmatched ability to build relationships and establish necessary infrastructure is a marvel to behold. You have been influential in changing my life for the better. I cannot thank you enough for the multitude of opportunities you have afforded me.

Collectively you have all championed inclusive practices and have modeled what it is to be an equity practitioner and a change agent. Each of you have helped to "tan" the homogenous landscape of higher education. Your contributions have been invaluable and

have changed countless lives. Thank you for your bravery and courage. Thank you for your continued perseverance in creating pathways for underrepresented scholars. Thank you all for carving out a lane for scholars of color.

This work has been incredibly personal for me. I have experienced in some form or another every emotion conveyed through the narratives embedded within this manuscript. I want to thank my committee for helping me to conceptualize and shape the story told through this research inquiry. It is so empowering to be adding to the body of knowledge about community colleges as told through the lens of Black students pursuing their education.

I would also like to acknowledge the various Indiana State University, EDLR program faculty. I would like to take a moment to thank Dr. Jon Iftikar, for being an amazing facilitator. Thank you for taking a very difficult subject and making it comprehensively palatable. Your delivery of the higher education law material made the content easy to understand and digest. I also want to thank you for periodically taking time to speak to me about various steps in the Ph.D process. Additionally thank you for your valuable feedback at my proposal defense and your introduction of Bourdieu's work on social capital.

I want to formally thank my family. The one I came from and the one I created. Mom, Dad and Ash, thank you for always being there. Thank you for your continued support. Thank you for letting me vent and complain. Ash, specifically thank you for always being my ride or die, and my biggest champion. Mom and Dad thank you for everything from childcare and encouragement to cash, so I could finally cross the finish line. Thank you to my aunts, uncles, and cousins who have been there from the first

graduation to the last. To my husband, Nathan Brewer, thank you for starting this journey with me back in 1999. Thank you for all of your sacrifices of free time, vacations, and my holiday attendance. Thank you for sacrificing all the things I noticed, as well as those things I did not recognize you gave up to support me through this process. Thank you for holding me down, as “we got our Ph.D”! To my sons Braylen, Brock, and Brodrick, everything mommy does is for you. I don’t make any moves without first factoring in how it will impact your lives. I pray that I am doing right by you. To my HU friends who are now more like family, (Chere`, Jeanine, Shantel, Crystal, Jessica, Charles and Rashard) thank you for everything, the list is countless. To my newest friend, battle buddy, soror, and sister scholar, Dr. Kelsey Bogard. I truly adore you and could not have done this without you. Thank you for the calls, the guidance, and most of all the support. This is just the start of our fruitful collaboration within the academy.

I want to mention a word of thanks to my current colleagues and mentors past and present. To Felix and Grace, thank you for welcoming me with open arms, being my sounding board, and your never ending support in every one of my endeavors. To my past supervisors who mentored me then, and I still “check-in” with today before major career moves, Pamela Choice and Iris Payne, Thank you. To Dr. Stefanie Coleman, thank you for being my mom in Illinois, and preparing me for each step of this culminating journey. From your recommendation in my application to your helpful hints about finishing the program, down to your words of wisdom for the defense. You’re remarkable and I am so lucky to have you in my life. This process has been transformative. Every person aforementioned has contributed to this final product in one way or another and I am grateful beyond belief.

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CHAPTER 1

UNEQUAL ACCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Wealth and resource disparity is a pervasive issue in America. These material inequities have serious socioeconomic consequences, including lingering disparities in health, psychological assets, and educational attainment for minoritized groups (Assari, 2018). Bullard and Lee (1994) explored the various socio-economic factors that contribute to racial segregation and inequitable resource distribution in America. The authors make the case that racial segregation has been strategically engineered and supported by political processes, discriminatory lending practices, and job suburbanization. They dubbed these institutional practices American apartheid. These tools of structural racism have contributed to community displacement, gentrification, limited mobility, minimal housing options, and decreased environmental choices for Blacks and other people of color in America.

The impact of these disparities can also be seen in education. The consequences of racism and its systemic inequity can be seen in student academic performance with respect to the achievement gap. The term *achievement gap* refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students. These disparities appear in a wide variety of data sets from standardized test scores, to college-enrollment and completion (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013). One of the most urgent and intractable problems in higher education is

the inequality of educational opportunities and outcomes for historically underserved groups (Bensimon, 2005). “The problem of unequal outcomes resides within individuals, in the cognitive frames that govern their attitudes, beliefs, values and actions” (Bensimon, 2005, p. 100). When employing a deficit cognitive frame influenced by negative stereotypes, institutional actors are more likely to attribute poor student performance to Black and Latinx students’ ability as opposed to generalized characteristics and practices embedded within the institution. “That is, individuals—the ways in which they teach, think students learn, and connect with students, and the assumptions they make about students based on their race or ethnicity, can create the problem of unequal outcomes” (Bensimon, 2005, p. 101).

This study will posit that it is these individual characteristics associated with systemic organizational learning that act as leading factors in student-teacher conflict on college campuses. This conflict can frequently result in student complaints. However, these complaints can be used to encourage institutional responsibility, and ultimately be used as a tool to create structural change. It is obligatory that institutions support and sustain this change. The structural facilitation of cross cultural and interracial interaction has been shown to improve students’ openness to diversity and willingness to have their individual conceptions about socially constructed identities challenged (Shim & Perez, 2018). This openness to challenge and acceptance of diversity within the college community is essential to improving inclusivity on college campuses.

Problem Statement

The complex evolution of American society and Black emancipation has changed the face of Black subjugation. Blacks in America were initially banned from all

educational opportunities. It was illegal for Blacks to learn to read and unlawful for them to participate in formalized schooling (Fox et al., 2017). The period following emancipation and failed reconstruction was marked by the enactment of “Black Codes,” a set of laws designed to return free Blacks to the status of illiterate and uneducated laborers. Titled “pig” and “vagrancy” laws, they were much more. “Their purpose was to keep the Negro exactly what he was, a propertyless rural laborer under strict controls, without political rights, and with inferior legal rights” (Adamson, 1983, p. 559). American codification eventually moved from the overtly punitive “Black Codes” to the less offensive, but still entirely restrictive, legislation of school admission and train car occupation established by Jim Crow segregation. Though different in presentation, the impact and social context remained identical; the universal assumption of Black inferiority fostered by racial prejudice.

Black colonial education, embodied by the Hampton Institute, was also a strategic undertaking, designed to perpetuate Black second-class citizenship within the established social order (Watkins, 1999). Hampton Institute, an institution chartered by Samuel Chapman Armstrong, was created to address the “Negro” problem. Chapman aimed to provide ex-slaves with teachers, manners, agricultural skills, and a work ethic that dignified labor. Most importantly, he wanted to instill an attitude of passivity toward slavery. This included the unyielding acceptance of Black subservience. Armstrong ensured that the Hampton Institute would prepare Blacks for survival and submission within the new South. They would be trained to teach and to labor, and, in turn, they would teach the Black community to accept a doctrine of conformity and quiescence. “They could not appear uppity or threatening to the social order or their own subservient

position in the South" (Watkins, 1999, p. 50). The vestiges of this inferiority inculcation remain present in today's college classrooms.

Formal secondary education has been historically utilized as a tool for assimilation and control. "The purpose of state sanctioned schooling has been to forward the assimilationist and often violent White imperialist project, with students and families being asked to lose or deny their languages, literacies, cultures and histories in order to achieve in schools" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1). Americanization programs have been systems of deculturalization for under-represented racial/ethnic minorities. White hegemonic education has typically employed six methods of deculturalization: (1) segregation and isolation, (2) forced change of language, (3) curriculum content that reflects the culture of dominant group, (4) textbooks that reflect the culture of the dominant groups, (5) the denial of cultural and religious expression by dominated groups, and (6) the use of teachers from the dominant group (Spring, 2013). Conversely, postsecondary education has also become a vehicle for continued upward social mobility.

For many people of color, open access institutions such as community colleges have proved to be an invaluable asset. Community colleges are the only affordable higher education option for many under-represented racial/ethnic minority students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds (Fox et al., 2017). Community colleges meet the needs of a critical yet vulnerable population. Over the last few years, they have met increasing criticism for their low retention and graduation rates. Exploring faculty-student interaction could be useful in understanding relationship dynamics that contribute to student complaints. Student dissatisfaction could be an important contributor to low retention rates. The increased use of structural strategies aimed at meeting the non-

cognitive needs of first generation, and low-income Black students could improve the outcome for these students at community colleges. In addition to policy reform, institution-supported changes to classroom pedagogy, specifically a dedication to inclusive classroom practices could be used to retain and matriculate marginalized student groups more effectively. This study will explore the interaction between students, faculty, classroom complaints, and retention. It will also explore how the prevalence of deficit thinking, promulgated by White dominance hegemony can lead to student complaints about faculty course facilitation and ultimately student attrition. This thinking disrupts the relational dynamics needed to facilitate the success of Black students in White-dominated educational spaces.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to extend knowledge regarding the nature of student complaints in community colleges. It presents an exploration of pedagogical practices intended to support student success and course persistence. A hopeful outcome for the research is the systemic implementation of structural and classroom strategies designed to better retain first generation, and low-income Black students, a group often marginalized and underserved in educational environments that may be predicated on White middle-class norms and similarly narrow definitions of success.

Research Questions

The specific research questions addressed include:

1. What are the characteristics of student complaints within a community college setting?

2. How can student complaints be used to create and implement inclusive classroom pedagogy for first generation and low-income, Black students in community college settings?

Significance

This study is significant because many first generation and low-income Black students receive their education within community college settings; however, these institutions have considerable difficulty successfully retaining and graduating these students. A college degree is often essential for achieving a better life. In order to address historically disparate allocations of material resources, community colleges and their faculty must be equipped with the tools necessary to retain and graduate vulnerable student populations. Institutions need to employ student-centered policy reform practices and inclusive pedagogy in order to improve student performance and institutional outcomes. Examining the factors that contribute to student dissatisfaction can enable colleges with the information needed to create a framework for policy changes that support the retention of first generation, low-income, Black students, as well as create a framework for classroom facilitation strategies to support the social and academic integration of marginalized student groups.

This study aims to explore students' experience of institutional culture using the vehicle of student complaints. The relational elements of student achievement will be reviewed through the lens of student–faculty connection and a sense of belonging fostered through inclusive pedagogy. There is a dearth of research on the interconnected dynamics of student complaints, student–faculty conflict, retention, and feelings of inclusivity. Given the tremendous impact student dissatisfaction can have on the student

experience, and the lack of research on the way in which institutions utilize student complaints, this study will examine the use of student complaints to inform institutional responsibility strategies for community college retention and classroom pedagogy. Utilizing the lenses of the equity cognitive frame, college students' sense of belonging, as well as mattering, and culturally relevant pedagogy, this study will explore how student complaints can be used to inform policy revision and classroom instruction to improve the collegiate experiences for students of color.

Definition of Terms

This section will provide a brief description of terms used as they pertain to this study:

Achievement gap: Achievement gap refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013).

Campus ethos: The combination of campus climate and culture, campus ethos centers on core themes that relate to the human experience, family, community, caring, student-centeredness, civic leadership, and responsibility (Kezar, 2007; Wood et al., 2015).

Complainant: The party who makes the complaint in a legal action or proceeding; the party who complains (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, n.d.).

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI): A process of progressive incremental improvement of organizational function (Deming, 1986).

Counter-stratifying practices: Professional actions designed to counteract or reverse patterns of racial and social hierarchy (Pendakur, 2016).

Deficit Cognitive Frame: A perspective that places the responsibility for unrealized success solely on students. The deficit frame posits that students who fail in school do so because of alleged internal deficits (such as cognitive and/or motivational limitations) or shortcomings socially linked to the student, such as family dysfunctions or deficits (Bensimon, 2005).

Disputant: One that is engaged in a dispute (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, n.d).

Equity Cognitive Frame: Involves data-driven inquiry into student outcomes, new and intensified awareness of identity-based inequities as institutional problems, and personal and collective responsibility for achieving outcomes (Bensimon, 2005).

First Generation: A first generation college student (FGCS) whose parent does not hold a bachelor's degree, a student whose family lacks a college-going tradition (Dennon, 2020).

Historically Black College or University (HBCU): An institution whose original founding was for the education of recently freed Black slaves. Since the beginning of the 21st century, these institutions have become more diversified to include all races with the goal of education for everyone, regardless of their racial demographics (Palmer & Gasman, 2008).

Inclusion: The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those

who have physical or mental disabilities and members of other minority groups. (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, n.d.).

Low-income: Students who are Federal Pell Grant eligible. The Federal Pell Grant is usually awarded to undergraduates who have a high degree of unmet financial need. Students whose families have a total income of up to $50,000 may be eligible for the need-based funding, though most Pell grant money goes to students with a total family income below $20,000 (Kerr, 2021).

Marginality: The inability for an individual to connect with their environment. These feelings can be temporary or permanent (Schlossberg, 1989).

Mattering: The ability for an individual to make a connection to their environment. This includes feeling that one is depended upon, others are interested in and are concerned with their fate (Rosenburg & McCullough, 1981).

Persistence: An individual's' internal desire to continue enrollment within an institution of higher education. This is sometimes researched in conjunction with a student's social capital and connection to campus resources, which further aids a student's ability to continue enrollment (Palmer & Gasman, 2008).

Respondent: A person who replies to something, especially one supplying information for a survey or questionnaire or responding to an advertisement or complaint. (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, n.d.)

Sense of belonging: A college student's perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, and the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the campus community or others on campus such as faculty, staff, and peers (Strayhorn, 2019, p. 4).

Assumptions and Delimitations

The following were assumptions within the study:

1. The inclusion criteria of the sample are appropriate and therefore assure that the participants have experienced the same or similar phenomenon reported within the study.
2. There were sufficient reliable data obtained to conduct this study.
3. Students submitted complaints for no other reason than because they felt genuinely aggrieved by their experiences at the institutions.

The following were delimitations within the study:

1. Comprehensive sampling was used to obtain a robust sample of narrative complaints within the single instrumental case study methodology.
2. Black students were chosen as the focus of this inquiry because RHSC is a predominantly Black institution whose retention rate has consistently lagged behind other institutions within its selected comparison group.
3. Complaint records were chosen because student complaints are recorded in an open-ended format, allowing the student to provide a narrative about their concerns.

Personal Statement

I have a personal and professional interest in this topic. I am a Black higher education professional with experience in equity, compliance, assessment and continuous improvement in community colleges. I am deeply troubled by the equity and achievement gaps that continue to persist. Conventional interventions appear to be short-sighted in their execution, by attempting to address issues of student persistence

and success without the necessary structural support. Addressing institutional underperformance in respect to student outcomes solely from a student deficit perspective has been ineffectual but continues to remain the preferred method of operation. Narrowly focused classroom practices predicated on cognitive deficit frames and limited diversity models defined by presupposed standards of Whiteness serve to alienate students of color. These feelings of alienation often lead to student attrition and poor institutional performance. Community colleges could benefit from an ideological shift in their collective thinking. Operating from a place of institutional responsibility, as opposed to student deficiency, could prove beneficial in reducing the achievement gap and improve the completion rates of under-represented ethnic/racial minorities.

Summary

Blacks were initially excluded from receiving an education of any kind. The extension of education to Blacks was a hotly contested issue within American society (Anderson, 1988; Watkins, 1999). Finally permitted to participate in formal education, conventional schooling was used to maintain a social hierarchy that required continued Black subservience. Many of the White architects of early Black education saw Black participation in higher education as a necessary evil that would develop a suitable working-class laborer. There was tremendous skepticism surrounding Black intellectualism and contempt for the Black intelligentsia (Watkins, 1999). The historic mistrust of Black intellectual ability mirrors contemporary thinking grounded in the presumption regarding the deficiencies of Black students.

These historic tensions may underlie the conflicts that result in complaints from Black students against the faculty in today's college classrooms. Applying an equity

lens and pervasive culturally relevant teaching is needed to create and sustain long-lasting equity in academic achievement. Higher education needs to shift its foci and method of inquiry to institutional factors such as policy and pedagogy, if it is going to remediate the issue of disproportionate achievement and disparate outcomes for racial/ethnic minorities. This chapter has explored how historic inequity may underpin the current disparity and has introduced the research questions and foci for the study; the next chapter will discuss contemporary theories surrounding campus inclusivity and student achievement.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Issue of Institutional Responsibility

The purpose of this study is to extend knowledge regarding the nature of student complaints in community colleges. It presents an exploration of pedagogical practices intended to support student success and course persistence. The topics examined throughout put forth comprehensive strategies for improved retention and academic success for Black students in community colleges. This study will explore how student complaints can be used to foster change and inclusivity within a two-year institution. There is a paucity of research dedicated to understanding the lived experiences of Black students within community college classrooms. One area overwhelmingly neglected is how Ombudsman Services, which serve as an official source for student complaints can be used to elucidate the experience of Black collegians. The goal of this study is to examine the student complaint feedback loop, from complaint submission to resolution, to determine how this experience may contribute to persistence decisions for Black students. The chapter covers existing research used to frame the study. It can be framed in two parts: the lens of institutional practices that contribute to student success and the lens of classroom practices that have been shown to contribute to the success of marginalized students.

Student Complaints

Higher education institutions are extremely complex entities. The complicated nature of their social systems, subsystems, and loops of interaction create an environment ripe for the eruption of conflict. “Conflict in higher education takes many forms, including faculty/administration, faculty/student, intradepartmental, and interdepartmental community conflicts” (Alcover, 2009, p. 276). The research for this dissertation will specifically focus on the origins of student and faculty conflict, while also examining the institution’s response to student-faculty conflict. Alcover (2009) articulated the positional dynamics that exist within each constituency:

> Conflict in universities is exacerbated not just by the fact that there are different client groups but also by the fact that each constituency claims ownership: faculty members claim in their favor the principle of academic freedom, the existence of autonomy in university management and the consideration of the university as a community of scholars; the student body demands participation in decision-making processes, contending that they financially support the institutions through the payment of tuition fees and due to the fact that the university would not exist without them. (p. 276)

The composite nature of higher education governance and organizational structures encompasses “a complex mesh of horizontal and vertical elements as lines of authority, decision making, and accountability cut across colleges, faculties, departments, institutes, projects and disciplines in often overlapping and conflicting manners, this hierarchical structure itself is often a source of conflict” (Alcover, 2009,

p. 277). The author also discussed the symmetry of power as it relates to the mediation of conflict within the collegiate setting:

> Symmetry of power means that there is an identical or very similar level of power between the parties in accordance with their category, rank, position or status. Asymmetry of power means that there is a great or very significant difference in the level of power between the parties. (Alcover, 2009, p. 280)

The educator/student relationship is historically one of the most asymmetrical relationships, and it is certainly the most asymmetrical within the college and university social system (Alcover, 2009). This lack of symmetry creates a dynamic wherein students are dependent persons and faculty are independent actors whose beliefs and values create the expectations and performance metrics by which outcomes are evaluated (Douglas et al., 2008). The expectations, values, and beliefs coalesce to become the culture of the classroom and campus. The fact is for Black students the campus culture is created by individuals from a different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic background than their own (Douglas et al., 2008). A prevailing set of beliefs that accompanies this cultural pairing is deficit thinking on the part of educators about the academic ability of Black students. A consequence of deficit thinking is the devaluing of knowledge that Black students bring to the classroom (Milner, 2006). Gusa (2010) asserted that unexamined White cultural ideologies embedded in language, cultural practices, traditions, and perceptions of knowledge allow institutions to remain racialized. The racialized nature of these institutions may impact the student's experience and lead to complaints and grievances.

The college and university response to student grievances has been the implementation of Ombudsman Offices. Robbins and Deane (1986) reported on the exponential increase in Ombudsman Offices within university settings. This increase can be largely attributed to the 1960s civil rights movement. The role of the ombudsman can be described as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism used to achieve just results and remediate student issues caused as a result of this asymmetry of power. Rowe (1995) suggested the purpose of an ombudsperson is to "foster values and decent behavior – fairness, equity, justice, equality of opportunity, and respect" (p. 103). Research conducted on the use of university ombudsman services found that the most frequent problems reported were (a) breach of norms, (b) violation of rights, (c) restriction of liberties, (d) conflicts in interpersonal group relations, (e) interpretation of norms, (f) conflicts of interests, (g) conflicts of values, (h) and other miscellaneous complaints about the operation of various functional offices and student services (Harrison, 2004; Robbins & Deane, 1986; Rowe, 1995).

