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Editor, Layout, & Design

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About The Learning Assistance Review

The Learning Assistance Review is an official publication of the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA). NCLCA serves faculty, staff, and students in the field of learning assistance at two- and four-year colleges, vocational and technical schools, and universities. All material published by *The Learning Assistance Review* is copyrighted by NCLCA and can be used only upon expressed written permission.

NCLCA's Definition of a Learning Center

The National College Learning Center Association defines a learning center at institutions of higher education as interactive academic spaces which exist to reinforce and extend student learning in physical and/or virtual environments. A variety of comprehensive support services and programs are offered in these environments to enhance student academic success, retention, and completion rates by applying best practices, student learning theory, and addressing student-learning needs from multiple pedagogical perspectives. Staffed by professionals, paraprofessionals, faculty, and/or trained student educators, learning centers are designed to reinforce the holistic academic growth of students by fostering critical thinking, metacognitive development, and academic and personal success.

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Letter from the Editor

Michael Frizell, M.F.A.

Missouri State University

As a director of a learning center, I often wonder about our effectiveness during this pandemic. I can't casually stroll through the center to witness the breakthroughs experienced by my staff and the students who turn to us to help them navigate a challenging course. Surveys help some, but the return rate is often dismal as the link is embedded in one of a hundred emails students receive each week.

Collecting retention data doesn't tell the whole story. The data may prove that the center bolsters the university's bottom line, but it can't effectively measure the power of human connections. Those connections are the reason many of us in this underpaid, often undervalued profession persist.

Doris D. Santoro, professor of education at Bowdoin College and the author of *Demoralized: Why Teachers Leave the Profession They Love and How They Can Stay*, in her article, "Teacher Demoralization Isn't the Same as Teacher Burnout," writes:

It is worth distinguishing teacher demoralization from burnout. Teachers' ongoing value conflicts with the work (demoralization) cannot be solved by the more familiar refrain for teachers to practice self-care in order to avoid exhaustion (burnout).

Demoralization occurs when teachers cannot reap the moral rewards that they previously were able to access in their work. It happens when teachers are consistently thwarted in their ability to enact the values that brought them to the profession. (n.p.)

This inherent need to “reap the moral rewards” isn’t confined to professors. Learning center directors need anecdotal evidence and to feel that what we do matters. Validation comes when a client of the center stops by my office and says she was thrilled working with one of our consultants, mentors, and tutors.

Even more powerful is when one of our student workers casually says, “I love this job!” after a powerful session with a client.

We’re approaching the end of a year working virtually. I wonder if I have the strength to maintain high spirits while holding us together through force of will without the human connections that make this job worth it. I envy colleagues who are used to working this way as they’ve no doubt mastered the art of creating meaningful online interactions I haven’t yet.

Time to login.

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Santoro, D. (2020, November 11). *Teacher Demoralization Isn’t the Same as Teacher Burnout*. Retrieved from: <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-teacher-demoralization-isnt-the-same-as-teacherburnout/2020/11?fbclid=IwAR1hqzNI3oJP9WkOicFw1try9jm6uGX-NJgm79Vniap7FAKKdNT6tWcjS94>

Parents as Partners: Engaging Parents to Support Student Success

Jack Truschel & Jan Hoffman

East Stroudsburg University

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”- Henry Ford

Introduction

Exploratory studies, is the advising program located in the Department of Academic Enrichment and Learning at a regionally accredited, comprehensive and state owned university in (the university). This advising program has often been asked to develop and deliver special programs to students and their families. In 2016, there was a discussion of how to use FERPA to the university’s advantage, due to the adversarial position parents were taking with university personnel. These parents were termed “helicopter parents.”

A “helicopter parent” is a parent who takes an “overprotective or excessive interest in the life of their child or children (Swalboski, 2018). In higher education, university personnel perceive helicopter parents as academically intrusive. “Helicopter parents pay extremely close attention to a child's or children's experiences and problems, particularly at educational institutions; like helicopters,

they "hover overhead", overseeing every aspect of their child's life constantly (Auerbach, 2019). Helicopter parents attempt to "ensure their children are on a path to success by paving it for them" (Westfall, 2020). The rise of helicopter parenting coincided with two social shifts. The first was the comparatively booming economy of the 1990s, with low unemployment and higher disposable income. The second was the public perception of increased child endangerment, a perception which free-range parenting advocate Lenore Skenazy described as "rooted in paranoia" (Skenazy 2014, as cited in Kendzior, 2016). "It is about too much presence, but it's also about the wrong kind of presence. In fact, it can be reasonably read by children as absence, as not caring about what is really going on with them ... it is the confusion of over involvement with stability (Skenazy, 2009)." Similarly, helicopter parenting is not the product of "bad or pathetic people with deranged values ... It is not necessarily a sign of parents who are ridiculous or unhappy or nastily controlling. It can be a product of good intentions gone awry, the play of culture on natural parental fears (Rolphie, 2012)." The inherent problem with the proverbial parent/child attachment is that college students are not ready to make tough decisions (Kennedy, 2020). Colleges and universities fatigued by intrusive parental meddling as well as the university's need to produce independent career-ready students and operate efficiently seek resolution.