The specific types of student grievances include institution grading policies (Stieber, 2000); perceptions of unfair grading, plagiarism, excessive absences, harassment, or forged grades (Harrison, 2004); poor teaching or classroom instruction (Harrison, 2003; Shelton, 2000; Stieber, 2000); faculty professionalism (Harrison, 2003); examination policies (Shelton, 2000); and personality issues (Harrison & Morrill, 2004). Research studies show, despite the wide range of complaint issues, Ombudsman Offices have been relatively successful at resolving complaints to student satisfaction, with students reporting satisfaction rates, from 60-90% (Harrison &

Morrill, 2004). Harrison and Morrill (2004) also found that despite the generally satisfactory outcomes:

> Students who use the ombudsman processes tend to avoid all future contact with the professor and rarely take additional courses from her or him. In addition, students report that the conflicts often dominate their thoughts, making it difficult to focus on other courses, and occasionally lead them to seek medical care. Students also voice concerns over the impact of their conflicts on future careers, eligibility for financial aid, and perceptions of the university. (p. 351)

In addition to concerns over future career impact and financial aid repercussions, some students find the conflict so disturbing they drop the course(s), leave the institution, and/or develop a generally unfavorable regard for the college or university, perceiving it to be a callous and uncaring institution (Harrison, 2007).

Equity Cognitive Frame

A willingness to innovate, a commitment to egalitarianism, and a genuine interest in student success are necessary to make sweeping changes in educational processes in order to improve outcomes for all students. This improvement can be achieved by modifying the cognitive frame applied to higher education. Cognitive frames can be described as the interpretive framework through which individuals make sense of phenomena. Bensimon's (2005) use of organizational learning theory was paired with an equity cognitive frame. She explained the benefits of using organizational learning theory to explore the issue of inequitable racial outcomes in higher education. "I propose that the theory and processes of organizational learning can help researchers and practitioners understand and address the structural and cultural

obstacles that prevent colleges and universities from producing equitable educational outcomes" (p. 99). Bensimon (2005) posited organizational learning theory has the power to illuminate shadowed institutional practices that contribute to disparate academic outcomes. "Organizational learning, in both theory and practice, is particularly effective in making the invisible visible and the undiscussable discussable, two conditions that aptly describe the status of race and ethnic-based unequal outcomes on most campuses" (p. 99).

Organizational learning has been defined as "the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding" (Fiol & Lyles, 1985, p. 803). Bensimon (2005) discussed how it could be used to close race-based achievement gaps in higher education. She explained the important role of the individual within organizational learning:

> Learning is done by individuals who are members of an organizational entity such as a college or university, an administrative division, an academic department, or a research team; (1) individuals inquire into a problem collectively, on behalf of an organizational entity and (2) organizational culture and structures can promote or inhibit individual learning. (Bensimon, 2005, p. 101)

Organizational learning theory focuses its attention on the institution. It asserts that the entity that needs improvement is the college or university itself, not the students within the institution. Organizational learning theory sees the deficiency in the business unit and its institutional actors, not the students. The value in this theory is that it positions the institution as the primary catalyst for change. It empowers the institution

to improve student outcomes by improving its delivery of relevant and, effective instruction and student support services (Bensimon, 2005; Felix et al., 2015).

Far too often minoritized students and the corresponding achievement gap are viewed and explained using a deficit and/or diversity frame. The diversity frame narrowly focuses its interest in a diverse student body on superficial phenotypical characteristics. Campus leadership guided by this frame see minoritized student attendance as a means of enriching the collegiate experience of middle class, White students (Seidman, 2005). Campuses that operate from this frame assert that colleges and universities have a compelling interest in a diverse campus because it yields educational benefits, such as the promotion of cross-racial understanding (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003).

The deficit frame is also commonly used by institutions. "The deficit frame is rooted in stereotypical perceptions of social class, racial/ethnic affiliation, and the "culture of disadvantage" (Wood et al., 2015, p. 12). The deficit frame blames students for inadequate outcomes. The equity cognitive frame is introduced as a tool to advocate for equity-mindedness on the part of institutional leadership and the faculty. "I believe that institutional actors, as a consequence of their beliefs, expectations, values, and practices, create or perpetuate unequal outcomes and that the possibility for reversing inequalities depends on individual learning that holds the potential for bringing about self-change" (Bensimon, 2005, p. 101).

Achieving equity-mindedness requires institutions to reframe racial/ethnic inequity as a symptom of undetected and unintended institutional dysfunctions and they, individually and collectively, have the power to remediate them (Felix et al.,

2015). The Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California has pioneered the *Equity Scorecard,* a theory-based strategy consisting of tools, activities, and processes to assist campuses in embedding equity into their structures, policies, and practices (Felix et al., 2015, p. 25). The *Equity Scorecard* is a change theory underpinned by participatory action research. Campus leaders are asked to commit to a system of guided inquiry in order to discover the underlying causes of disparate outcomes for minoritized students. The methodology of the *Equity Scorecard* is organized into five phases across three domains of learning. The scorecard phases include laying the groundwork, defining the problem, assessing interventions, implementing solutions, and evaluating results. These steps create a recursive learning process designed to encourage collaborative, double-loop, and equity-minded learning. The characteristics of equity-minded learning include:

> Being race conscious in a critical way as opposed to being colorblind, (a) being cognizant of structural and institutional racism as the root cause of inequities as opposed to deficiencies stemming from essentialist perspectives on race or ethnicity; (b) recognizing that to achieve equity it may be necessary to treat individuals unequally as opposed to treating everyone equally; and (c) being able to focus on practices as the source of failure rather than student deficits. (Felix et al., 2015, p. 28)

To become equity-minded, administrators and faculty must become comfortable reviewing data disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Reviewing data this way allows the campus team to set specific equity benchmarks, called “focal efforts.” These “focal efforts” ensure the creation of targeted interventions designed specifically to meet the

needs of the student population. Targeted investment in student needs will ultimately enable the institution to reach its performance benchmarks. Using group specific numeric data allows the campus team to “uncover fine-grained racialized patterns of inequality.” The visualization of these patterns aids in the development of the solution. One of the most important aspects of the intervention must be its deployment of culturally relevant pedagogy. The proposed solution must be a good cultural fit for the target demographic; as such, campus evidence teams complete a series of reflective exercises that ask, “What are we doing? How is this experienced by our students of color? And how is this working for each group of minoritized students” (Felix et al., 2015).

Shifting from the deficit framework to an inclusive equity framework requires a complete overhaul of philosophical orientation. Deficit thinking, although often unintentional, is prevalent in the design of interventions aimed at supporting low-income and first generation students (Martin et al., 2018). Scholars operating from a deficit perspective rationalize inequitable outcomes as a product of several factors, generally explained by a lack of student effort and/or student engagement. The quality of student effort and time on task arguments imply that a student’s academic performance is solely a matter of the student effectively investing in their academic endeavors. These theories, from Pace (1984) and Anderson (1975) posited that students must invest significant amounts of time actively involved in pursuing their learning in order to be successful. While this is true, it is incomplete in its explanation, since it neglects both campus environment and educator contributions to student success.

Other theories discuss campus environment but neglect to address institutional culpability in creating an environment conducive to the success of marginalized student groups. Astin (1984) identified student involvement but suggested it is merely a product of the student's investment of physical and psychological energy devoted to their academic experience. Tinto (1993) posited student success is a matter of academic and social integration, attributing poor outcomes to a student's difficulty transitioning to a new academic environment. While Kuh (2009) asserted it is the student's level of academic engagement, "the more students study a subject, the more they know about it, and the more students practice and get feedback from faculty and staff members on their writing and collaborative problem solving, the deeper they come to understand what they are learning" (p. 5). A comprehensive view of student success should consider not only the students' role in their success, but also the role of the campus environment. Specifically, how the environment may impact student's motivation and belief in their own ability to be successful (Palmer & Maramba, 2012).

Institutional Practices for Minoritized Student Success

Sanford (1966) supplied a more balanced theory of student success. He espoused student success in college was a function of two institutional factors. He postulated the effective balance of challenge and support are critical components to academic achievement. Faculty must challenge students with rigorous coursework, and the institution must provide equally effective and reliable campus services, such as tutoring and advising. Wood et al. (2015) built on Sanford's theory, conceiving that it is a culmination of four factors that create a constructive environment for student success, specifically the success of male students of color in community colleges.

The authors contended that challenge, support, high expectations, and authentic care are crucial for student success. Faculty must convey to students through verbal and non-verbal means their genuine belief that students will be successful and perform at a high level. The final component, authentic care, is defined as a genuine concern for the student's personal and academic welfare (Wood, 2014). This must also be communicated to students in order to optimize the opportunity for students to be successful. "When faculty members' challenge and support of students are prefixed with high expectations and authentic care, the necessary conditions for student success are fostered" (Wood et al., 2015, p. xv).

The pool of individuals with the ability to access higher education has grown significantly and become increasingly more diverse (Seidman, 2005). This shift in demographics requires a comprehensive institutional response. Institutional leadership must be proactive in creating an environment that dissuades campus marginalization. To create an inclusive campus culture, colleges and universities must commit to the implementation and fiscal support of structural strategies that support diversity, promote inclusion, and create an improved sense of belonging for all students (Seidman, 2005). Along with critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, the ability to engage cross culturally is central to the mission of U.S. higher education (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005).

Openness to diversity and conceptual challenges are fostered through deliberate educational interventions (Seidman, 2005). Engberg (2004) found the most effective interventions in reducing bias and promoting openness to diversity to be courses and workshops; the most successful being peer-facilitated interventions, such as group

dialogues, living-learning communities, and service-based interventions that provide opportunities for direct engagement with racially and culturally diverse groups. Umbach and Kuh (2006) asserted that experiences that promote diversity are beneficial for all collegians and support the retention of minority students. Experiences in the classroom that support diverse backgrounds and perspectives are most effective when they continually provide the opportunity for sustained reflection. Sustained interpersonal interaction with diverse groups of peers and meaningful interaction with faculty members have been found to improve the acceptance of campus diversity and play a role in enhancing the social integration experiences of students of color (Engberg, 2004).

Prior research suggests contact with faculty members can promote achievement and student characteristics such as motivation and other persistence behaviors (Anaya & Cole, 2001). “Unfortunately, many minoritized students at predominantly White institutions (PWI) reported perceiving their white faculty as neutral, and sometimes remote and/or unsympathetic” (Anaya & Cole, 2001, p. 6). These constrained and unsatisfactory contacts with faculty may contribute to feelings of isolation for students of color. These isolating experiences at PWIs exist in direct contrast to the benefits reported from students attending Minority Serving Institutions (MSI). Research on students attending these institutions suggests students benefit significantly from role modeling opportunities and mentorship. The study found that the most significant benefit of MSI attendance is the culturally affirming, nurturing, and supportive environment, virtually free from racial discrimination (John & Stage, 2014).

In order to provide opportunities for mentoring for students of color, institutions must effectively support and retain minoritized faculty. Eagan and Garvey (2015) found that institutional strategies intentionally designed to support the retention and success of minoritized students and faculty may also work to further scholarship. An unchecked organizational culture that perpetuates bias not only harms students of color but also wounds faculty of color. Faculty of color often encounter a professional devaluation on par with the silencing experienced by students of color (Locke & Trolian, 2018; Telles, 2019). A campus environment brimming with exclusion and micro-aggressions is deleterious to the productivity of student achievement and faculty research efforts (Eagan & Garvey, 2015; Locke & Trolian, 2018).

Faculty of color lament the minimization and discounting of their scholarship efforts, especially when these efforts are conducted in communities of color. Telles (2019) explored the experiences of marginalized persons of color in institution initiatives. She discussed the experiences of faculty of color in predominantly White environments. She detailed the tension experienced by faculty whose scholarship efforts are minimized because they occur in non-White communities. The author asserted that higher education must become more inclusive, recognizing and rewarding community engagement scholarship in order to improve retention of minoritized faculty. She also stressed the importance of racial equity and representation, not just generic diversity of discipline and professional thought.

The importance of the role of faculty must be emphasized when discussing institutional efforts to improve the academic and social integration of students of color on college campuses, including two-year institutions. Faculty have the opportunity to

provide critical supports to vulnerable student populations. This concept was highlighted by Strayhorn and Terrell (2010):

> One supportive factor contributing to the academic integration and subsequent success of Black students in higher education is the relationships they are able to establish with faculty members, second, only to relationships established with peer groups, faculty-student interaction represents the most salient factor in student success at the undergraduate level. (p. 73)

Faculty directly contribute to the ethos of the campus, by way of the environment they create in the classroom and the sense of belonging they cultivate as an institutional constituency. The demonstration of authentic care can effectively reduce students' apprehension to seek academic support services. It fosters a foundation of trust between faculty and student. Wood et al. (2015) found this to be particularly true for men of color attending community colleges. The researchers collected data on the experiences of 7,000 community college men, examining the factors that contribute to respondents' persistence, achievement (defined by GPA), their prioritization of school, and engagement with faculty members. A clear pattern emerged, which prompted the authors to produce two statistical models that predicted student success. Model one employed student background factors, such as parents' educational attainment, enrollment status, full or part-time, and external familial and work obligations. Model two employed the use of faculty ethos measures, such as student perceptions of faculty's willingness to engage in and outside of the classroom, whether or not faculty made them feel as if they belonged in college and communicated validating messages about student achievement. Prediction models using student

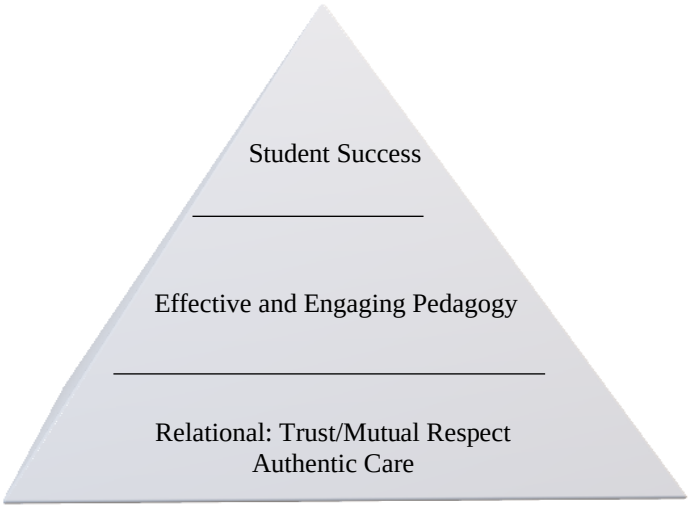
background characteristics only accounted for 10% of the variance in student success. Model two, focused on faculty ethos, predicted 30% or more of the variance in student success. “More simply, this finding suggests that the ethos created by faculty members in class contributes significantly more to student success than student’s characteristics and environmental pressures” (Wood et al., 2015, p. 17).

Thus, the case could be made that student success is more a function of the environment created by faculty members than factors related to students themselves. This means the most critical determinants of success lie within the control of the institution and the faculty (Wood et al., 2015). Faculty members can enable community college students to overcome achievement obstacles by being affirming, welcoming, and validating. The authors posited relational faculty-student elements, such as trust, mutual respect, and authentic care act as the foundation for student success. Faculty competence factors such as effective and engaging pedagogy join the interpersonal elements of the teaching and learning dynamic and culminate with student success as the final apex of the pyramid. To illustrate this point, the authors proposed the pyramid of student success. Wood et al. (2015) contended:

> Enhanced relationships (coupled with effective and engaging pedagogy) play an important role in mediating the effects of external pressures, racial-gender stereotypes, male gender role socialization, and academic preparation issues that contaminate the experiences and compromise success for men of color in community colleges. (p. 30)

Figure 1.

Pyramid of Student Success, Men of Color in Community Colleges



Other structural strategies dedicated to the social integration of students of color include campus resources such as Black Cultural Centers designed to foster supportive peer engagement. Researchers found that there were five major benefits of Black Cultural Centers on PWIs: (a) they act as a "home away from home," (b) they provide academic and social integration, (c) they act as a safe haven from the hostility and antagonism of a White campus, providing a safe place to study and interact with peers, (d) the existence of the cultural center conveys a sense of mattering to the rest of the campus (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010). These campus structures promote a sense of belonging for Black students on predominantly White campuses. Colleges should look to foster and support the creation of ethnic affinity groups and other programs that support ethnic identity development in students of color. Engagement in racial/ethnic affirming activities has been shown to have a positive impact on the self-esteem and self-concept of Minoritized students attending PWIs (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010).

Campus ethos

Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) like Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) have successfully mastered creating the supportive college environment for the Black collegian. MSIs play an important role in the baccalaureate education of minoritized students. They reduce the social integration gap between students of color and higher education institutions (Bridges et al., 2005). John and Stage (2014) explored the number of bachelor's degrees conferred to undergraduates of color at PWIs compared to those conferred at MSIs.

The researchers employed a critical quantitative approach to examine the circumstances by which students of color access higher education. Unlike other studies, this project collapsed all MSIs into one category, combining HBCUs, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions into one demographic for comparison. The study found the most significant benefit of MSI attendance is the culturally affirming, nurturing and supportive environment, virtually free from racial discrimination. These institutions also provided considerable opportunities for mentorship and role modeling. The study found that significantly more minoritized students attending minority institutions graduated than their counterparts attending majority White institutions. The results suggest the social support benefits of MSI attendance for students of color contribute to increased retention and higher graduation rates.

Research has suggested that Black students on HBCU campuses exhibit positive psychosocial adjustment, cultural awareness, high academic achievement, and increased confidence (Palmer & Maramba, 2012). Many of the students at HBCUs are

low-income Black students who are academically ill-equipped. Despite this, once admitted, students at HBCUs show disproportionate gains in undergraduate academic performance and subsequent admittance into graduate and professional schools (Kim & Conrad, 2006; Perna, 2001). According to the United Negro College Fund:

> Of the top 10 colleges that graduate African Americans who go on to earn PhDs or MDs, 9 are HBCUs, as are 8 of the top producers of African American graduates in mathematics and statistics. And the top 12 producers of African American graduates in the physical sciences are all Black Colleges. Seventy-five percent of all Black Army officers, 80% of Black federal judges, and 85% of Black doctors attended HBCUs as undergraduates. Buttressing this information, Strayhorn (2008) found that African Americans who graduate from HBCUs assume more prestigious occupations, compared to their peers who graduated from PWIs. (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010, p. 140)

Wilcox et al. (2014) addressed the issue of HBCU relevance. Created to educate the descendants of slaves, the integration of American schools along with the civil rights movement has advanced the question of need for and value of the Black college. The authors presented new functions for the HBCU that support improve and transform their historic mission. HBCUs are facing financial crisis and a consistent desertion of Black talent to PWIs. The authors expounded on the benefits of racial solidarity and increased feelings of self-efficacy experienced by many HBCU graduates. Additionally, the authors extoled the feelings of safety and familiarity that resonate with first generation, low-income students, increasing their likelihood of continued collegiate success and matriculation.

Strayhorn (2008) attributed Black student success at HBCUs to the more welcoming and inclusive environment. He described a "family model" where faculty and staff act in the role of surrogate "parents" to nurture and encourage students. Strayhorn identified three areas of support that were contributory to student success: (a) faculty that were personally concerned about students' personal and academic success, (b) institution administrators that worked to create a warm and welcoming environment to enhance student success, and (c) role models and mentors that illustrated a pathway to professional success after college completion. The overwhelmingly supportive campus climate created at HBCUs continues to be a critical factor enabling the achievement, attainment, and overall well-being of Black students at higher education institutions.

Mattering

Schlossberg (1989) discussed the importance of mattering for undergraduate students. She identified this concept as an important element of campus culture closely connected to student persistence. "Mattering is a motive: the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego-extension exercises a powerful influence on our actions" (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 165 as cited in Schlossberg, 1989). Patton et al. (2016) described the idea of mattering as a construct containing five separate dimensions:

> Attention, the feeling an individual is noticed; importance, a belief the individual is cared about; ego-extension, the feeling that someone else will be proud of what an individual does or will sympathize with their failures;

> dependence, a feeling of being needed; and appreciation, the feeling that others appreciate an individual's efforts. (p. 37)

Mattering exists on a continuum with marginality operating as the opposing theme. When individuals feel marginalized, they feel as if they do not belong. Experiences of marginality can present as a consequence of transition; the greater the difference between the former role and the new role, the greater the potential for feelings of marginalization (Schlossberg, 1989).

Cuyjet (1998) investigated Black students' perceptions of mattering and marginality within the collegiate milieu of PWI environments. He surveyed students attending six, large, public institutions, representing five Carnegie classifications. The institutions were located in the east, Midwest, and western regions of the country. The survey measured students' perceptions of mattering in six general areas of campus life: advising relationships, administrative climate, classroom climate, faculty interaction, peer interaction, and student services. The inventory contained questions that were categorized as "race-neutral," "race-mentioned," and "race-specific" items. There were 1,063 surveys collected. The respondents were classified as Black 32%, and non-Black 68%. When the survey responses were analyzed for the independent variable of ethnicity, the results showed a significant difference in the responses of the Black students. Black students reported a less favorable response in five of the six categories measured. Black students reported more negative experiences in campus life, administrative climate, classroom climate, faculty interaction, peer interaction, and student services. Both groups reported positive experiences with academic advising

relationships. Cuyjet concluded the norms of behavior within PWI environments being based on majority culture may contribute to Black students feeling marginalized.

Research makes clear there is a relationship between student satisfaction with college, faculty/student relationships (Astin, 1984, 1999), academic achievement (Astin, 1993), and retention (Defour & Hirsch, 1990; Stoecker et al., 1988; Tinto, 1993 as cited in Guiffrida, 2005a). However, evidence also indicates Black students at PWIs may not gain the same level of benefit as their White counterparts from increased faculty interaction and may even have difficulty forming positive relationships with their White faculty members (Arnold, 1993; Fleming, 1984; Nettles, 1991). The results suggest dissatisfaction on the part of Black students with the quality of the interaction with their White faculty and supports other research indicating students of color are more apt to seek academic help from family, friends, and other college professionals who are minorities than from White faculty (Braddock, 1981; Burrell & Trombley, 1983; Guiffrida, 2003, 2004, 2005a; Sanchez et al., 1992; as cited in Guiffrida, 2005b).

Guiffrida (2005b) examined Black students' definition of student-centered faculty through the lens of "othermothering," a term coined by Foster (1993) to describe an expanded and comprehensive relationship between Black students and Black faculty. Collins (2000) explained the practice of this type of broad support and advocacy has historical roots, dating back to slavery. Black women would educate and socialize children in their own ways and traditions. This was done in order to uplift the Black community (Perkins, 1989). "Unlike the traditional mentoring so widely reported in the educational literature, this relationship goes far beyond that of providing students

with either technical skills or a network of academic and professional contacts" (Collins, 2000, p. 191).

Guiffrida (2005b) interviewed Black students to ascertain their perspectives on their relationships with faculty. He found three major themes emerged from the research. A salient characteristic exhibited by faculty regarded as student-centered was the willingness to "go above and beyond." Students described this behavior as providing comprehensive career, academic, and personal advice. They also discussed expanded support and advocacy, wherein faculty not only empathized with their concerns, but also went the "extra mile" to assist in the remedy of problems. Lastly, students introduced the idea of "raising the bar" and suggested the Black faculty they encountered held higher expectations for their academic performance. The students shared that this type of additional support was a motivating factor in their academic success. This suggests students' perceptions of faculty support and feelings of mattering may be closely related (Brown, 2006).

The Issue of Pedagogy

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Several strategies have been discussed as effective in supporting the academic achievement of Black students. Faculty that create an inclusive and racially affirming environment have demonstrated success in retaining Black students (Baumgartner & Johnson-Bailey, 2008). Ladson-Billings (1995) coined the term "culturally relevant teaching" to describe "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Coffey, 2008 p. 1). The collection of teaching practices that utilizes the

student's backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences to inform lessons and classroom assessments constructs the foundation of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP; Coffey, 2019). CRP is one of the most effective strategies to support minoritized students (Paris & Alim, 2017). "CRP is comprised of three main components, (a) a focus on student learning, (b) developing student's cultural competence, and (c) supporting their critical consciousness" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 142). A focus on student learning requires educators to be committed to developing students' intellect as a direct result of their classroom and school community experiences. The second component, cultural competence, is often misunderstood. Cultural competence refers to the obligation that the educator has to foster the student's skills and ability to recognize and appreciate their own culture, while also learning fluency in navigating the culture of at least one additional group, often times the dominant culture. The last aspect, critical consciousness, refers to the educator's commitment to providing meaningful projects that solve problems that matter in the lives of the students. Educators who support student development of critical consciousness and encourage students' veracity to question what they read in classrooms. Students are also encouraged to ask questions about the interplay between culture, economics, and politics (Paris & Alim, 2017). Critical educators have touted the benefits of CRP for its effectiveness in working with marginalized communities. CRP succeeds in taking into account both the micro and macro social-cultural and political context in which students are educated (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Wood et al. (2015) suggested that there were four primary strategies that have been found to be successful in improving classroom performance and engagement for students of color in community colleges. They identified content relevance, critical

reflection, collaborative learning, and performance monitoring. Content relevance refers to selecting texts, guest speakers/lecturers, and collateral course materials that reflect the contributions of individuals that are from a diverse racial, ethnic, and gender background. It also includes providing several divergent opinions and perspectives on the same topic. Lastly, content relevance requires faculty to connect course content to themes that are relevant to the lives and issues of people of color. Critical reflection should be employed by the professor to analyze the effectiveness of their teaching practices. It should also be used as an exercise to challenge students to apply a critical lens of analysis to narratives within popular culture. Critical analysis should also be applied to widely held assumptions and stereotypes. Collaborative learning is also an effective pedagogical practice. "Collaborative learning involves recognition that the faculty member is not the only purveyor of knowledge" (Wood et al., 2015, p. 62). Effective collaborative learning models include learning communities, service learning, small group work, and providing opportunities for experiential learning. The final strategy, performance monitoring, highlights the importance of substantive feedback and proactivity for students on the margins. Effective performance monitoring requires faculty to ask questions about student concerns and work promptly to resolve issues. It asks faculty to be vigilant about conveying and reminding students about upcoming due dates, and lastly, it demands faculty proactively reach out to students to "check-in," especially those who have had past academic struggles. These strategies are executed in the hopes of building students' academic self-efficacy in order to support the students in achieving scholastically.

Strayhorn and Terrell (2007) examined the evolving challenges of Black collegians. Strayhorn (2010) examined the connection between academic self-efficacy

and resilience in high-achieving, low-income Black students attending a PWI. He explored the relationship between resilience, academic self-efficacy, and academic achievement. For the purposes of the study, resiliency was defined as the ability to "bounce back" successfully from hardship or failure. Academic self-efficacy refers to students' feelings about their ability to accomplish academically oriented tasks. Strayhorn found a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. The more students believed in their ability to be successful, the more successful they were in college courses. The relationship between resilience and scholastic achievement was also statistically significant. The more resilient the student, the greater the academic success in the collegiate environment. Strayhorn (2010) concluded:

> Those who rated higher on academic self-efficacy had higher high-school GPA's, first year GPA's, and feelings of belonging than did those with lower levels of self-efficacy. Additionally, those with higher resiliency scores, had higher GPA's, higher self-efficacy scores, and expressed an intention to remain enrolled in college more than their less resilient counterparts. (p. 55)

Strayhorn (2019) also discovered that low-income Black students who reported a higher sense of belonging intended to stay in college. This adds to the ever-growing body of research that illustrates the relationship between college student sense of belonging and retention. Strayhorn concluded by offering some practical suggestions for collegiate educators. He suggested scaffolding incremental assignments to provide the opportunity to "engage in educationally purposeful activities that nurture their resiliency and improve their academic self-efficacy" (p. 60). He mentioned that this is particularly important for

Black students who may be in hostile academic environments that are perceived as unsupportive, threatening, or unwelcoming to Black students. Other strategies for building resilience include fostering resilient mentoring relationships and the demonstration of empathy on the part of faculty and administrators. Strayhorn (2019) also asserted that high expectations coupled with genuine praise, substantive feedback about performance, and effective support can propel students through rigorous coursework.

Intrusive Interventions

Beckles (2008) stated that students who talk with faculty outside of class, have consistent interactions with them, and actively seek their assistance are more likely to be successful than students that do not. This interaction must also be accompanied by a desire on the part of the faculty to affirm the student's voice and experiences. When this occurs, the student trusts the faculty member and is then willing to engage with faculty about more critical issues. Wood and Turner (2010) qualitatively examined the experiences of male students of color regarding the relationship between faculty-student interaction and academic success. Their research affirmed there was a positive correlation between positive faculty-student interaction and student achievement.

Wood and Turner (2010) found there were five elements of faculty-student engagement that could account for academic success: (a) being friendly with students from the onset, (b) checking in on students' academic progress, (c) listening to student concerns, (d) proactively addressing student performance issues, (e) encouraging students to succeed. These five behaviors were housed under the label of personal attention. Students reported that faculty who exhibited these behaviors eased the transition into

college and improved students' perceptions of their own academic self-efficacy. "I think people telling me you can. I think people supporting me. I think people encouraging me affects my possibilities of success" (p. 146). Faculty initiating communication and proactively "checking in" with students were also seen as contributors to student success. Participants shared that professors asking if they were "okay" encouraged them to ask questions, when they otherwise would not have, for fear of being perceived as unintelligent or academically inadequate. Conversely, professors who demonstrated an indifferent or apathetic demeanor were perceived as barriers to academic achievement.

Other intrusive interventions recommended for supporting minoritized students' success were providing public praise and private criticism, avoiding unintentional microaggressions, arriving a few minutes early, and staying a few minutes late in order to converse casually with students (Wood & Turner, 2010). These techniques provide the opportunity to connect with students as individuals. These practices increase students' feeling of validation and sense of belonging. They also display tenets of authentic care. Wood and Turner (2010) encouraged "checking in" with students who may have disappeared for an extended period of time. Wood et al. (2015) encouraged faculty to provide "warm hand-offs" to colleagues who may be able to provide additional services and support to students. They discouraged referrals without personal facilitation. Lastly, they warned against the "approach me first" mentality as students may be unlikely to seek out necessary services and academic support (Wood et al., 2015).

Empowering Minoritized Students

Creating an environment conducive to the success of historically marginalized students requires a disruption to the traditionally inequitable landscape of higher

education. Pendakur (2016) made the case that actors, such as faculty and staff within the college and university systems, must commit themselves to becoming empowerment agents for marginalized student groups. He suggested the ideal empowerment agent will use their power and position to provide students with access to important social networks while also fostering a lens of critical consciousness. Stanton-Salazar (2011) contended empowerment agents help students alter their destinies by empowering them with an ideological mind-set and the means to transform themselves and society.

A critical network orientation, asset mindedness, community embeddedness, a political worldview, and maintaining a critical consciousness are essential to the success of those institutional actors who support low-income, first generation, and minoritized students (Pendakur, 2016). Stanton-Salazar (2011) asserted the empowerment agent must maintain an extensive network of professional acquaintances who view the world through a critical lens and are always willing to support an effort of redistributing necessary resources. Asset-mindedness enables empowerment agents to challenge prevailing perspectives of student deficiency. Asset-minded thinking centers the student learning around their lived experiences. This allows educators to create salient and enriching classroom activities and opportunities for greater conceptual understanding (Pendakur, 2016). Encouraging community embeddedness supports the student's sense of personal and cultural identity while fostering their commitment to the communities of which they are a part. This reinforces the idea that a responsibility of success is to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people. This philosophical orientation discourages success for the sole purpose of individual achievement. Possessing a political worldview requires the adoption of the perspective that erasing the inequities in higher education is a

necessary and worthwhile political act. The final key belief, maintaining critical consciousness, demands reflexivity and self-awareness. “Successful empowerment agents actively contemplate and examine their life, work, positionality, and relationships. They spend time thinking through beliefs, privilege, patterns of practice, and their own subjectivity” (Pendakur, 2016, p. 118).

Pendakur (2016) defined counter-stratifying practices as professional actions designed to counteract or reverse patterns of racial and social hierarchy. The execution of counter-stratifying practices is critically important when working to remedy the underlying inequities that plague higher education. He insisted that the aim of such practices is to support students in decoding unspoken assumptions based on White middle class norms, while also empowering them to challenge the system and push for continued equity and change. “Decoding the system may involve unlocking the hidden curriculum, achieving one’s goals within an existing system while learning what structures need to be dismantled” (Pendakur, 2016, p. 120). Empowerment agents work to create a holistically supportive atmosphere that contributes to the success of marginalized students. Effective agents help low-income students, first generation students, and students of color to think critically about their position within the system, while also asking larger systemic questions of power and its distribution. These agents assist students in identifying and developing their personal agency to challenge and change a fossilized inequitable system. Whether in an interpersonal context or the classroom environment these allies mentor, advise, and serve as student advocates. They construct equitable curricular and co-curricular spaces where the lived experiences and stories of marginalized communities are given centrality (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Lastly, they role model how to navigate the

"system" with integrity and help students develop the skills and ability to be heard by those in positions of power within the institution (Pendakur, 2016).

Summary

The previous chapter provided a comprehensive review of literature exploring factors that impede and support the academic success, persistence and retention of Black students in higher education settings. Chapter three will discuss in detail the research methodology for the proposed inquiry. The topics discussed will include content analysis as a research design, sampling procedures as well as data collection and analysis. Chapter three will also cover issues pertaining to trustworthiness and validity.

CHAPTER 3

THE TAXONOMY OF COMPLAINTS

The purpose of this study is to extend knowledge regarding the nature of student complaints in community colleges. It presents an exploration of pedagogical practices intended to support student success and course persistence. This chapter will relay the qualitative methodological processes used to conduct the study. This inquiry has characteristics of both basic and applied research. It aims to explore the phenomenon and extend the knowledge surrounding the conditions that lead to student complaints within community college settings. It also intends to demonstrate applied research elements by promoting and supporting improvements in educational practice (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ideally, the practices explored within this study will ultimately lead to improved retention of first generation and low-income Black students within two-year institutions.

Methods

The research design of the study is qualitative and emergent. It evolved during the investigation. As is the case with qualitative research, the research questioned the social and cultural contexts of the phenomenon being studied. It employed field research techniques that occurred in a natural setting and explored how students at a community college understand and interpret conflictual classroom interactions. It also examined how these students construct their educational experience and attribute meaning to various classroom communications (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study explored the complex

interactions of factors present within faculty–student dynamics resulting in student complaints. A goal of the study is to provide a rich and detailed description of the community college experience. It also aims to extend the understanding of relationship related retention issues within these critically important institutions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The inquiry seeks to provide an illustrative contribution to educational practice for community colleges, specifically changes in campus environments for underserved students.

Research Design

The identified framework for the research inquiry is case study. “Case study research is defined as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96). The case study is a fitting design for the research inquiry because it affords the opportunity to provide a holistic examination of student’s perspective and interpretations of their experience within a constrained space, time, and place. “An instrumental case provides insight into a specific theme or issue. Here the focus is on in-depth understanding of the entity, issue, or theme” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 345).

This case study utilizes tenets of critical research. “A basic assumption of critical research is that all thought is mediated by power relations that are historically and socially constructed” (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 164). “In critical inquiry the goal is to critique and challenge, to transform and empower” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 10). The study explored various components related to the socially constructed dynamics present within community colleges, and how the interests of some are preserved at the expense of

others through various systemic mechanisms and institutional structures. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained the importance of critical research:

> Critical studies are distinguished by the researcher's use of an advocacy role to respond to important themes of marginalized individuals or groups. These studies are focused on systems of power and control, privilege, inequity, dominance, and influence on groups based on race, gender, and socioeconomic class. The struggles of these groups become the central issue. Often the researcher is involved in empowering members of these groups and changing society so that participants have more power and influence. It is the emancipation of the group from the more dominant culture, reducing inequality. (p. 347)

The single instrumental case study design was used to explore the dynamics of student complaints, pedagogy, and student persistence. The case study approach was chosen as the theoretical orientation because of its ability to capture effectively organizational processes and complex social phenomenon. "The case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events, such as organizational and managerial processes," (Kohlbacher, 2006, p.93). Extensive multiple source document analysis was performed to understand the taxonomies of complaints, and how their analysis and resolution can be used as a tool for improvement in organizational function and classroom pedagogy. The collection of the institution's formal student complaints was examined for content relevance and categorized for further investigation. Thematic analysis, made possible by comprehensive sampling, was conducted to evaluate the nature of the grievance, the students' perception of the professorial wrong-doing, and the college's response to the complaint.

Sampling Procedures

The sampling procedures were site selection and comprehensive sampling. The site selected is a two-year institution located in the suburbs of a large urban metropolis. Rolling Hills State College (RHSC) is a publicly supported, comprehensive community college of Illinois located in the southeastern suburbs of the Chicagoland area. The college offers two-year degree programs and 100 certificate programs, adult education, English as a second language, high school equivalency, and workforce training. RHSC has a mission to be a richly diverse community college dedicated to student-centered instruction that fosters success in adult, transfer, and workforce education. With an open-admissions policy, the college proclaims to meet diverse student needs, regardless of level of academic preparation.

Community colleges are open-access institutions that are vital to the educational landscape. They meet critical needs in the lives of marginalized students. They bridge the affordability and college preparedness gap. These colleges prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions, as well as provide vital expedited training opportunities in quality high-wage yielding vocations (Schneider & Yin, 2011). All of this is accomplished at a per-credit-hour tuition rate less than the average four-year institution. Students from historically underserved communities in rural and urban areas generally attend community colleges. These students present with a myriad of familial and work obligations that make attendance at a traditional four-year institution infeasible. As a result, it is especially important to insure equitable practices in institutional governance, grievance remediation, and course instruction (Harrison, 2007). Critical research within the community college setting creates an opportunity for the examination of social issues

and a platform for transformative action. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) discussed how critical studies are used to expose hidden inequitable practices often overlooked:

> Critical studies often aim at historical revision and transformation, erosion of ignorance, and empowerment. Some studies focus on the lived experiences of racial and ethnic groups, social classes and gender roles. Researchers examine qualities, such as race, ethnic group, social class, homosexual and female in a more holistic social context to critique their ideological aspects and the political/economic interests that benefit from a given situation. Studies frequently express the so-called culture of silence experienced by various groups; others describe forms of resistance and accommodation of groups that develop their own values as a force for cohesion and survival within the dominant culture. (p. 325)

RHSC is a predominantly Black institution (PBI) and plays a crucial role in the educational aspirations of the region's residents. RHSC has a student body that is approximately 57% African American, 16% Hispanic, and 19% White. Nearly half (47%) of RHSC students are first generation. Of the 20 communities served within the district, 80% (16) of the communities are experiencing poverty rates between 11.2% – 28%, well above the state's rate of 10% and Chicago's rate of 10.8%. The number of public aid recipients in the region is almost 43,000 with almost 24,000 identified as adults over the age of 16 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The problems faced by the students in this region are varied and include academic difficulties. Many of these difficulties can be attributed to under-preparation at the k-12 level in at least one or all of the basic skills (reading, writing, and math). Demographically, 65% of RHSC's fall 2018 student body is designated low income,

47% are first generation students, 29% are both low income and first generation, and 5% are students with disabilities.

The demographic composition of the institution makes it an ideal candidate for critically positioned action research. The constituency of RHSC is the most geographically, socio-economically, and racially diverse of all Illinois community colleges (NCES, 2018). The diverse environment of predominantly minoritized students makes it ideal to critique, challenge, and transform the status quo of established power structures within the campus milieu.

Data Collection

Approval was sought from Indiana State University's Institutional Review Board. Once approval was given, the researcher sought permission from the RHSC college president to obtain access to the institution's complaint database. Access to the complaint database was granted and a comprehensive review of the college's student complaints and supporting documentation was conducted. RHSC utilizes I-sight, a web-based case management software to house and coordinate its complaint and conduct investigations. This is paired with an online forms software known as FormSmart. The FormSmart form is completed first by students, then transferred to the I-sight database, where it is assigned a computer-generated case number. The case number is alpha numeric and is completely unconnected to the student's personal information or educational record. The complaints included within the institution's database were formal complaints submitted by students between the Spring of 2017 through the Fall of 2020. The I-sight database included the transcript of the original FormSmart complaint, summaries of complainant interviews, and other primary source documents, such as the institution's historical record of student

grievances. A secondary request for information was also submitted to the college's Institutional Research office. This request was also approved and the researcher was permitted access to student complainants' course level and institutional persistence activity, first generation status, and Pell grant status.