Given the reported influx of demanding parents/guardians seeking information about students, in 2016 the division of enrollment management at the University, began planning strategies to limit parent/guardian inquiry of student records through clever interpretation of The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). According to the FERPA act, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. Therefore, the goal of enrollment services was to limit conversations with parents as much as possible.

Coincidentally, at the same university a department that houses academic success services for students noted that the support parents offer may complement university retention efforts if channeled appropriately. The department rallied against the planning strategies of enrollment management and worked collaboratively with Student Orientation to develop a "Parents as Partners" orientation program presented to parents at summer orientation. The presentation familiarized parents with campus support systems and encouraged an alliance between the service providers on campus and parents in support of student success.

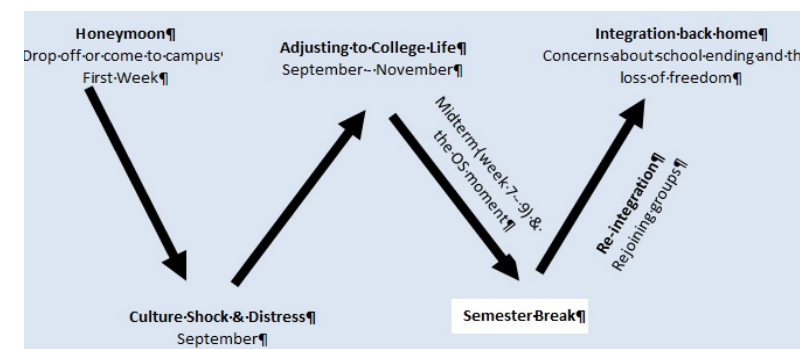
Methods

A proposal was presented to the vice president for enrollment management as well as the director of orientation. The proposal included a designated timeslot for parents to attend the proposed presentation during summer orientation. The presentation was aimed at leveraging parents/guardians to advocate campus student success services to their student. During the presentation parents were provided an understanding of their role as advocates to student academic success. Additionally, all campus constituents agreed to deliver the “parents as partners” message throughout orientation to both students and parents/guardians.

A second objective of the presentation included familiarizing parents with the college student first year experience. The university recognized that parents do not understand the first-year adjustment and growth concerned when their student faces typical first year hindrances. The university began to realize that the more awareness shared on the first year adjustment and the more parents/guardians addressed their concerns on the front end the more supported they would feel by the university, therefore reducing intrusive behavior.

To effectively communicate to parents/guardians the first-year adjustment, a modified version of the “W-curve” was used as a support model Zeller and Mosier (1993).

Figure 1.



According to Zeller and Mosier (1993), the “W curve” is a predictable lifestyle adjustment pattern that occurs when a person experiences culture shock. Typically, culture shock is attributed to individuals visiting other countries and experiencing new cultures. However, culture shock also applies to the new academic community/culture experienced by first-year college students. For purposes of our “parents as partners” objective, the original model from Zeller and Mosier (1993), was modified relevant to the first-year college experience. Jennifer Wickham, licensed professional counselor at the Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire, says, “The W-Curve is something that a lot of students and parents aren’t aware of when it comes to leaving for college. Accordingly, change is difficult and is especially so for young adults who are leaving home for the first time to attend college.

The first phase in the “W curve” is called the “honeymoon” phase. The honeymoon phase begins before school even begins when students beam with anticipation and excitement for the

freedom and opportunity of college life. Students arrive on campus eager to meet new friends and live new experiences. Accompanying the excitement is also a feeling of anticipatory anxiety, the two feelings combine creating an overwhelming rush of emotion. According to Zeller and Mosier, 1993 (19-23), "... as students arrive on campus there generally is a strong sense of welcoming from the campus community. Other students become friends, returning students become mentors, and staff / faculty can assist them move in and work through a variety of first week transitions."