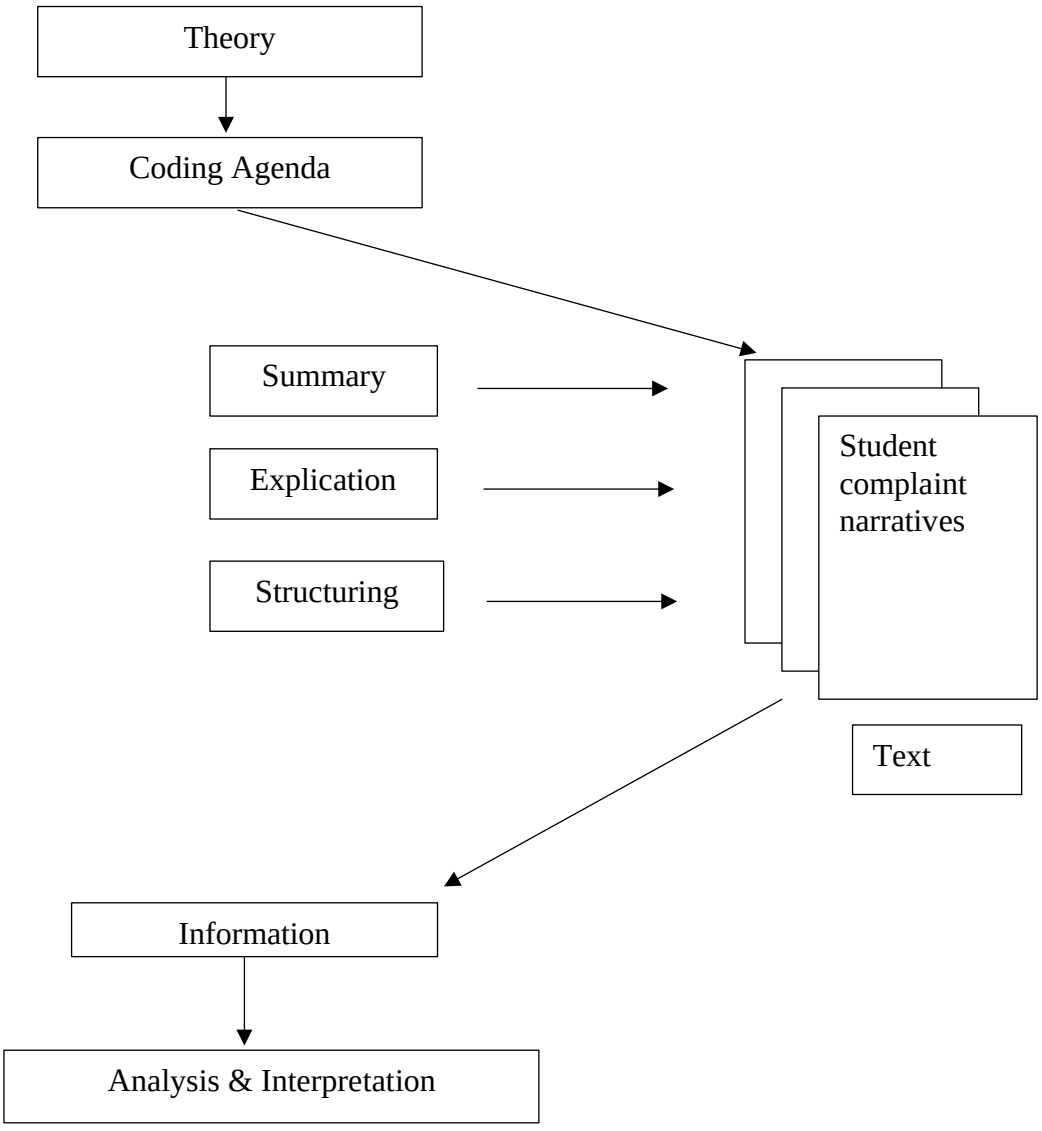
Data Analysis

The procedure for data analysis was qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is a systemic research method for analyzing and making inferences from text and other forms of qualitative information. It is a replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on the explicit rules of coding. It is useful for examining trends and patterns in documents (Stemler, 2000). Raw data for content analysis includes artifacts, such as interviews, focus groups, open-ended survey questions, documents, and video. Content analysis utilizes a variety of analytic strategies to categorize, compare, and contrast a corpus of data. The systematic coding of data helps the researcher to identify key themes and trends across multiple sets of records and documents. Previous qualitative studies (Titscher et al., 2000, p. 64) identify nine steps that must be performed in every content analysis: (1) determination of material, (2) analysis of the situation in which the text originated, (3) the formal characterization of the material, (4) determination of the direction of the analysis (inductive or deductive), (5) theoretically informed differentiation of questions to be answered, (6) selection of the analytical techniques (summary, explication, structuring), (7) definition of the unit of analysis, (8) analysis of the material (summary, explication, structuring), and (9) interpretation of the analyzed data.

The following figure offers a graphic representation of the qualitative content analysis process.

Figure 2.

Basic Proceedings of Qualitative Analysis (Source: Kohlbacher, 2006)



There are two distinct approaches to coding data: emergent and *a priori*. With emergent coding, there are four general steps to coding. If there is more than one researcher, the first step of emergent coding involves two independent raters reviewing the data, then creating a checklist of features needed for category definition. The second step requires the researchers to reconcile differences in the definitions and categorizations. Thirdly, the researchers use the consolidated checklist (also known, as a coding agenda) again independently to code the data with the new modified coding definitions. With emergent coding, researchers can choose to use Cohen's Kappa or percent agreement as a method to determine the reliability of the coding (Stemler, 2000). The final step involves periodic quality control checks of the data coding among the researchers. Emergent qualitative analysis can also be conducted by one principal researcher, in this case, reliability is determined through peer debriefing and data triangulation. By contrast, *a priori* coding consists of pre-established coding categories, identified on the basis of prior analysis of a theory. The data are then analyzed and put into each previously identified category.

When using content analysis as a research methodology, there are four different ways to define and code data units: (1) physically, (2) syntactically, (3) referentially, and (4) propositionally. A physical approach involves using the intuitive boundaries where data are defined by its physical margins, in this case the student complaint forms. A syntactic approach involves defining data using separations created by the author, such as words, sentences, or paragraphs. In the case of a student complaint, one could look at the percentage of complete sentences or different types of paragraphs. A referential approach is defined by what the data represent: type of violation, type of authorial tone. Coding

data in this manner is good for making inferences about attitudes, values, or preferences. Propositional coding is the most complex method. In this method, data inferences are drawn from breaking down the text to explore underlying assumptions. A propositional approach might take a student complaint such as “The professor took six weeks to grade my essay and then wrote no comments” and generate two propositions. The first proposition would be that the professor took too much time to grade, and the second would be that the professor provided no evidence of having read student work (Stemler, 2000).

Procedures Followed

The material identified for this study was the four-year collection of the institution’s student complaints. The analysis of the situation in which the text originated was conducted at the macro and micro levels. At the macro level, I reviewed the college’s key performance indicators, and discovered an institution that is underperforming when juxtaposed against its selected peer group. The micro level investigation was completed by examining the context of each individual grievance. The formal characterization and interrogation of the material were both achieved by using various types of analytical coding. The analytical processes of summary, explication, and categorical structuring were employed to execute the data interpretation and analysis. The direction of analysis for this study was inductive. The data collection and analysis were completed simultaneously through a consistent and iterative loop of comparative feedback and application. The inquiry was informed by the extant literature on student complaints and tenets of inclusive pedagogy. The submitted narratives were reduced and paraphrased to preserve the original meaning and essential content while still extracting a rich corpus of

material. The unit of analysis for each complaint was defined by its physical boundaries and analyzed for the thematic context presented within the student narrative. The consistent and recurring themes that emerged from the analysis of each unit were used to create categories. The categories were then defined by the behavioral criterion unique to each thematic context. The working definitions for each category were derived from the theoretical background of the extant literature and the research questions.

Each student complaint narrative was reviewed independently within its physical boundary. Using summary coding each complaint was hand coded to contextualize the main theme of the narrative. This created many initial categories of coding. Through an iterative process of explication and reduction I clarified and condensed the many codes into more narrow definitions determined by specific behavioral criteria. Using analytical explication; I clarified and annotated the material. The broad categories were winnowed down to establish an explicated paraphrase. This paraphrase became the final definition of the complaint category. The final list of complaint categories were the six prevailing themes. These prevailing themes were organized into a coding agenda.

I used the coding agenda to perform a secondary independent review of each complaint. This was done to classify each grievance into a final complaint type. The categorized data was then rigorously interrogated using the established coding to identify and connect prevailing themes across multiple student complaints. The qualitative data analysis software NVIVO was also used to aid in the investigation. The software was not used as a primary coding source but was utilized to query key words for the purpose of comparison to the manually coded categories and themes. NVIVO was used to support data management and facilitate the secure storage of researcher notes and annotations.

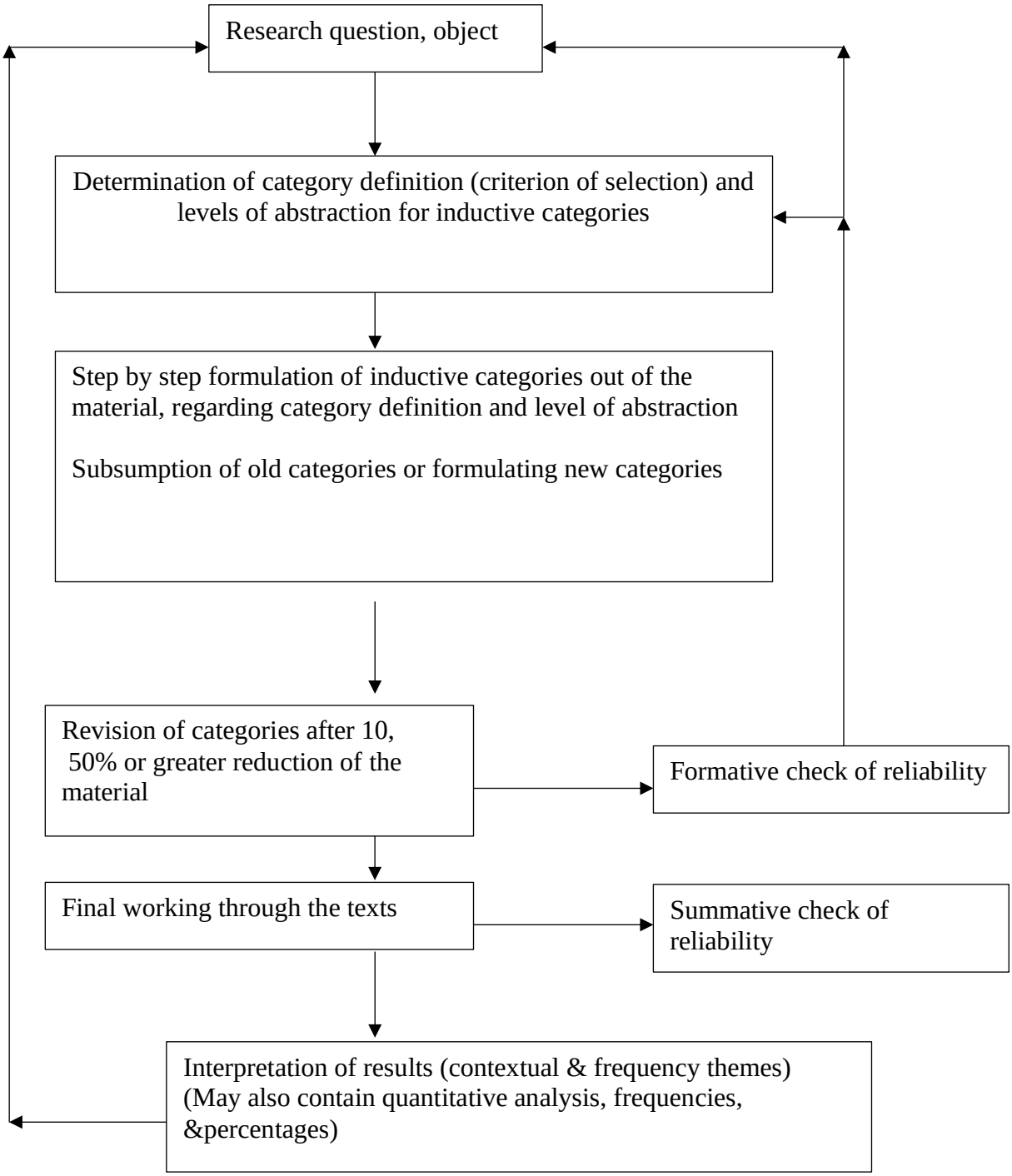
The NVIVO software also acted as a records repository throughout the research and was helpful in creating visual representations of key concepts and emergent themes.

Following the induced criterion and the coding agenda, each complaint narrative was categorized within a feedback loop that was constantly revised and eventually reduced to the various complaint themes for each area. Academic complaints had two broad categories and six prevailing themes (unfair grading, rude professors, rigor, poor teaching, lack of communication/feedback, bias). There were four broad categories for student affairs complaints (severity of sanctions, appeals determinations, staff friendliness, and dissatisfaction with service delivery). Finance and Administration also had four broad categories for complaints, (displeasure over business office policies, poor facilities and technology, as well as staff friendliness). There were only two total complaints from Non-Credit, but one was consistent with the other three areas. One of the non-credit complaints was about a staff person perceived as unfriendly or rude. Lastly, each complaint theme was analyzed and interpreted based on prevailing theory of inclusive pedagogy to ascertain how employing such practices could have improved the student experience.

The following figure offers a graphic representation of the inductive category development process.

Figure 3.

Step Model of Inductive Category Development. (Source: Kohlbacher, 2006)



Trustworthiness

My role throughout the investigation was participant observer. My positionality was an insider from the community. In order to ensure appropriate objectivity, I used researcher bracketing to monitor, evaluate and ameliorate any principal investigator subjectivity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The data were triangulated through review of supplemental documents included within the complaint database. The complaint narratives were triangulated with investigation emails, notes, and supplemental documents provided by students to substantiate the legitimacy of their various grievance claims. Critical reflexivity was used to evaluate and monitor researcher perspective. A constant analysis of researcher positionality was undertaken by employing continuous self-critique. Difficult questions were posed at each stage of document analysis throughout the investigation to ascertain any inadvertent bias. Peer debriefing was also used to assert the trustworthiness of the research. The internal validity of the research methods was achieved through constant comparative and theory guided analysis. The repetitive comparison of the project data with prevailing theory and extant literature on complaints and college student development served to ensure the quality of the content analysis and validity of the project (Kohlbacher, 2006). These validation strategies were important to further the credibility of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical practices were a top priority throughout the investigation. Informed consent was not necessary as the collected data was categorized as exempt human subjects' research. The risks to human subjects was determined to be minimal and all complainants were over the age of 18 and did not demonstrate any impaired mental

capacity. Student complaints housed within the database were de-identified and assigned an alpha numeric complaint number. The complaint number effectively removed any personally identifying information. Institutional records of student complaints falls under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and can be made publicly available as long as personal information is redacted. The de-identification measures protected the confidentiality of complainants. Other characteristics, such as student enrollment persistence, first generation status and Pell Grant eligibility were recorded and analyzed in the aggregate to further protect student identity. Appropriate permissions were obtained from each institution and pseudonyms have been adopted for organizations and individuals mentioned within the study to ensure anonymity as well as maintain standards of confidentiality.

Summary

The goal of chapter three was to outline the procedures of the study in order to answer the identified research questions comprehensively. This chapter described the methods, research design, sampling, data collection and analysis procedures of the investigation. The chapter also discussed the steps required for content analysis and the measures taken to insure confidentiality and trustworthiness. Chapter four will discuss the findings that emerged from the completed research inquiry.

CHAPTER 4

THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to extend knowledge regarding the nature of student complaints in community colleges. It presents an exploration of pedagogical practices intended to support student success and course persistence. The purpose of this chapter is to relay the results of the content analysis. The specific research questions addressed:

1. What are the characteristics of student complaints within a community college setting?
2. How can student complaints be used to inform and support the use of inclusive classroom pedagogy for first generation and low-income Black students in community college settings?

This chapter discusses in detail the analysis of the collected data. The chapter will present the demographics of the sample as well as the frequency and contextual themes that emerged from the investigation. Included within this section are tables and graphics used to emphasize key themes and describe their relationship to the research questions. This chapter will also include the full narrative of several different student complaints. Each narrative helps to paint a rich and comprehensive picture of the lived experiences of the students. The narratives have been included as they were written and submitted by the complainants. They have not been edited or standardized to maintain the integrity of the student voice.

Comprehensive Complaint Sample

The first question, characteristics of complaints, can be answered in three parts, (1) an overview of the comprehensive complaint sample, including the reasons students provided for the complaint, (2) the demographics of the disputants, and (3) themes that emerged from analysis of the complaints. The college instituted its formal complaint system in January 2017. Through the use of comprehensive sampling, the entire collection of formal student complaints was collected and reviewed. From January 2017 (spring semester) through December of 2020 (fall semester), there were a total of 160 student complaints submitted. After screening for duplicates and relevance, there were 152 total complaints about the institution. The complaints could be categorized into four domains of administrative purview, Academic Affairs, Students Affairs, Finance & Administration, and Non-Credit Community based educational programming. There were 122 academic affairs complaints, 15 student affairs complaints, 13 complaints for finance and administration, and 2 non-credit complaints.

Academic affairs complaints could be classified into two categories (1) classroom experiences/ academic policies, and (2) academic support services, such as the computer lab, tutoring center, and placement testing center. Student Affairs complaints could be classified into four categories; (1) conduct sanctions, (2) student appeals, (3) customer service, and (4) dissatisfaction with service delivery, generally the timeliness of service delivery. This was the case for services with student accommodations, program participation decisions and refund checks. Finance and Administration complaints could be broadly categorized as displeasure with campus services, facilities, and policies. Students submitted complaints about registration holds due to account balances, campus

facilities, and technology, such as email accounts, and Wi-Fi bandwidth. The last area of administrative purview were complaints about instructors in non-credit, community-based programming, such as workforce innovation and vocational programs such as forklift driving.

Table 1.

Complaint Overview

Administrative Area of College	Types of Complaints	Totals	Total
Academic Affairs	Classroom experiences/ academic policies	115	122
	Academic support services	7	
Student Affairs	Severity of sanctions	2	15
	Appeals determinations	2	
	Staff Friendliness	3	
	Dissatisfaction w/ service delivery	8	
Finance & Administration	Business office policies	7	13
	Facilities	2	
	Technology	3	
	Staff friendliness	1	
Non-Credit Programming	Faculty Bias – Gender	1	2
	Staff friendliness	1	

Note. n = 152

The overwhelming majority of complaints were academic in nature with 122 of the 152 complaints being about classroom instruction or academic policies. The specific nature of the grievances were consistent with previous student complaint research (Guiffrida, 2004; Harrison, 2003, 2004; Harrison & Morrill, 2004; Steiber, 2000).

Academic complaints centered around grading and/or examination policies, perceptions of unfair grading, poor teaching or classroom instruction. Many of the academic complaints were also in reference to interpersonal issues with faculty. Students complained of faculty professionalism, as well as personality related issues. When analyzing the characteristics of the faculty members identified in complaints, the employment status of the faculty was reviewed, faculty status as part-time adjuncts or full-time associate faculty. Full-time associate faculty accounted for 54% of the complaints about classroom experiences while 46% of the complaints about classroom experiences involved part-time adjunct faculty.

Disputant Demographics

Given the nature of the research questions, race of the student complainant and the staff respondent (faculty, staff, administrator) was included within the characteristics collected and analyzed. RHSC is federally classified as a Predominantly Black Institution (PBI). According to the US Department of Education the racial composition of the college is 58% Black, 18% White, 17% Hispanic, 3% Unknown, 2% Two or more races, 1% Non-resident alien, 1% Asian, 0% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The racial composition of the complainants deviated slightly from the recorded student population, 75% of the student complainants were Black, 15% White, 9% Hispanic, less than 1% were of Two or more races, 0% was recorded for the remaining racial classifications, Unknown, Non-resident alien, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific islander.

Table 2.

Racial composition of students vs. student complainants

Racial Composition of Students		Racial Composition of Complainants	
Black	58 %	Black	75 %
White	18 %	White	15 %
Hispanic	17 %	Hispanic	9 %
Unknown	3 %	Unknown	0 %
Two or More Races	2 %	Two or More Races	.01 %
Non-resident alien	1 %	Non-resident alien	0 %
Asian	1 %	Asian	0 %
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0 %	American Indian/Alaskan Native	0 %
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0 %	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0 %

The racial composition of the faculty and staff at the institution as well as the racial composition of the faculty and staff complaint respondents was also examined. The racial composition of the college faculty is 26% Black, 67% White, 3% Hispanic, 2% two or more races, 1% Asian, and 0% for the remaining classifications, including Unknown, Non-resident alien, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific islander. The racial composition of the faculty respondents was 25% Black, 61% White, 6% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 2% two or more races, and 0%, for the remaining classifications, including Unknown, Non-resident alien, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific islander. The racial composition of the faculty respondents is closely representative of the racial composition of the faculty within the RHSC institution. There is a modest degree of over-representation of faculty respondents identified as Hispanic as well as Asian. Hispanic respondents accounted for 6% of faculty complaints while they only represent 3% of faculty, while Asian respondents were also named in 6% of complaints, while they only account for 1% of the college faculty.

Table 3.

Racial composition of faculty vs. faculty respondents

Racial Composition of Faculty		**Racial Composition of Faculty Respondents**	
Black	26 %	Black	25 %
White	68 %	White	61 %
Hispanic	3 %	Hispanic	6 %
Unknown	0 %	Unknown	0 %
Two or More Races	2 %	Two or More Races	2 %
Non-resident alien	0 %	Non-resident alien	0 %
Asian	1 %	Asian	6 %
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0 %	American Indian/Alaskan Native	0 %
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0 %	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0 %

The racial composition of the college's administrators not including faculty is 26% Black, 67% White, 7% two or more races, and 0% all other categories. The racial composition of staff and administrators identified as a respondent of a student complaint within the areas of student affairs, finance and administration and non-credit programming, was 80% Black, 20% White, and 0% all other categories. It should be noted that within student affairs conduct, appeals decisions, and academic advising were all under the purview of the same administrator. When examining the racial composition of the complaint dyads for the administrative areas collectively, 78% of the complaints came from dyads where the complainant and respondent were of a different race, the most frequent pairing being Black students and White professors, while 22% of the complaints were from dyads where the complaint and respondent were of the same race. Another aspect of the research question was the socioeconomic and first generation status of the student complainants. The percentage of student complainants who received an income-based federal Pell grant intended for low-income students was 65%. The

percentage of student complainants who identified as first generation college students was 48%, and 16% of the student complainants were concurrently first generation and low-income.

Table 4.

Racial composition of administrators/staff vs. administrators/staff respondents

Racial Composition of Administrators/Staff		**Racial Composition of Administrators/Staff Respondents**	
Black	26 %	Black	78 %
White	67 %	White	22 %
Hispanic	0 %	Hispanic	0 %
Unknown	0 %	Unknown	0 %
Two or More Races	7 %	Two or More Races	0 %
Non-resident alien	0 %	Non-resident alien	0 %
Asian	0 %	Asian	0 %
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0 %	American Indian/Alaskan Native	0 %
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0 %	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0 %

Course Performance, Persistence and Completion Activity

Persistence activity and academic performance were included within the investigation as a complaint characteristic. For the purposes of the study, persistence was defined as a subsequent registration the following semester after submitting a student complaint. A review of the student's academic performance looked at whether or not the student completed the course and if so, the final course grade. Persistence activity was reviewed in the aggregate for all complainants, across all administrative divisions. Subsequent registration data was available for 139 of the 152 total complaints. The majority of student complainants, 73% enrolled in at least one course the following semester after submitting a student complaint, 27% did not enroll again the subsequent

semester. The percentage was almost identical when isolating for only academic complaints about classroom experiences and course policies (115). Of the students that submitted a complaint about academic policies or their classroom experience, 72% of students registered the following semester, while 28% did not register or enroll in a course the following semester. The high percentage of complainants persisting from one semester to the next did not translate to a high percentage of program completers. Only 38% of student complainants completed their program of study; 24% percent earned an Associates' degree, while 14% earned a short term, vocational certificate or credential. This completion statistic could suggest there is a proximal window for intervention.

Table 5.

Student Complainants' Program Completion

Student Complainants' Program Completion	
Associates Degree	24%
Short Term Certificate (8 – 16 weeks)	14%
Total Complainant Completers	38%

The academic performance of students who submitted a complaint about their classroom experience was also reviewed, 43% of students who submitted a complaint completed the course with a passing grade of A, B, or C, 10% of student complainants completed with a final grade of a D, 9% of student complainants completed the course with a final grade of F, and 38% of student complainants did not complete the course, choosing to withdraw from the course with a W. The top three courses that students opted to withdraw from were Chemistry 16%, Math 16%, and Communications 11%, respectively. Courses in Astronomy, History and Biology were tied for fourth most 7%,

Business, English, Humanities, Art, Sociology, and Nursing were fifth 5%, and IT web design, Philosophy, Physical Science and Spanish tied for sixth 2% .

Frequency Themes

The majority of the complaints were under the administrative purview of Academic Affairs (122). Complaints citing classroom experience/academic policies and concerns about other academic support services were most prevalent. There were several re-occurring themes that emerged about students' classroom experiences. The most common reason cited for a student submitting a complaint was unfair grading, followed by complaints that professors were rude, the rigor of the course was excessive, poor teaching, insufficient or untimely communication/feedback regarding returning emails and grades. Complaints alleging bias based upon sex, disability, or race did occur but they were the most infrequent reoccurring theme.

Table 6.

Ordinal Ranking of Academic Affairs Complaints

Academic Affairs	
Rank	Complaint Type
1	Unfair Grading
2	Rude
3	Rigor
4	Poor Teaching
5	Communication/ Feedback
6	Bias

Student complaints about academic policies were also submitted. Students displeased with the colleges' academic policies cited the incomplete policy, the dismissal

policy of selective admissions programs (Nursing & Dental), academic placement testing, payment and registration for proctored exams, course sequencing and prerequisites, as well as the college's policy on developmental course credits not fulfilling degree requirements for graduation. Complaints about academic support services concerned rude staff, the lack of peer tutor availability, and technology issues encountered when taking the placement test. The recurrent themes of unfair grading, rude professors, unreasonable course rigor, poor teaching, untimely communication or feedback, and bias were reviewed across each academic division of the institution.

The Math and Natural Sciences division that houses the institutions, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) classes had the most complaints of any division (50), followed by Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (43), Career and Technical Education (11), and Allied Health (11). In the division of Natural Sciences complaints were submitted about Biology, Math, Chemistry, Astrology, and Physical Science. Students submitted the most complaints about Biology courses (22), followed by Math (11), Chemistry (10), Astrology (3), and Physical Science (1). The most common student complaint within the natural sciences division was about excessive course rigor, followed by accusations of rude professors, poor teaching, unfair grading, and communication and feedback. When examining complaint frequency and type by discipline the most frequent Math and Physical Science complaint was rude professors, the most frequent Biology, Chemistry, and Astrology complaint was excessive course rigor. The Allied Health division received student complaints about the selective admissions programs of Nursing (8), Dental (1), and Emergency Medical Technician (1). There was also a complaint about an introductory general health class (1). The most frequent complaints were about

the nursing program policies. Students complained about unfair grading, the incomplete policy, the academic dismissal policy, and advanced placement policies for practicing licensed vocational nurses. Other complaints were about rude or intimidating professors, poor teaching, and untimely communication/ feedback regarding grades. The dental program received one complaint about sex-related bias and unfair grading. The Career and Technical Education division received complaints about Business courses, HVAC, Information Technology (IT), and the Early Childhood Education program (ECED). The most frequent complaints were about the Business courses (6), followed by IT (2), Early Childhood ECED (2), and lastly HVAC (1). Students complained about excessive course rigor, rude professors, untimely communication and feedback, unfair grading, and poor teaching. Liberal Arts and Social Sciences received complaints about Communications (18), History (6), English (5), Art (3), Humanities (2), Psychology (2), Philosophy (2), Sociology (2), Criminal Justice (1), Political Science (1), Spanish (1), and the most common complaint was unfair grading, followed by rude professors, poor teaching, bias, untimely communication/feedback and rigor.

Student Affairs complaints accounted for 15 of the total complaints submitted. The most common reason cited was a general dissatisfaction with service delivery (8), followed by rude customer service staff (3), severity of conduct sanctions (2) and lastly, student disagreement/ displeasure over appeals decisions (2). Dissatisfaction with service delivery complaints were about eligibility determinations for participation in TRIO Student Support Services, dissatisfaction with the decision to hold a virtual graduation ceremony that did not include a cap and gown, and the course registration and withdrawal process. Other complaints included allegations of being misadvised, the slow delivery of

a student accommodation letter, and a delayed refund for a military affiliated student. There was also a complaint about data security as a result of an inappropriate disclosure of protected personal information. Complaints about rude staff were made about a baseball coach and financial aid representatives. Two students who were disciplined with a suspension and an expulsion complained that the sanction was too severe. Two other students submitted complaints when their appeal for a tuition refund and a late course withdrawal were denied.

There were 13 student complaints about Finance and Administration areas. The majority of those complaints were about policy related issues (7). While the other complaints were about general institution related concerns of technology (3) and facilities (2). The final complaint was about a rude staff person (1) within the bursar/cashiers office. The finance and administration policy complaints were all about account restrictions, or "holds" that prevented students from registering for classes or obtaining a transcript because of an outstanding account balance. The last administrative area, Non-Credit Community programming had two complaints, one complaint about a rude Workforce Innovation counselor. The other was a gender/sex bias complaint about a forklift course,\when a female student alleged that women enrolled in the forklift course were not given equal practice time on the driving equipment.

Classroom Contextual Complaints

Academic complaints were analyzed for frequency as well as inferential themes. The prevailing inferential themes for classroom experience complaints were unfair grading, rude professors, excessive rigor, poor teaching, untimely communication and feedback, and bias related complaints, respectively. Within each theme were common

contextual experiences shared across various students that resulted in the students submitting a complaint. Single complaints frequently encompassed embedded complaints about several of the prevailing themes. As a result, when analyzing for meaning, one complaint would have been coded for each theme represented within the complaint narrative.

Unfair Grading

Students that alleged "unfair grading" generally declared the professor as unfair, then proceeded to provide evidence of interactions and correspondence that supported their assertion. Students that submitted complaints about perceived unfair grading made statements about unclear expectations for course requirements, and course assignments. Several complaints included language about perceived retaliation based upon prior experiences where the student complainant had contacted the subject area dean. Unfair grading complaints included statements about students feeling that they had worked "very hard." sought extra help from the professor, as well as tutoring but still received a grade significantly lower than what they had anticipated. Students who submitted unfair grading complaints typically received course grades of a C, or lower, or withdrew from the course. Another aspect of unfair grading complaints was student anger about receiving no credit for submitted assignments. These students felt that they should have at least received partial credit for having submitted something. Students also submitted complaints because they were surprised by their final grade. These students believed they were earning a higher grade prior to the close of the course. Unfair grading complaints consistently included language about students not being informed of their grades by the conclusion of the course. These complaints made reference to professors being "behind"

in their grading which inhibited their opportunity to potentially improve their grade. The following complaint submitted from a student follows the general pattern of the "unfair" assertion and subsequent discussion of alleged unfair acts:

> *I want to report a complaint about unfair grading with an Intro to Communication professor by the name of Jane Doe. A majority of the class did not pass despite the fact that we all worked very hard and gave no impression that we earned a poor grade. I generally feel that we all earned a passing grade. I've discussed this with classroom peers and informed them of the situation via email. I believe we should have are* [*sic*] *grades appealed, or we should be given the option to retake the class for free.* (Complaint 40)

Another student complaint about unfair grading demonstrated the students perceptions of unclear expectations for classroom assignments:

> *I was a student in Professor MH Humanity class. The only grade that he gave me and many of the students was a D. Now when this happen a few times I asked him what did he want in a* [*sic*] *essay. The information was never clear, so I kept trying to give him what he was looking for that never happen. So I dropped his class. During the class he told the students if they did not like the class that was too bad. He even said that we could tell the Dean, but nothing would happen to him. He also said if we told the Dean it would be bad for that student and not him.* (Complaint 51)

Rude Professors

Students submitting complaints about “rude” professors often began by proclaiming the professor rude, then going on to describe behaviors or experiences that illustrated their declaration. Classroom interactions that included public criticism about performance on individual assignments or overall class performance were frequently detailed in rude professor complaints. Students often described feeling embarrassed or humiliated in front of their peers. Rude professors were described as using condescending or disrespectful tones. Students described them as yelling, using expletives in class, having a bad attitude, or being short tempered. Students perceived professors to be rude when they appeared irritated about answering student questions, raised their voices often in class during discussions, or were regarded as being overall intimidating or frequently angry while in class or interacting with students. One student shared an experience she had with a professor that brought her to tears, when she initiated a conversation about her performance in the course:

> *On July 13, 2017 I returned to my math 112 8:00 a.m. class after not being able to make it to class due* [*to*] *transportation issues. I went to speak with my instructor, Mr. John Doe, in regards about where I stand in his class. At this time, there were about 6-8 students in the class that heard him tell me "I might as well drop his class." Then I explained to him that I didn't appreciate him speaking out loud about how I was doing in his class. I then explained to him that because my truck was broken down again, and that I wasn't in any position to get to school those days that I missed, and he told me, "I don't care about what you are going through." Mr. Doe told me that" my excuse about not having transportation was*

> *getting old." I am a pregnant women and this situation caused me to* [*sic*] *very emotionally upset to the point I left his class in tears. I have also sent* [*sic*]*Mr. Doe was informed by via email in regards to what my issue was and why I missed class. I have never been so upset like this since I have been a student at RHSC. He violated my student confidentiality right. I feel that the instructor needs to be told by his superiors the importance of student confidentiality and never tell a student that you are not concerned about what their personal issues are. I feel that the necessary actions should be taken that this never happens again to any student!!!!!*
>
> (Complaint 10)

A prevailing theme consistent across academic complaints as well as complaints from student affairs, finance and administration, as well as non-credit programming was "rude" personnel. Student affairs had several complaints about staff customer service being subpar due to an unpleasant demeanor, namely of two financial aid representatives and a baseball coach. Academic affairs student support services received several complaints about rude staff in the computer lab, as well as the placement and make-up testing centers. Finance and administration received one complaint about a rude cashier in the business office, and non-credit also received a complaint about a rude workforce innovation counselor. The student complained that the workforce counselor was rude and dismissive, which delayed the completion of her application and resulted in late enrollment within the training program. The narrative provided for one of the student affairs complaints is included below. The student referenced a phone interaction with a representative in financial aid that she regarded as rude and unhelpful:

> *I called the Financial Aid Service Office to figure out the condition of how my scholarship would be processed. I talked to staff person X and she rudely talked to me. She stated that I did not deserve a scholarship and I had no need of using the scholarship at Rolling Hills State College. I stated to her that my scholarship would automatically go to RHSC and I would need help as to how I could get a refund or freeze my account of scholarship money. I also mentioned that I would become a transfer student because due to my health condition and upcoming surgery I will be taking online classes and then transferring over to a four-year university. She stated that I also did not need to use the money and it would go over to the Business Office and then I won't have any money. She would not even allow me to talk or speak because she was talking over me. Her name was Staff X, this happened on August, 9th, 2018 around 10:40 am, in the morning. She is a Financial Aid Adviser and I decided to get other help.* (Complaint 67)

Excessive Rigor

Complaints about course rigor frequently described workloads that students perceived to be excessive. Students used the term "overwhelming" when describing individual assignments or the comprehensive coursework for the class. A perceived limited access to help when completing course assignments also accompanied complaints about course rigor. Other verbiage accompanying complaints of excessive rigor concerned lectures that were difficult to follow, professors teaching too fast or rushing through the material without giving students the opportunity to ask questions. Some

students described the organization of the course as “overly complicated and “irrationally strict.” Several students made the statement that the professor “teaches as if we already know the subject and did not teach as if this is a 101 course.” One student complained about a biology class with a workload she considered to be unreasonable:

> *I dropped my microbiology class because she assigned at least twenty objective questions each class period. It would take her an hour and a half to answer just four of these questions. On top of that we have 100 question exams, now* [*sic*] *study guides or PowerPoint notes. She also made a comment that it’s not my job to teach you guys. That’s the book’s job. I’m just here to guide you. That comment left a bad taste in my mouth. That was what finally pushed me to drop the class.* (Complaint 46)

Another student who complained of rigor characterized the course as design as overly complicated:

> *Professor C I’s Business 131 class is the most over complicated class. I have studied and studied, gone to tutoring, worked with classmates, met with her herself and I still have failed every test. I thought I was making improvements when in fact the material that she’s been teaching is making it more complicated than it should be. I have been so frustrated with this class, the teacher’s rude attitude and demeanor, and how she runs the online program. The book is extremely over priced that I couldn’t afford it for the first few weeks of the semester. That was also an issue because I couldn’t complete the assignments on time without all of the material. I’ve read students reviews online on many*

> *platforms that say that she is an excellent teacher. She most likely is, but it doesn't show in the online course.* (Complaint 20)

Poor Teaching

Similar to complaints about "unfair grading" and "rude professors," students who submitted complaints about "poor teaching" often made explicit statements like, "this professor is a bad teacher, or described the instruction as "poor" then offered accounts of interactions or email correspondence to support their position. Other descriptions of poor teaching included claims, that the professor was disorganized, unprepared for each class session, frequently arrived late, or left early, presented poorly structured lectures, was impatient and appeared to not like answering student questions or didn't provide thorough explanations of questions and their subsequent answers. Students also described a professor as "bad" if they "lost" submitted assignments, or demonstrated behaviors students believed to be indicative of nepotism. Students also characterized faculty as "bad" if they frequently changed assignments on the syllabus or did not use the assigned course textbook for many assignments. Students often paired frequent changes to assignments and ineffective use of the assigned textbook with accusations of poor quiz or exam preparation. Students also regarded a professor as "bad" if they perceived the assessment to be ineffectively aligned with coursework and homework assignments. Professors were also deemed "bad" if they "gave instructions that were hard to decipher". During the Fall 2020 semester of the pandemic, the institution began offering exclusively online courses. Several students complained that the course delivery was poor because there were no synchronous meeting opportunities and the professor did not offer a live

lecture of any kind. One student submitted a complaint that detailed a series of behaviors he regarded as problematic from the professor:

> *Dr A. is a horriable* [*sic*] *instructor. He does not prepare his students for success. He refuses to answer your questions and offer assistance when needed. Dr A. does not go by the book, he uses his own knowledge and expect you to know it, and he has not presented you with the proper information to learn it. If you question his work, he yells at you and tells you if you don't like it leave his class. Since I have attended Rolling Hills I have never had a teacher not want to see a student succeed. I will hate to think that it is racial motivated but all the signs are there. Dr A. would give extra help to certain students of a certain race but other students he would tell to figure it out. The entire class has completed a complaint form. Something has to be done with this instructor. He does not need to teach, he can't teach and should not be allowed to going forward. I have never had a instructor that did not review or give a study packet for the final. Once I got the final test there were maybe 15 questions that he covered; the rest he never covered or told the class the information was wrong in the book. Then presented us with the information on the test that the book presented after he told us not to go by the book.* (Complaint 37)

Other students who complained of bad teaching, submitted very succinct complaints alleging poor instruction, "*Mrs. SD has poor teaching skills, and attitude. Majority of the class dropped because nobody felt like they was learning anything; she teaches extremely fast, office hours don't help much, and homework is more like test.*" (Complaint 30)

Insufficient Communication and Feedback

Students who submitted complaints about communication and feedback issues with a professor complained of insufficient or untimely feedback about individual assignment grades as well as their grade in the course. Students complained that the professor did not post grades in the learning management system nor did the professor provide any feedback on any prior assignments. Students also complained that professors either did not respond to emails or did not answer specific questions within emails. Students complained professors did not return phone calls at all, or in a timely fashion. Students said that the calls or emails were returned after the assignment was due, so the students were unable to integrate any feedback. One student alleged she dropped the course because the professor did not respond to her requests for help:

> *I was forced to drop a class last semester--the introduction to web design, because the professor would not respond to my emails or phone calls asking for help. I drop the class after speaking with my advisor about the situation. It would be nice if online proffessors* [*sic*] *answered students' requests for help* (Complaint 159).