As the semester settles and the permanence of the college lifestyle phases in, the honeymoon transitions into the distress that defines college culture shock. Tasks that are routine in nature become an issues. Some routine tasks, which can create feelings of frustration can include activities of daily life, such as going shopping or getting a haircut (Zeller and Mosier). During this phase, homesickness may increase, and some students go home on weekends and reestablishing relationships (Zeller and Mosier). Developmental life cycle tasks are also continuing such as becoming self-sufficient, establishing identity, and accepting responsibility for their actions. In summary, the college freshman has many personal issues to deal with in addition to focusing on the critical issue of academics: reworking relationships with parents, establishing interdependence with peers, dealing with separation and its resultant anxiety and dealing with conflicting values. Attempting

to synthesize these personal challenges into some formal structure requires a great investment of energy. It is important to understand that this is a period of great potentially positive change, but it is also a period of more intense personal conflict and anxiety" (Zeller and Mosier). Fortunately, once students emerge from the "culture shock" phase of the "w-curve" they typically transition into a more positive college experience (Zeller and Mosier).

At this point of the "parents with partners" orientation presentation, the presentation focuses on how the campus assists students through culture shock and guides parents on how they can best assist their student. Ultimately, "the best way out is through". Reduced visits to home will invite more campus engagement, fostering transition to the "Adjustment" phase of the first-year W-curve.

Adjustment happens during the first half of the first semester. During the adjustment phase, students understand accountability for decisions and make a stronger commitment to academic obligations. As a result, students find a method of routine and adjust into campus life and learn to be college students.

With adjustment comes realization. Realization is the opposite of denial. At mid-semester students experience the second downward slope of the W-curve as midterm examination stress triggers what is coined as the "Oh-Sh" moment. The "Oh-Sh" moment is the

recognition that bad habits and decisions from the beginning of the semester result in less than stellar mid-term grades.

The upside of the “Oh-Sh” moment is the formation or reinforcement of new study habits, and a dedication to understanding better ways to learn through the help of academic support services. Students seek out their professors gaining better understanding of content and inquire about how to succeed in their classroom. They set aside study time and seek academic coaching and tutoring as needed. At the bottom of this downward slope, studies regain footing and enter the second half of their freshman year more prepared.

As the semester winds down, students leave campus for winter break. Students, in need of a respite from new college rigors, look forward to reconnection with family and friends in their former environment. In many cases, students embrace the familiarity that these connections bring and may feel apprehensive returning to campus for the second semester. At this time, they may begin to entertain thoughts of transferring either to be closer to home or to a college their friends may attend. “Strong feelings of homesickness begin to arise or re-arise for students and they often feel as though they are caught between two worlds. College life is still not as comfortable as home and home is now not as familiar as it once was (Univeristy of Wisconsin-Superior Parent and Family Program,

2020).” Emotions and experiences during this stage may include (2020):

- Shock over changes that happened at home in their absence
- Feeling of homesickness for a home environment that may feel different
- Doubts regarding choice in college, major, career and other decisions begin to surface
- Begin to challenge belief and value systems and they may be inconsistent with values of the university culture
- Larger roommate issues surface and students tend to sit alone in their room or find outlets to escape their housing situation
- Cliques may form and students may feel that getting to know others is harder than before

According to Mayo Health Clinic, there is a developmental aspect to this stage where students may not have been taught skills necessary to be successful. Wickham says, “Parents may have selected or directed areas of study for their child, which results in students not knowing themselves or having a lack of confidence. Parents also may feel uncomfortable and not let go, which may interfere with students looking to be more independent (2017).”

During this point in the “parents with partners” orientation presentation, it is suggested parents practice autonomy supportive behavior with their college freshman; listen to their student’s concerns while allowing them to consider and voice their own

solutions. Encouraging their student to consider alternatives while delaying decision making until their freshman year commences will provide the student a sense of control and independence.

According to the W-curve theory, students enter the second semester of their freshmen year well ahead of their Fall semester integration. In most cases, students quickly re-integrate to campus life and re-establish academic habits while continuing to foster relationships. Students develop a more balanced view of the university, their academic pursuits, and their future. A true feeling of acceptance, integration and connectedness occurs when a student has successfully adapted to their new academic world (University of Wisconsin-Superior Parent and Family Program, 2020).

At the final meeting of the day, students and parents met in the auditorium and were asked to complete the evaluation form. The evaluations consisted of 10 questions allowing the attendees to respond in a Likert format, ranging their experience from Excellent (3 points) to Poor (0 points). Evaluations included the following questions: The objectives were clearly defined; The materials were organized and useful.; The topics covered were relevant to me and my student, The time allotted for the presentation was sufficient, The speakers were knowledgeable about the topic; The speakers solicited audience interaction, The speakers responded effectively to participant questions., The information provided help in me making a decision about my student attending ESU; The meeting room was

adequate and comfortable and Overall, I would rate this presentation as. There were about 452 evaluations received upon people leaving the auditorium.

The Results

There were a total of 452 evaluations forms received from parents in 2016. The form's highest score is a 3 and the lowest is a 0. Under the comments section, the parents reported that they were impressed by the level of information provided to them and asked that the same information be provided to their children. Overall the mean for the questions are as follows:

Figure 2.