Students submitted complaints about grades not being available during the midterm, as well as professors not responding to progress report requests. Lastly, students complained that there was not sufficient information provided about the format and delivery of online courses prior to the start of the course. For these courses, students desired additional information such as, if there would be any synchronous meetings, the format of the midterm, and how communication about assignments would be posted within the learning management system. One student submitted a complaint about a nonresponsive American Literature professor:

> *At the moment I am taking an American Literature course with Professor B. He tends to not interact with his students almost whatsoever. I have emailed him with questions times before and have never even come close to getting a response. It's extremely unprofessional that when we are in a time as such, when our classes are online, that a teacher does not respond to emails. I honestly can't take any action if my Professor doesn't respond, so I filed this complaint.* (Complaint 149)

Bias

Students submitted complaints about "bias" when they believed they were subject to disparate treatment on the basis of a federally protected class. Students submitted complaints on the basis of disability, sex/gender, and race. There were few similarities within the individual experiences presented by students suggesting that they were treated poorly on the basis of disability, sex/gender and race. The student who submitted a complaint about disparate treatment on the basis disability did so because she perceived her request for classroom accommodations to have led to the professor not allowing her to submit assignments that she missed as a result of complications related to her disability. Female students submitted complaints about gender bias because they felt as if professors made sexist remarks in class or used abusive language toward female students but spoke to male students more respectfully, or gave them better grades on exams where the student perceived their answers to be equivalent. The complaints about race included student statements that asserted they witnessed a professor grading them lower on assignments than students of another race. One student asserted the professor told him he was giving him a lower grade because of the color of his skin:

> *The history department with prof. X. I took a midterm before we went on spring break for his class easy test list 2,3,4 fact per question to get full credit for it. i got and revived and f as my grade so i asked him what i get wrong on the test he said i didn't list enough fact so i said okay then i asked wouldn't i get at least a 4 not 3's and 2' on it and he didn't respond so i was also in the room with two other students who was facing the same problem. so I left to speak to a student who had gotten an a on the test and we had the same amount of facts listed for some of the answer so i went to him again he said he will look over it again. now the next day he tells me no I'm not changing anything to me an the other student and told the other student im grading lower because the color of are skin at that point i walked out and spoke to the dean of history about it and formed this complaint.* (Complaint 89)

There were also bias complaints about gender, with a student alleging a professor made comments she regarded as sexist. She also asserted she was being singled out because of her gender:

> *This complaint is regarding MM, my professor for Intro to Computer Art. On the first day of class, January 18, he mentioned multiple times how I am the only female student. He asked only me why I was taking the class, not any of the other students. On the second day, January 23, he said, "Hey, you came back!" in a surprised tone. Yesterday, February 6th, I finished the assignment early and asked if it was alright that I left class early. He told me I was very bright, and that I reminded him of "what they call a "Fuzzy Blonde." I asked him to explain that, and he said, "Those*

> *are the girls that are so pretty and you'd expect to see air when you look in between their ears. But, they're actually way smarter than everybody else and get ridiculous amounts of work done and you don't even see them doing it. You'd never expect it from them." He then told me I could go if I wanted, but that it'd be a good idea to play around on Adobe Illustrator. Before he said this next comment he mumbled, "Oh God, this is gonna sound sexist. Oh well." He said, "kind of like how you play with Barbies. Try on different outfits, see which ones you like best!" He was rambling, but he also mentioned something about Barbie being home and Ken being "somewhere else". I am a student before anything else, and saying I am reminiscent of a "fuzzy blonde" is degrading and extremely sexist. There's no reason he should treat me any different from the other students, who happen to be completely male.* (Complaint 3)

Co-curricular Contextual Complaints

Complaints were not isolated to the classroom. Each division within the college received at least one student complaint. Student Affairs complaints had four broad categories of student displeasure, severity of sanctions, appeals determinations, staff friendliness and general dissatisfaction with a transactional aspect of service delivery. A student who submitted a complaint about sanction severity, included how he felt targeted and disrespected by the personnel within the office.

> *Disability office and JD (staff title removed to protect anonymity) is being a hindrance to my education. He suspended me for 3 days because AN (staff person) was unhappy with my behavior when I was collecting my notes for a class. I explained to her that I had a bus to catch and I needed my notes. She however had*

a attitude with me and did not get to notes right away. Then she proceeded to call security, which then brought five Security Guys. Then the (Administrator) was called as well. He proceeded to tell me that he would suspend me for 3 days and that I had to have a meeting with him Thursday morning when I came back. This was to take place after I had taken my test for my music appreciation class. However I email professor (AG) and she stated that I could not retake the test and that I would have to drop the lower grade. So therefore I've been inconvenience on my education, I've been singled out. Also (Administrator) have the nerve, the audacity to threaten me stating that he could have expelled me that day and that it will ruin my transcript if I was to transfer out. This is unacceptable and unprofessional. I have been going to Rolling Hills on and off since 2005, 2006 semester. When I came back in 2014 I had some setbacks. Since that day (Administrator) has been mistreating me talking down to me and disrespecting me at every turn. I am working and going to school he still has no respect for me. The date and which this took place for the meeting about the suspension was Monday September 11th 2017. I would appreciate if this gets resolved in the proper manner. (Complaint 13)

In addition to the fairness of sanctions, the fairness of appeals determinations was also an area of student discontent. A student submitted a complaint after her tuition and late withdrawal petitions were denied.

Hello, my name is KB. I am a current student at Rolling Hills College. I was enrolled fall of the 2019 semester. Unfortunately, I was involved in a domestic violence relationship. I was basically held hostage by my ex significant other. Due

to the unfortunate circumstances, I suddenly was unable to keep attending school. I was held at knife point on multiple occasions. I feared for my safety, and was trying to find a way out every opportunity that presented itself. When I finally made an escape with police involvement, I filed a police report in November. Unfortunately this left me very little time to drop my classes. I came into Rolling Hills as soon as I could, in order to drop my classes, but found out it was too late. I then filled out paperwork in order to do a late withdrawal. I included documentation, which included a police report that stated I was a victim of aggravated assault. I finally heard back from the (Administrator) after waiting a month. He told me that the police report of aggravated assault was not enough evidence in order to get my classes dropped. He also repeatedly tole me the report I gave him was not a police report when the paper I gave him states it is indeed a police report. I take full responsibility for my actions. I understand there is a process that needs to be followed. With that said, I feel as if the (Administrator) did not give me a fair opportunity. He stated, "I was not winning him over, and I needed to go back to Chicago to get more evidence". He also stated, that the police report provided that states, I was a victim of aggravated assault was not sufficient. I have no further evidence. I am asking for someone to please review my student records because I would hate for a domestic violence incident against me to affect my future education. I plan on attending school in the near future, and really would like and appreciate any help anybody can give me in order to help me get back on track. (Complaint 129)

A consistent complaint across each division was staff who were perceived as unfriendly. Student Affairs had complaints from several functions areas from financial aid to intercollegiate athletics about staff with a less than friendly personal demeanor. One student who submitted a complaint about financial aid suggested she found the staff communication to be demeaning and their general affect to be disinterested.

> *I have been in and out of the finanical aid office since before summer registion began and the amount of customer skills they have at the front desk and the loan office manager is horrible! When having a conversation with them they talk to me directly like i supposed to know some of the things that goes on with financial aid, talking to me like iam a child.. Since coming here since early April i have never seen the two receptionist smile or have a little bit of compassion toward me being new student to this school. And yesterday after being seen by the loan officer she was very bland, tired and completely unmotivated during my interview process. The ID and parking stickers office is under staff and wait time is to long.*
>
> (Complaint 62)

There were also general complaints about service delivery transactions. One military affiliated student, using Veterans Administration benefits complained about a delayed refund negatively impacting her continued financial assistance.

> *I am filing a complaint regarding the reimbursement of my tuition. I have been in contact with (Staff Name) at the Veteran's Resource Center but progress is not being made. We have been working on this issue for over a month but (Staff Name) is out of office every other week making it impossible to make progress towards my case. The VA overpaid Rolling Hills College ($1,555) in the summer*

> *of 2019. I registered for 3 classes in the summer of 2019 but dropped all of them. Rolling Hills College Veteran's Resource Center failed to send the overpayment back to the VA; resulting in my GI Bill account being in the negatives. The VA has taken the amount out of my Base Housing Allowance. The month that is granted to me to pay rent and SURVIVE. According to the VA my account with them is now paid in full and it is Rolling Hills responsibility to reimburse me! Zero progress has been made this last month. (Staff Name) keeps insisting that I need to provide a reciept but I cannot provide a reciept for a debt that was already charged to my GI Bill account! I told him this and also the VA GI Bill representative told him this when we called them TOGETHER. Everytime I try to contact (Staff Name) his voicemail says he's out of office for another WEEK. Rolling Hills College owes me money and I highly suggest it be paid in full before I get my attorney involved.* (Complaint 117)

Another student complained about being misadvised. This student suggested a Macroeconomics course registration resulted in them taking courses that were not required for their degree, unnecessarily delaying their graduation and erroneously exhausting financial aid resources.

> *When enrolling in classes for the Fall term of 2017, I was advised to take Macroeconomics. The problem with that guidance was that I brought a Microeconomics credit from a previous College, and my major (engineering) only allows one class credit per discipline. Therefore, Macroeconomics will not count towards my degree. This mishap has thrown me off of schedule (a loss of time)*

> *and committed me to a financial obligation for a class that does not benefit my degree requirements.* (Complaint 78)

The college's Finance and Administration division also received complaints. Complaints germane to financial practices were about business office policies. While other areas beneath the Finance and Administration umbrella included complaints about information technology as well as brick and mortar facilities issues. Business office policies were recurring complaints about account balance holds preventing course registration and transcript requests. One student lamented about her hold preventing her from sending her transcripts to another school in order to transfer.

> *I don't have any names but the Department is the (Business Office) and the nature of this complaint is because they failed to try to set me up with a payment plan for my remaining balance. I feel I should have that choice to do so because I was younger then fresh out of high school and very uneducated about everything towards college at that time and my life and only had my parents who also had no knowledge because they didn't attend college. And if I had the money back then to start up a payment plan I would've but I was still living at home with my parents and they were my financial support. Here I am 24 can't get my unofficial copy of transcripts because of one mistake I can pay the balance off by January for a copy of my official as the current school I'm trying to go will still need it.* (Complaint 77)

Two students submitted declarative statements about poor technology related campus services. One student was displeased about the WIFI speed "*The WiFi internet on*

campus is terrible!" (Complaint 131). The other student was unhappy about the frequency with which the ATM machines were inoperable and/or not dispensing cash.

> *RHSC One machine is always not dispense cash every time I come up here. What's up there should be at least two and I'm not talking about that other one Old Bank I know it only charge a dollar I'm talking about two RHSC with monthly Maintenance and cash reloads from the brinks truck people* (Complaint 8).

Co-curricular student complaints were varied and covered the gambit of student services from staff behavior to equipment maintenance. Despite the variance in functional area, there were far fewer co-curricular than academic complaints, with a one to four ratio.

Resolutions and Corrective Mitigation

RHSC utilizes the I-sight case management database. The database acts as a repository for the complaint record and its investigative resolution. The complaint resolution letters included a restatement of the student's allegations; a notation about the referral to the leadership over the administrative area, the institution's determination regarding the complaint; and grievance escalation or appeals instructions for the student, in the event they were dissatisfied with the enclosed resolution. Academic complaints about classroom experiences/ academic policies and support services were considered "resolved" when they were forwarded to the subject area dean. Few resolution letters regarding academic complaints included information about corrective measures or corrective coaching for the faculty member as a part of the complaint mitigation. Student Affairs, as well as Finance and Administration resolution letters contained more evidence of corrective measure implementation and subsequent policy changes. Academic Affairs

and Non-Credit complaints were considered resolved by sending them to the subject area deans for any necessary corrective action.

There were 122 student complaints about classroom experiences and academic support services and 30 complaint resolution letters; 25% indicated corrective mitigation measures were employed after the submission of the complaint. There were 15 student affairs complaints, and eight resolution letters; 53% indicated there were mitigation measures to address the students' concerns. Finance and Administration had 13 total complaints four complaint resolution letters; 31% of the issues indicated by students were addressed. There was no evidence of complaint remediation for the two non-credit complaints. There was evidence of corrective mitigation for 42 of the 152 comprehensive complaints. This suggests 28% of complaints led to changes in policy or classroom management. The other 110 complaints were identified as resolved by way of referral to the administrative leadership over the area but did not include the details of the corrective action taken. The 28% of complaint records that included notes of detailed corrective measures, had three common themes. Repetitive corrective measures across each administrative division were tuition refunds for a course (5), tuition credits to take a future course at no cost to the student (2), and "late" or "administrative" withdrawals (2), which permitted the student to withdraw from the course and receive a "W" as opposed to a failing letter grade after the college's posted "last day to withdraw" date.

Table 7.

Evidence of comprehensive complaint resolution by administrative area.

Administrative Area	Percentage
Academic Affairs	25%
Student Affairs	53%
Finance & Administration	31%

Summary

The goal of chapter four was to outline the analysis of the study in order to answer the research questions comprehensively. This chapter provided the analysis of the collected data and presented the demographics of the student complainants and employee respondents. The disputant characteristics were juxtaposed against the overall populations of each group to illustrate organizational patterns present within the sample. The chapter also discussed the various themes uncovered through the investigation. Chapter five includes a summative discussion of the research findings and their connection to the extant literature on student complaints and inclusive pedagogical practices.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to extend knowledge regarding the nature of student complaints in community colleges. It presented an exploration of pedagogical practices intended to support student success and course persistence. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the major findings of the content analysis as they relate to the literature on inclusive pedagogy. The chapter will offer possible explanations for the relationship dynamics that result in complaints, while also introducing potential strategies to quell classroom conflict and improve overall student satisfaction. This chapter concludes with the introduction of a comprehensive network of student-centered strategies that form a model for inclusive pedagogy.

The chapter contains discussion and interpretive findings of the research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of student complaints within a community college setting?
2. How can student complaints be used to inform and support the use of inclusive classroom pedagogy for first generation and low-income Black students in community college settings?

A content analysis of formal complaints submitted over a period of four academic years revealed, students complained about co-curricular and classroom experiences, the

latter being the resounding majority. Students complained about classroom experiences more than four times more often than they did about co-curricular issues. Co-curricular complaints were primarily about dissatisfaction with service delivery transactions. Students were displeased with the access, timeliness, or availability of student services, as well as the brick-and-mortar facility. They were also displeased with the disposition of customer service staff. Curricular complaints about classroom experiences or academic policies were about teaching competence or relational elements of the classroom environment. The student complainants were primarily Black students 75%, low-income 65%, and first generation 48%. Sixteen percent of the complainants were both first generation and low-income. Most of the disputant dyads, 78%, were interracial, with the student complainant identifying as Black and the faculty respondent identifying as White. There were six themes that emerged as reasons for student complaints about the classroom: (1) unfair grading, (2) rude professors, (3) unreasonable rigor, (4) poor teaching, (5) a lack of communication or feedback and (6) bias. Higher education institutions can use student complaints as a valuable data source for continuous improvement in teaching and student services. Complaint information can be used as the basis for assessing campus and classroom climate. Reviewing and analyzing complaints can form the basis for service standards and effective pedagogy.

Interpretation of the Findings

The emergent findings of complaint characteristics are consistent with previous research that higher education, even open access institutions like community colleges, are perceived as chilly and marginalizing environments for Black students. Student complaints serve as indicators to the institution that there are problems within its

operation and function. The disproportionate submission of complaints by Black students should alert campus leadership to potential problems of equitable policy and practice.

Addressing Themes With Inclusive Pedagogy

Student feedback in the form of complaints is a valuable source of data. Submitted complaints provide an illustrative glimpse into the lived experience of the student. Institutions can use this type of feedback to improve the classroom environment. There are several inclusive practices that could be used to remediate the concerns that emerged as prevailing themes. The tenets of meaningful interactions, effective performance monitoring, and culturally affirming practices could be used to improve the classroom experience and likely reduce complaints from first generation and low-income Black students at community colleges.

Unfair Grading – Building Trust

Two underlying themes inferred from the unfair grading complaints were students feeling "blindsided" by their final grades and confused about the expectations of course assignments. Student allegations and subsequent complaints about unfair grading could be reduced by improving the transparency of the classroom grading process. This can be accomplished with improved performance monitoring and feedback about course performance (Wood et al., 2015). More frequent faculty-initiated communication with students about their overall college transition along with "check-ins" about course performance could create the meaningful interactions necessary to build trust (Wood & Turner, 2010). These important interactions provide the opportunity to address concerns proactively from the perspective of the faculty and the student. A practical strategy to build trust and provide clarity of expectations is the use of assignment rubrics. The clear

demonstration of point or percentage value assigned to course requirements, paired with effective performance monitoring and substantive feedback could aid in the feelings of trust toward faculty, reducing the perception of unjust subjectivity in course grading.

Rude – Relational Elements of Effective Teaching

The demonstration of genuine concern and authentic care by faculty has been identified as paramount in the successful retention of marginalized students. Meaningful interaction with faculty has been found to promote achievement, motivation, and persistence behaviors (Wood et al., 2015; Wood & Turner, 2010). Authentic care has also been shown to promote help seeking behaviors. Students perceiving faculty as rude and uncaring has the opposite effect on student success and retention. Constrained relationships with faculty have been connected to lower collegiate satisfaction and increased student attrition (Anaya & Cole, 2001). The perceived willingness of faculty to go above and beyond with advocacy and support, as well as their willingness to engage outside of class have been shown to increase students' sense of belonging and self-efficacy (Strayhorn, 2010; Wood et al., 2015). Faculty members' demonstration of empathy has been identified as a tool to foster student resilience and improve self-efficacy. An affirming environment cultivated by mutual respect, and student validation has been identified as an effective educator contribution that improves the likelihood of student success.

Excessive Rigor – Challenge and Support

Student complaints about excessive rigor could potentially be mitigated through the improved implementation of challenge, support, and high expectations. Rigorous course work should be paired with statements from faculty about their belief in the

student's ability to meet the demands of the course work. Challenge and support also includes pairing rigorous coursework with effective and reliable campus services like tutoring and advising (Sanford, 1966). Another behavior associated with faculty support is criticizing privately, while offering genuine praise and validation publicly (Wood et al., 2015). Faculty support also includes consistent and substantive feedback. Faculty who learn student names quickly, arrive a little early or stay a little late before and after class, monitor student progress closely and intervene when necessary are regarded as more connected to the students and enjoy greater student success and course retention. Faculty who have rigorous standards but can also demonstrate flexibility and compassion, occasionally giving students the opportunity to submit late assignments without severe penalty, also enjoy higher course retention. Scaffolding complex assignments into smaller individual parts that build upon each other to meet the learning objective as opposed to one large assignment has been shown to be effective in facilitating undergraduate student success (Strayhorn, 2010).

Poor Teaching – Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In addition to relational elements of the classroom experience, technical skills and perceived faculty competence are also integral in dissuading the submission of student complaints. Wood et al. (2015) described faculty competence as effective and engaging pedagogy. The skillful delivery of content should also be included. A number of the student complaints about poor teaching included poor work behaviors that should be monitored and extinguished through the practices of instructional supervision and course evaluations, such as, arriving late, leaving early, being unprepared to teach, and making frequent changes to the syllabus or course assignments. However, the perceptions of

poorly aligned course content and assessments could be remedied with the infusion of more culturally relevant teaching. The use of cultural referents to impart knowledge could help minoritized students with the integration of course content. In addition to the use of cultural referents, collaborative learning opportunities could be beneficial in reducing complaints of poor teaching. CRP encourages student involvement within the course curricula and acknowledges that faculty are not the only purveyors of knowledge. This inclusive strategy welcomes the students' infusion of their lived experience into the classroom. This practice could allow students to connect core course themes more easily to their cultural experiences, possibly even improving knowledge retention.

Communication and Feedback – Performance Monitoring

Student complaints about a lack of sufficient communication and feedback from faculty could be reduced through the increased use of performance monitoring and consistent substantive commentary. Frequent "check-ins" from supportive faculty have been found to be effective in gauging student concerns that allow for prompt resolution of student issues. Faculty proactively reaching out to students has also been shown to build student self-efficacy and support meaningful relationships between students and faculty. Faculty perceived as neutral, distant, or remote can contribute to students' feelings of isolation and alienation (Anaya & Cole, 2001). Faculty frequently offering positive and validating messages supports student achievement. A nurturing environment of broad support and advocacy has been shown to promote achievement, motivation, and persistence (Guiffrida, 2005a).

Bias – Culturally Affirming Spaces

Students submitted complaints about bias when they felt they were being treated poorly on the basis of a federally protected class, such as sex/gender, race, and disability. Students also submitted bias complaints when they perceived they were given a lower grade than their classmates on the basis of race or sex/gender. Using practical strategies like assignment rubrics to demonstrate transparency in grading, along with culturally relevant teaching, and faculty behaviors indicative of personal attention could be effective in reducing student perceptions of discrimination. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) coined the term "culturally relevant teaching" to describe "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Coffey, 2019, p.1). The collection of teaching practices that utilizes the students' backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences to inform lessons and classroom assessments constructs the foundation of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP; Coffey, 2019). Providing a classroom environment where students see themselves and their life experiences positively reflected throughout the curriculum could also reduce feelings of unjust treatment. Wood and Turner (2010) offered five effective techniques that aided in building meaningful relationships with students: (1) being friendly with students from the onset, (2) checking in on students' academic progress, (3) listening to student concerns, (4) proactively addressing student performance issues, and (5) encouraging students to succeed. Students reported that faculty who exhibited these behaviors eased the transition into college, and improved students' perceptions of their own academic self-efficacy. The collection of these behaviors can assist students in feeling included, supported, and valued. Feelings of

mattering and belonging could mitigate feelings of alienation and the perception of disparate treatment.

Equity Cognitive Frame

The findings of the study suggest RHSC could benefit from a critical review of institutional policies and practices. The disproportionate number of low-income, Black students experiencing dissatisfaction and submitting formal complaints within the institution indicates the college could benefit from a systemic equity analysis like the *Equity Scorecard*. This organizational change theory, designed to assist campus leaders in systemic inquiry, can be used to discover underlying causes of unequal outcomes for Black students. The application of equity-mindedness can support the college in remediating conditions that result in disparate outcomes for Black students. Felix et al. (2015) discussed how reframing racial/ethnic inequity as a problem of the institution and not of the marginalized student group empowers the institution to identify and correct previously undetected and unintended dysfunctions. Race conscious organizational learning requires the faculty and administrators to commit to being cognizant of structural and institutional racism as the root cause of inequities. This type of organization learning requires a departure from many traditional theories that either minimize the institutional contributions to student success or blame disparate outcomes solely on student behaviors and student deficiency (Anderson, 1975; Pace, 1984). Focusing on institutional culpability can aid the college in creating an inclusive framework conducive to student satisfaction and success.

Campus Ethos - Practices That Encourage Mattering & Belonging

RHSC is a two-year college without dormitories or a student recreation center. The mobile nature of the student body places an even greater importance on classroom interactions as the vehicle to create the sense of mattering and belonging critical for the achievement of first generation and low-income Black students. Complaints about rude, biased, and unfair grading from faculty exist in direct opposition to the environment needed to foster success for these marginalized students. The campus environment can play a major role in student satisfaction and achievement. The environment of the campus can impact a student's motivation and belief in their own ability to be successful (Palmer & Maramba, 2012). Strayhorn and Terrell (2007) found a statistically significant link between student self-efficacy and academic achievement. Meaningful relationships with faculty are a critical piece of the campus environment, student self-efficacy, and achievement puzzle. Wood et al. (2015) found faculty members' willingness to engage outside of class, demonstrate authentic care, and consistently convey validating and affirming messages can support students in overcoming academic obstacles. The complaints from Black students about constrained relationships with some White faculty is consistent with previous research suggesting Black students may have difficulty forming positive relationships with White faculty members (Arnold, 1993; Fleming, 1984; Nettles, 1991). The findings reinforce the idea that Black students may be dissatisfied with the quality of their interactions with White faculty. Guiffrida (2005a) found that Black students desired a comprehensive and empathic approach to interactions with faculty in order to access career, academic, and personal guidance along with

expanded support and advocacy. Student perceptions of faculty as rude, disinterested, and impatient act as an impediment to effective relationship building.

Practical Application of Complaint Data for Continuous Quality Improvement

In addition to complaints about the relational elements of the classroom, students also complained about excessive rigor, poor teaching, and a lack of communication and feedback. Effective and engaging pedagogy is equally important to student success. Students who submitted complaints about rigor often lamented over an excessive workload with insufficient support and unclear direction from the professor. Wood et al. (2015) asserted course rigor should be paired with support, high expectations, and authentic care. The findings suggest there was insufficient encouragement and support resulting in formal complaints. Student complaints of poor teaching could be remedied with the implementation of collaborative learning opportunities, more high impact practices, such as service learning and learning communities. The implementation of inclusive assessment practices predicated on providing students choice in the method of evaluation could also improve perceptions of faculty teaching. Complaints about insufficient feedback and communication suggest a need for increased performance monitoring. Students need to be provided with timely and frequent feedback. They must also be given the opportunity to practice and correct previous mistakes in follow-up assignments. The study findings create a picture consistent with previous complaint research about student assertions of poor teaching and faculty competence (Harrison, 2007).

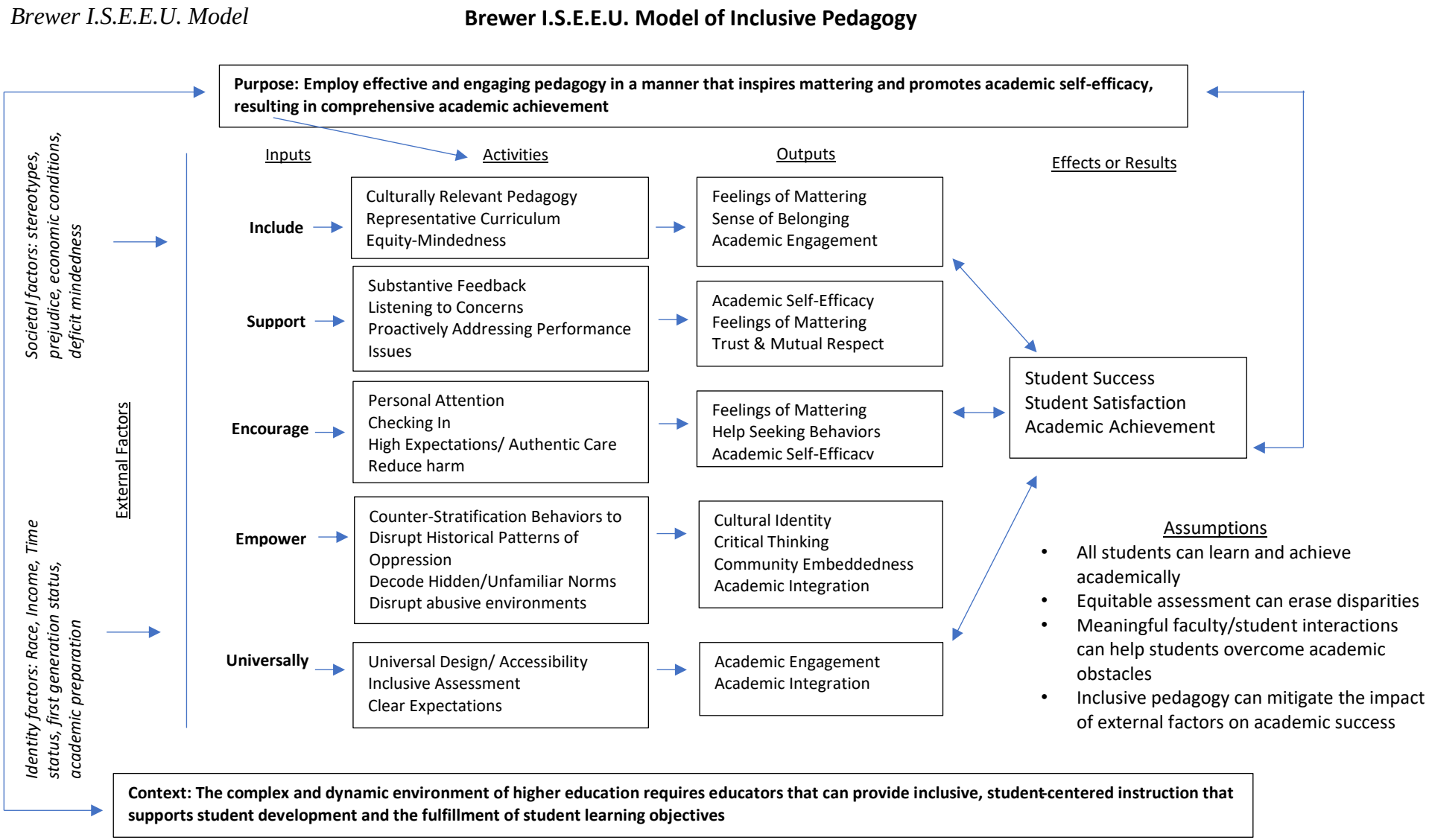
Exploring the origins of student dissatisfaction is important as higher education practitioners work to close achievement gaps. Finding ways to reduce Black students'

feelings of marginalization and alienation within collegiate settings is an important aspect of the retention conversation. Continued investigation surrounding the removal of inequitable policies, business practices, and classroom micro-aggressions could coalesce to make the higher education environment more hospitable and welcoming to first generation and low-income, Black students.

The findings of the study suggest that a great deal of attention should be devoted to the classroom experience of Black students. The application of a comprehensive network of inclusive strategies is needed to reduce feelings of marginalization and improve feelings of inclusion and mattering for first generation and low-income, Black students. To accomplish this, I propose the Brewer I.S.E.E.U. Model of Inclusive Pedagogy. In order to achieve a classroom environment that cultivates a sense of belonging and mattering, while also supporting academic success, faculty at community colleges need to Include, Support, Encourage, and Empower students, in a Universal way. This model posits that the impact of external factors, such as socioeconomic status, academic under-preparation, and first-generation status can be mitigated through the implementation of inclusive pedagogy. MSI institutions like HBCU's have demonstrated continual success with marginalized student groups. This has been attributed to the richly supportive atmosphere of the campus. The student complaints reviewed within the study paint a picture of marginalization of first generation and low-income, Black students. The Brewer I.S.E.E.U. Model of Inclusive Pedagogy proactively addresses the relational and curricular elements within the classroom that lead to students feeling sidelined and disregarded within some campus environments.

Figure 4.

Brewer I.S.E.E.U. Model



Pedagogical Tenets of Brewer I.S.E.E.U. Model

1. Reduce Harm / Undo Past Harms
2. Remove Barriers
3. Provide Comprehensive Counsel
4. Perform Intentional Acts of Advocacy

There are five main components and four tenets to the model that coalesce to create a nurturing and supportive environment designed to support, encourage, and ultimately retain students. These strategies are particularly effective for students existing at the academic periphery. The five behavioral constructs are: Include, Support, Encourage, Empower, Universally, and they form the foundation of the model. There are also four pedagogical tenets of the model to actively support students through challenges in order to help them overcome obstacles: (1) reduce harm or undo past harms, (2) remove barriers, (3) provide comprehensive counsel, and (4) perform intentional acts of advocacy. These nine things act as the pillars for student success. The dissatisfaction Black students are experiencing within the RHSC classroom can be improved through the application of this model. Including Black students within the curriculum through culturally relevant pedagogy, representative course materials, and equity mindedness can lead to feelings of mattering, a sense of belonging, and improved academic engagement. Supporting students with substantive feedback, providing opportunities to listen to their concerns, and proactively addressing student performance can promote feelings of academic self-efficacy, feelings of mattering, and create an environment built on trust and mutual respect. Encouraging students through personal attention behaviors, frequent check-ins, high expectations, and authentic care can also support feelings of mattering and increase help seeking behaviors. Institutional agents intentionally working to empower marginalized students by decoding the hidden norms of higher education and demonstrating counter-stratifying practices can help students think critically, achieve academic integration, and support their cultural identity. Faculty employing these strategies universally through individualization and inclusive assessment can support

students' academic engagement and help them improve their academic performance at the course level. Recurring student complaints tell us a lot about the lived experience of the student and the campus climate; using these data to inform classroom instruction and business process improvements can support institutional retention and student success initiatives.

The I.S.E.E.U. Model concurrently presents a linguistic double entendre and a metaphor for student interaction predicated on the ethic of care. The duality of the model begins with the acronym for each major component, Include, Support, Encourage, Empower, Universally. These letters also form the words I, See, and U. In Black American colloquial vernacular, the term "I see you" is an expression of validation, support, and praise. It is a catch-all phrase that communicates, "I acknowledge your efforts, I value what you have done, and good job." It conveys the acknowledgement of a note-worthy achievement. Marginalized students desperately need to hear these validating messages within academic settings. This concept of expressed validation forms the basis of effectively supporting students at the margins of academic success. The condition of marginalization is akin to invisibility. Feeling marginalized often presents as feelings of alienation and hiddenness. This model focuses on creating a counter condition to invisibility. Making these students feel included through representation in the curriculum as well as feel heard by actively seeking their engagement facilitates feelings of being valued and seen. Students' perceptions of mattering and feelings of belonging are critically important for retaining first-generation and low-income, Black students. This model also provides educators with a comprehensive network of strategies to see

through and permeate the protective facades students may have formed after prolonged exposure to hurtful, alienating, or unsupportive campus environments.

In addition to I.S.E.E.U. as a play on words it is also a metaphor to guide interactions with students in order to support their maturation and development. The construct of providing education through a lens defined by the ethic of care can be conceptualized in terms similar to an Intensive Care Unit, or I.C.U. This metaphor introduces a framework rooted in the first tenet of the model, reduce harm and/or undo past harm(s). For many students classrooms and school campuses have not been kind, for some these places have been outright hostile environments. As a result educators are tasked with "undoing" some of the deleterious effects of previous hurts from micro-aggressions, micro-insults, micro-assaults or repetitive experiences of invalidations. In order to reduce harm educators should learn the "how" and "why" of students' past academic struggles. This facilitates the creation of supportive classroom and campus environments that counteract the impact of those previous negative experiences. Reducing harm also requires educators to enact a holistic approach to student development. This calls for campus leaders to create environments that actively seek to acknowledge and support the myriad of social identities that comprise each individual student. This can be achieved through intentional efforts to create accessible and inclusive curricula and campus culture that are richly representative of diverse races, ethnicities, gender identities, religions, and sexual orientations.

The Intensive Care Unit, or I.C.U. metaphor is continued in tenets three, provide counsel and four, perform intentional acts of advocacy. These intentional acts of advocacy should be designed to support students actively through challenges and help

them overcome obstacles. Faculty and other educators on campuses are regarded as the resident experts. Students are frequently encouraged to seek out advice from their faculty and other institutional agents in order to navigate college successfully. Educators should be willing and available to provide helpful information about successfully navigating individual courses and college as a whole. Students who develop relationships with faculty that afford them the opportunity to receive comprehensive personal, career, and academic advice, regard these interactions as meaningful (Guiffrida, 2005a; Wood & Turner, 2010). These types of meaningful interactions with faculty have been shown to be an important factor in collegiate undergraduate success. When students receive sought after advice from faculty about various topics course related and otherwise, they are more likely to perceive the faculty as "student-centered." Students' perceptions of faculty as "student-centered" encourage continued engagement and help seeking behaviors which support improved course performance and persistence (Guiffrida, 2005a). Actively supporting students to overcome challenges and removing barriers are closely related. Educators should actively use their legitimate authority to remove barriers for students. The removal of barriers can take many forms; it can be as small as providing an extension for an individual assignment, to as large as an institutional stance that no longer requires standardized testing such as SAT and ACT scores for admission. The goal is to mitigate or remove those things that are disproportionately preventing some students from being successful. Educators purposefully removing barriers hindering student access and success along with intentional acts of advocacy form the expanded network of support many marginalized students need and use to persist and matriculate from collegiate institutions.

Summary

The intent of chapter five was to effectively convey the interpretation of the findings. The aim was to confer comprehensively each research question. The chapter discussed the various themes uncovered through the investigation and proposed the inclusive practices best suited to address the assorted classroom complaints. It reiterated the findings of the study through the lens of the equity cognitive frame and discussed the equity cognitive frame in relation with campus ethos. Chapter five imparted empowering practices for first generation and low-income, Black students. It also offered a broad discussion of the practical application of complaint data to remediate student grievances. The Brewer I.S.E.E.U. Model of Inclusive Pedagogy, was introduced and its nine pillars of student success were divulged in detail. Chapter five concludes with a call to action for educators, encouraging the proactive remediation of structural barriers impeding student achievement. Chapter six will further elaborate on implications of the study and highlight opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to extend knowledge regarding the nature of student complaints in community colleges. It presented an exploration of pedagogical practices intended to support student success and course persistence. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the implications of the major findings of the content analysis in order to improve the collegiate experience for first generation and low-income, Black students. This chapter will also present recommendations for practice within the field of higher education. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and introduces areas for future research.

The relational dynamics resulting in complaints may be a symptom of poor cultural competence within the institution. Georgetown University's National Center for Cultural Competence released an adapted version of the Cross et al. (1989) *Cultural Competence Framework.* The cultural competence continuum ranges from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency (Goode, 2004). The disproportionate number of complaints from Black students about marginalizing classroom experiences paints a picture indicative of an institution operating from a place of cultural blindness. The college may espouse a philosophical orientation of treating everyone the same, inadvertently ignoring cultural strengths, and operating from a deficit perspective that encourages assimilation. RHSC and similar institutions could benefit from placing an

increased value on professional development designed to improve constituent groups' cultural and linguistic competence. Perceptions of student abilities rooted in deficit mindedness can influence the attitudes of faculty, as well as administrators resulting in an organizational culture stagnated by its own perceptions of students' innate limitations. An environment permeated with cultural blindness could benefit from the explicit implementation of practices designed to educate staff on implicit bias, disrupt historical patterns of oppression, and empower marginalized students of color. Performing equity assessments using tools like the *Equity Scorecard and Cultural Competence Continuum*, while simultaneously working to improve business function through the process of continuous quality improvement could effectively remedy many of the conditions contributing to student complaints.

Improving the campus dynamics and organizational culture at RHSC requires attention to relational elements, as well as improvements in transactional service delivery. Students submitted complaints about service delivery delays, old facilities, slow technology, and rude staff. In order to remediate student dissatisfaction at the college, RHSC and similar institutions could benefit from a concentrated effort to address the issues that lead to student grievances. The implementation of a systemic process designed to eliminate problem behaviors and improve underperformance should be employed to address the issues of policy and pedagogy for first generation and low-income, Black students. Continuous Quality Improvement seems to be a fitting solution to address the conditions that underlie conflict leading to student grievances.

The concept of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) was first introduced by Walter A. Stewhart in *Economic Control of Quality of Manufactured Products* in 1931.

William E. Deming, an American engineer, championed Stewhart's process control works into what we now know as the "Plan Do Study Act" (PDSA) cycle of continuous quality improvement. According to Deming (1986) the CQI process consists of four phases based on four general assumptions. The first assumption is that all decisions should be driven by data and verified by analysis of the facts derived from the collected information. The data will determine what should be changed and how the change should occur. Continued analysis will also determine if the change is effective. The second assumption, the individuals conducting the work are the most knowledgeable. Their input on the proposed changes must be sought consistently. This requires involvement of all stakeholders at all levels. The third assumption focuses on the involvement of the stakeholders. It assumes teams are more successful than lone individuals. The final assumption is teams need to be trained in order to maximize their ability to solve problems (Brown & Marshall, 2008).

According to Deming (1986), each phase is identified by a specific task. The "plan" phase is characterized by establishing a vision for the project and clearly identifying the end goal(s). In the "do" phase, the team obtains the resources needed to complete the task and enact the vision created during the "plan" phase. All members of the team are educated on the actions taken in the "do" phase. The "study" phase follows the "do" phase, and all members of the team monitor the progress of the change initiative. Members of the team monitor the effects due to change, obtain perceptions and data regarding the impact of the initiative, and compare new data with the original data. The "act" phase is characterized by adjustment. The improvement strategies are modified as needed. The effective changes are institutionalized by policy and

ineffective changes are discarded. The cycle continues with a search for more processes to review and improve (Brown & Marshall, 2008).

Kotter (1996) identified a series of steps necessary to initiate a successful CQI process: establish a sense of urgency, form a leadership coalition to provide guidance for the project, create a shared vision, communicate the vision, empower others to accomplish the vision, plan and create short-term wins and objectives, consolidate improvements, continue to produce helpful change, and institutionalize best practices. Brown and Marshall (2008) stated that:

> CQI is consistent with adult learning principles, standards of teaching and learning in higher education, and parameters of organizational growth that require a student-centered approach. Those involved in CQI continually strive to improve the quality of all educational products and services. (p. 207)

CQI's focus on process optimization and performance enhancement makes it an ideal system to support initiatives aimed at eliminating the achievement gap for students of color within higher education. The process itself is highly adaptable and can be used to address sentinel events or longstanding problems. CQI can also be used to identify which students are at risk of failing and to develop appropriate interventions to improve these students' academic performance. The flexibility of CQI allows it to be used to evaluate internal processes and their relationship to external outcomes. These constructs can easily be applied to the effectiveness of classroom instruction (Brown & Marshall, 2008). The complaints RHSC received about student displeasure with business transactions, as well as student frustrations within the classroom, make it an

ideal site for the implementation of CQI process changes in equity and general organizational practices.

When examining the collection of student grievances at the micro-level there are several implications that emerge for each division of the college. The complaints about classroom experiences can be remedied through the comprehensive collection of inclusive practices demonstrated through the Brewer I.S.E.E.U. Model of Inclusive Pedagogy, and other student-centered practices designed to support academic achievement. Each complaint type can be addressed with intentional interventions in the classroom. Student complaints about unfair grading can be addressed by faculty working to build trust, provide clear expectation about course objectives and specific classroom assignments. Implementing the use of inclusive assessment tools and rubrics can alleviate students' perceptions of arbitrary or capricious grading. Complaints about rude faculty can be remediated by focusing on the relational elements of effective teaching, by actively working to establish meaningful interactions with students. Student complaints about excessive rigor within a course can be mitigated by scaffolding the presentation of the material as well as diversifying the assessment measures used to evaluate content mastery. Excessive rigor can also be addressed by providing effective support services like tutoring or supplemental instruction. Student complaints about poor teaching can be addressed through the deployment of course material in a manner that supports salience and integration. Culturally relevant pedagogy supports marginalized students' ability to connect with the coursework in a more meaningful way. Consistent substantive communication about academic achievement through effective performance monitoring can remediate complaints about

insufficient feedback. Complaints about classroom and campus bias can be diminished by providing Black students with more culturally affirming physical spaces. There should also be a focus on making the classroom itself a more inclusive and diverse identity affirming space.

Student Affairs had four areas of complaints: (1) severity of sanctions, (2) disagreement with appeals determinations, (3) staff friendliness, and (4) dissatisfaction with service delivery. Student complaints about the severity of sanctions and disagreement with the appeals process can be remediated by employing an equity-lens of analysis to the institution's conduct proceedings and practices. An equity assessment can be undertaken to determine if there is a racial, ethnic or gender disparity in sanction severity and institutional dismissals. Additionally the college can review its judicial model. The college currently employs a single adjudicator model for conduct and appeals proceedings. Changing the single adjudicator model to a multi-member panel judicial committee could improve student perceptions of fairness for each process. Complaints of staff friendliness as well as student dissatisfaction with general business transactions could be addressed and remedied by establishing a tiered and comprehensive series of customer service standards. These standards should be widely publicized through campus communications and should be accompanied by training and performance incentives. The service standards should communicate the organization's expectations regarding effective service delivery in every area of the college. They should include expectations about response time, staff friendliness, and student or client interaction guidelines or standards.

There were four areas of complaints for the Finance and Administration division: (1) dissatisfaction with business office policies, (2) the condition of the physical facilities, (3) technology, and (4) staff friendliness. The vast majority of the complaints were student displeasure with college policies regarding payment plans and account restrictions for registration and transcript processing due to outstanding balances. Student complaints about the business office could be remedied through more transparent communication about student account policies and accompanying restrictions. The business office could better support students by posting their balance restriction policies on the department website. They could also provide students with a "payment plan guide" or "frequently asked questions" booklet when they have an account balance or may need to establish a payment plan or other financial arrangement. The business office should also consider providing brief but mandatory financial literacy sessions for students with consistent and recurring account balances. Similar information-based counseling should be required for students who may need to establish a payment plan. These counseling sessions would insure student understanding of institutional practices. They would also provide an opportunity for the student to ask questions about policies, procedures, and consequences for defaulting on payment arrangements. For students who may be struggling with making payments or having difficulty keeping up with their payment arrangements, these counseling sessions would provide an opportunity for them to receive additional supports and resources. Complaints about the physical condition of the facility and speed of technology services available for student access can be addressed through a capital improvement campaign. Students' and other stakeholders' feedback should be solicited

about desired physical improvements at the college. This can be achieved by employing a traditional survey or social media campaign to ascertain where students perceive the college facilities and technology to be lacking. This solicitation of stakeholder involvement is consistent with CQI principles. The Finance and Administration division also received complaints about staff friendliness. This reinforces the assertion the college could benefit from the design, promotion, and implementation of a customer service standards program that educates staff on service delivery expectations and provides incentives for adherence to ensure accountability and compliance.

Limitations and Future Research

The sample size and retroactive nature of the research design can be identified as intentional methodological constraints or limitations of this study. The investigation was a case study, only examining the student complaints from one college. However, the topic is significant enough to warrant an expansion of the sample to include additional community colleges. Further exploration could include an increase in the type and number of institutions to determine if there is consistency in the complaint themes across a diverse collection of colleges and universities. The retroactive nature of the document analysis provides an illustrative corpus of data but does not provide the opportunity to ascertain a correlation between campus practices and educational outcomes. The introduction of a survey instrument could facilitate this type of analysis. The study has identified areas of improvement; future research efforts could benefit from a mixed method or quasi-experimental research design to determine if the complaint themes are generalizable or possess any statistical significance. The quasi-experimental approach

could also be used to help determine the effectiveness of the inclusive pedagogical practices presented throughout the study.

The findings from this study have uncovered the characteristics of complaints within one community college. There appear to be disrupted relational dynamics between some faculty and students within the institution. Future research could explore the origin of the disconnect. A possible theoretical foundation to facilitate exploration could be Stanton-Salazar's (2011) social capital framework. Built on the foundational works of Bourdieu's social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and Lin's social capital theory (Lin, 2001), Stanton-Salazar (2011) suggested that social capital consists of resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions. This capital, social and cultural in nature, can be theorized in a model of conflict that highlights the contradictory and simultaneous dynamics of structured inequality and empowerment. "Following Bourdieu, social capital is primarily a mechanism of privilege and domination, precisely because it is embedded in hierarchical, integrated and reproductive social structures (emphasis here on systems of stratification: race, class and gender)" (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 29). According to Stanton-Salazar, faculty and administrators unconsciously gravitate toward and reward those students who exhibit "high-status" social characteristics, by successfully displaying the "right" cultural capital, illustrating the students' acceptance and internalization of the institution's socialization agenda. Future research could examine how the tacit acceptance and subsequent reproduction of oppressive practices manifest within the classroom and lead to complaints about marginalization from first generation and low-income, Black students.

An additional area of investigation could be the exploration of a relationship between organizations experiencing cultural blindness and the prevalence of color-blind racism. Bonilla-Silva (2013) discussed the constructs of color-blind racism and its role in the preservation of racial inequality in America. He asserted there is a "new racism" that has replaced the former Jim Crow racial structure. This new racism is comprised of a dominant racial ideology that has four central frames, or roadmaps for interpreting information. These central frames are abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism. According to Bonilla-Silva, abstract liberalism is the most important to understand because it forms the basis for a new racial ideology, identified as colorblind ideology. This concept of racial reasoning, which highlights individualism, universalism, and egalitarianism is often used by Whites to espouse a position that supports equality, but generally opposes policies such as affirmative action or reparations for the descendants of slaves. The naturalization frame posits that racial phenomena such as segregation are natural occurrences, for example, "people of the same race naturally prefer to live together." This position ignores intentional practices such as redlining and residential covenants that prevented Blacks from living in certain neighborhoods. Cultural racism as a frame relies heavily on culturally based arguments such as, "minorities do not value education" to explain a stratified social hierarchy in which minorities have a lower social standing. The last frame, minimization of racism, asserts racial discrimination is a thing of the past and no longer affects the daily lives of people of color. These four frames can collectively be described as Color Blind Racial Ideology (CBRI). This philosophical position theorizes three approaches: (1) treating everyone equally regardless of race encourages a more equal society, (2) systematic racism no

longer exists, (3) one race is not privileged over others (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Gonlin & Campbell, 2017).

The danger inherent in this philosophy is its allowance for the denial of the effects of racism by reframing structural inequalities as issues of individual choice and ability. It has also been argued that colorblindness as an ideology can be used as a mechanism to preserve White privilege (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017). A noteworthy exploration would be the intersection of social capital theory and colorblind ideology. This type of investigation could serve to examine colorblindness as a collective organizational discourse in order to understand its role in the creation and maintenance of the campus ethos. This study ascertained the lived experiences of student complainants within the institution. The findings of student marginalization serve as a call to action for further critical research.

Summary

The objectives of Chapter six were to share implications of the investigation and contribute to the body of knowledge within the higher education community of practice. This chapter provided limitations of the current study and offered suggestions for future studies. An opportunity exists to continue to explore the relationship between student complaints and institutional retention. The voices of the student complainants suggested poor relational dynamics and inefficient business processes. This should alert campus leaders to a need for change. The students' high persistence from one semester to the next, but the institution's low retention rates from year to year, suggest a proximal window for intervention and correction. The Brewer I.S.E.E.U Model of Inclusive Pedagogy can be used to facilitate the necessary improvement and retain marginalized

student groups. Campus faculty and administrators can improve the student experience by effectively using data from student complaints to deploy targeted interventions. A focus on equity, improving business operations, and progressing along the cultural competence continuum can serve to improve the institution’s retention and reduce equity disparities in student performance outcomes.

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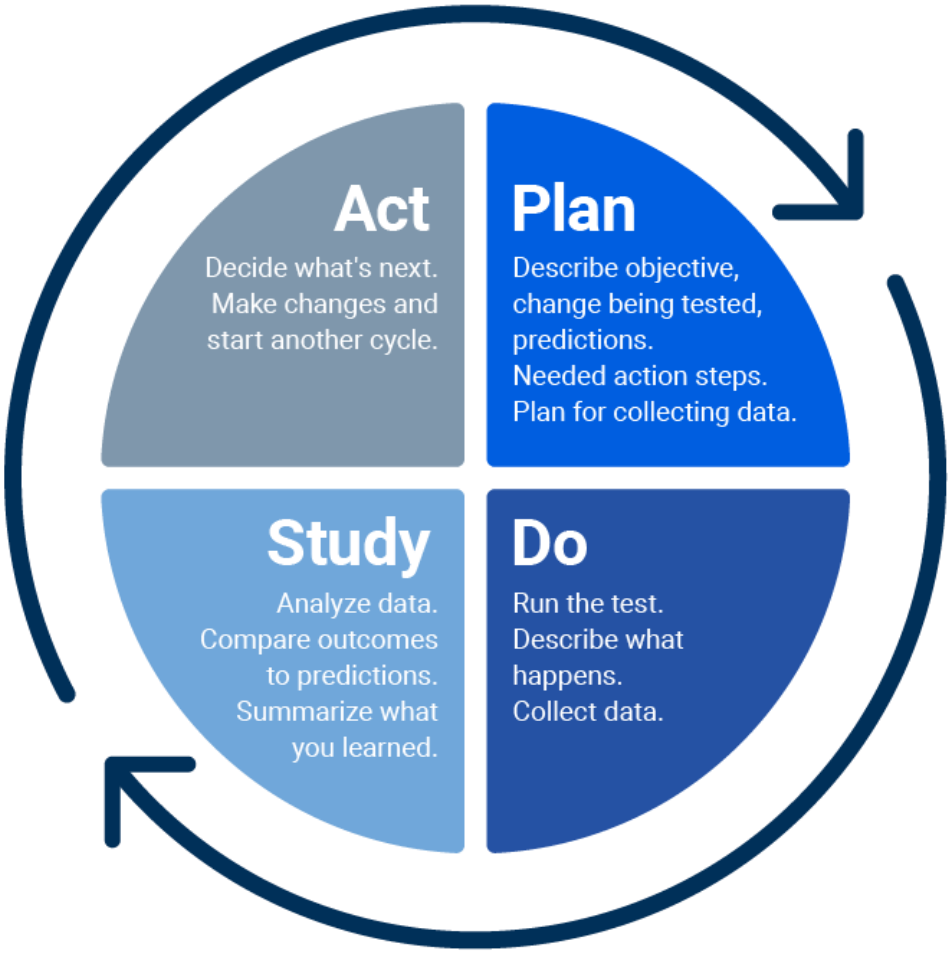
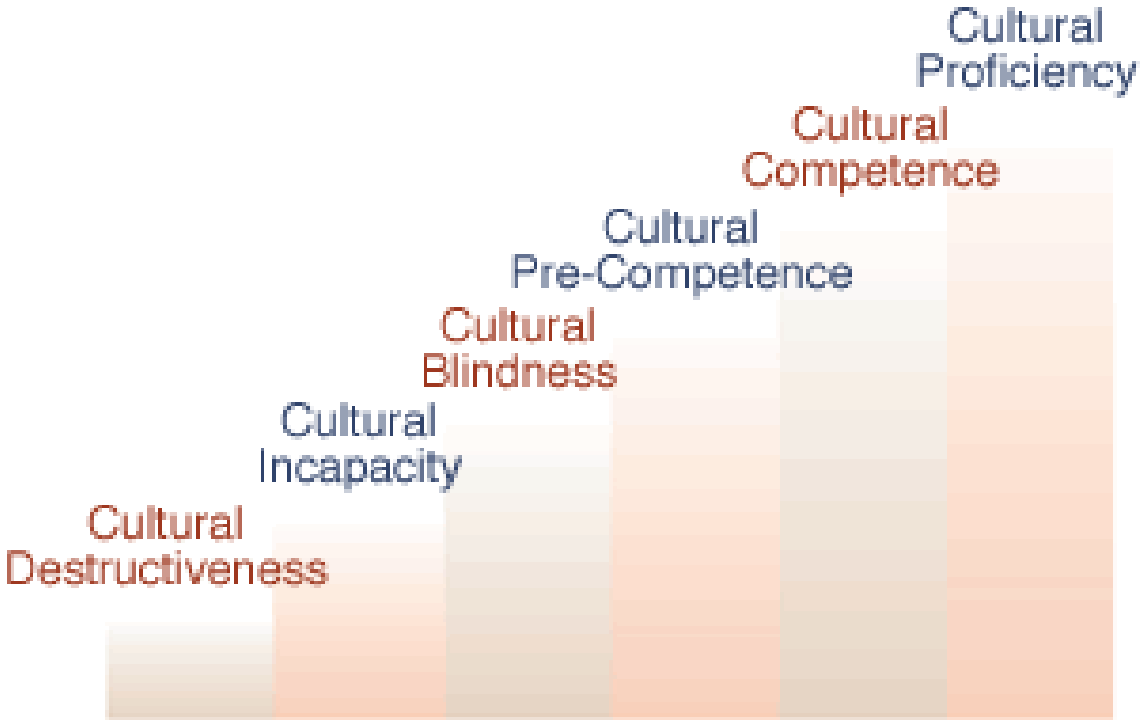
APPENDIX A: DEMING CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Deming Cycle of Continuous Improvement could be ideal for higher education because it is a system of data driven decision making. It requires team input and shareholder involvement is critical. It is well suited for the shared governance model of higher education and identifies training as essential for process improvement.



APPENDIX B: CULTURAL COMPETENCE CONTINUUM



Source: National Center for Cultural Competence
Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development

Cultural destructiveness is characterized by attitudes, policies, structures, and practices within a system or organization that are destructive to a cultural group.

Cultural incapacity is the lack of capacity of systems and organizations to respond effectively to the needs, interests and preferences of culturally and linguistically diverse groups. Characteristics include but are not limited to: institutional or systemic bias; practices that may result in discrimination in hiring and promotion; disproportionate allocation of resources that may benefit one cultural group over another; subtle messages that some cultural groups are neither valued not welcomed; and lower expectations for some cultural, ethnic, or racial groups.

Cultural blindness is an expressed philosophy of viewing and treating all people as the same. Characteristics of such systems and organizations may include: policies that and personnel who encourage assimilation; approaches in the delivery of services and supports that ignore cultural strengths; institutional attitudes that blame consumers—individuals or families—for their circumstances; little value placed on training and resource development that facilitate cultural and linguistic competence; workforce and

contract personnel that lack divest (race, ethnicity, language, gender, age etc.) and a few structures and resources dedicated to acquiring cultural knowledge.

Cultural pre-competence is a level of awareness within systems or organizations of their strengths and areas for growth to respond effectively to culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Characteristics include but are not limited to: the system or organization expressly values the delivery of high quality services and supports to culturally and linguistically diverse populations; commitment to human and civil rights; hiring practices that support a diverse workforce; the capacity to conduct asset and needs assessments within diverse communities: concerted efforts to improve service delivery usually for a specific racial, ethnic or cultural group; tendency for token representation on governing boards; and no clear plan for achieving organizational cultural competence.

Cultural competence is achieved when systems and organizations exemplify and demonstrate an acceptance and respect for cultural difference and they: (1) create a mission statement for the organization that articulates principles, rationale, and values for cultural and linguistic competence in all aspects of the organization, (2) implement specific policies and procedures that integrate cultural and linguistic competence into each core function of the organization, (3) identify, use and or adapt evidence-based and promising practices that are culturally and linguistically competent, (4) develop structures and strategies to ensure consumer and community participation in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of the organization's core function, (5) Implement policies and procedures to recruit, hire, and maintain a diverse and culturally and linguistically competent workforce, (6) provide fiscal support, professional development, and incentives for the improvement of cultural and linguistic competence at the board, program and faculty and/or staff levels, (7) dedicate resources for both individual and organizational self-assessment of cultural and linguistic competence, (8) develop the capacity to collect and analyze data using variables that have meaningful impact on culturally and linguistically diverse groups, (9) practice principles of community engagement that result in the reciprocal transfer of knowledge and skills between all collaborators, partners, and key stakeholders.

Cultural Proficiency : Systems and organizations hold culture in high esteem, use this as a foundation to guide all of their endeavors and they; (1) Continue to add to the knowledge base within the field of cultural and linguistic competence by conducting research and developing new treatments, interventions, and approaches for health and mental care in policy, education, and the delivery of care, (2) develop organizational philosophy and practices that integrate health and mental health care, (3) employ faculty and/ or staff, consultants and consumers with expertise in cultural and linguistic competence in health and mental health care practice, education and research, (4) publish and disseminate promising and evidence based health and mental health care practices, interventions, trainings, and education models, (5) Support and mentor other organizations as they progress along the cultural competence continuum.

APPENDIX C: ORDINAL RANKING OF COMPLAINTS BY ACADEMIC DIVISION

Table 8.

Ordinal Ranking of Complaints by Academic Division

Natural Sciences		**Allied Health**		**Career Technical Education**		**Liberal Arts & Social Sciences**	
Rank	Complaint Type	Rank	Complaint Type	Rank	Complaint Type	Rank	Complaint Type
1	Rigor	1	Rude	1	Rigor	1	Unfair Grading
2	Rude	2	Unfair Grading	2	Rude	2	Rude
3	Poor Teaching	3	Communication/ Feedback	3	Communication/ Feedback	3	Poor Teaching
4	Unfair Grading	4	Poor Teaching	4	Unfair Grading	4	Communication/ Feedback
5	Communication/ Feedback	5	Communication/ Feedback	5	Poor Teaching	5	Bias
6	Bias	6	Rigor	6	Bias	6	Rigor

APPENDIX D: COMPLAINT TYPE & INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY STRATEGIES

Table 9.

Academic Affairs Complaint Type & Inclusive Pedagogy Strategies

Complaint Type	**Inclusive Pedagogy Strategies**
Unfair Grading	Building Trust / Clear Expectations / Equitable Assessment
Rude	Relational Elements of Effective Teaching
Rigor	Challenge & Support
Poor Teaching	Culturally Relevant Teaching
Communication/ Feedback	Performance Monitoring
Bias	Culturally Affirming Spaces

APPENDIX E: COMPREHENSIVE COMPLAINT RESOLUTIONS

Table 10.

Comprehensive Complaint Resolutions

Administrative Area of College	Types of Complaints	Totals	Evidence of Complaint Mitigation	No Evidence of Complaint Mitigation
Academic Affairs	Classroom experiences/ academic policies	108	29	79
122	Academic support services	14	1	13
Student Affairs	Severity of sanctions	2	0	2
		2	1	1
15	Appeals determinations	3	2	1
	Staff Friendliness	8	5	3
	Dissatisfaction w/ service delivery			
Finance & Administration	Business office policies	7	1	6
		2	0	2
13	Facilities	3	2	1
	Technology	1	1	0
	Staff friendliness			
Non-Credit Programming	Bias – Gender	1	0	1
2	Staff friendliness	1	0	1
Totals		152	42	110

Note. N=152