Measure	Mean
The objective were clearly defined.	2.9
The materials were organized and useful.	2.85
The topics covered were relevant to me and my student.	3.0
The time allotted for the presentation was sufficient.	2.9
The speakers were knowledgeable about the topic.	3.0
The speakers solicited audience interaction.	2.8
The speakers responded effectively to participant questions.	2.95
The information provided help in me making a decision about my student attending ESU.	2.9
The meeting room was adequate and comfortable.	2.7
Overall, I would rate this presentation as	2.95

Comments were limited and included questions related to FERPA and how students were required to approve their parent.

Next Steps

Since 2016, we have presented to parents in 2017 – 2019. All results are similar and responses from parents are also similar. There have been a few outlier comments and questions from parents about housing concerns, billing and meal plans, of which all were sent to the appropriate parties on campus to follow up on.

It is planned that we will continue to provide this information to parents. The university administration has supported this approach and have encouraged the continuation of this positive interactions with students and their parents.

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First-Year Experience Peer Mentor Program

Laurie A. Sharp
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Abstract

Peer mentoring involves a reciprocal relationship of mutual benefits to both the mentee and mentor. To help first time in college students experience a smooth transition to college and empower at-risk college students, South Central University (all names in this paper are pseudonyms) implemented a pilot study for a FYE Peer Mentor Program in fall 2019. This study employed a case study methodology to explore key outcomes and student success metrics qualitatively and quantitatively. Study participants included five FYS instructors, five peer mentors, and 49 FTIC students who were enrolled in 10 FYS course sections. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, documentary information, and a researcher-created questionnaire. Qualitative data were analyzed with thematic analysis techniques, and quantitative data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially using independent *t*-tests. Qualitative findings characterized the FYE Peer Mentor Program as a vital support mechanism for FTIC students academically and

socially, as well as a promising way to promote leadership development in at-risk college students who serve as peer mentors. While quantitative findings showed that FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course with a peer mentor earned higher final course grades and had higher fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention rates than FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course without a peer mentor, these findings were not statistically significant. A discussion of findings was presented, as well as limitations for this study and future area for research.

Keywords: at-risk college students, first time in college students, mentoring services, peer mentors

First-Year Experience Peer Mentor Program

Student engagement and retention have been long-standing concerns for institutions of higher education (Tight, 2019). Existing literature has advocated that engaged students are more likely to persist in their studies and successfully obtain a bachelor's degree (e.g., Kuh et al., 2008; Kuh et al., 2005; Tinto, 2012). However, at-risk and underserved students, such as first-generation college students and students of color, often experience distinctive challenges that influence their ability to "thrive and graduate on time" (Pendakur, 2016, p. 4).

Peer mentoring has been shown to positively influence college student achievement and increase student retention at institutions

of higher education, particularly among at-risk college students (Albright & Hurd, 2018; Collings et al., 2014; Flores & Estudillo, 2018; Heirdsfield et al., 2008; Lenz, 2014; Sanchez et al., 2006; Yomtov et al., 2017). At-risk college students are the most vulnerable students who have a higher probability of experiencing lower levels of academic and social achievements (Horton, 2015) and higher levels of student attrition (Tinto (2012) than their counterparts. To address these issues, institutions of higher education have implemented peer mentoring programs to provide incoming at-risk, first time in college (FTIC) students (i.e., mentees) access to knowledgeable and skilled upperclassmen (i.e., peer mentors) who attend to academic, logistical, and social-emotional needs. Such programs have been shown to improve academic and social integration (Hartness & Shannon, 2011; Moschetti et al., 2018; Plaskett et al., 2018; Zevallos & Washburn, 2014) as peer mentors help their mentees experience "a smooth and successful transition to higher education" (Plaskett et al., 2018, p. 48).

Peer mentoring also has a strong potential to promote the development of leadership dispositions and skills among students who serve as leaders among their peers (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Woelk & Pennington Weeks, 2010). Students who serve as peer mentors have also reported experiencing transformative personal growth while engaged in their peer mentoring role (Bunting & Williams, 2017). Several researchers have contended that

peer mentoring involves a reciprocal relationship of mutual benefits to both the mentee and the mentor (Good et al., 2000; Marquez Kiyama & Guillen Luca, 2014; Zevallos & Washburn, 2014).

Through peer mentoring, mentees and mentors are well positioned to experience academic and social growth in college (Good et al., 2000; Marquez Kiyama & Guillen Luca, 2014; Zevallos & Washburn, 2014), as well as lifetime gains beyond college personally and professionally (Good et al., 2000). Although available literature for undergraduate peer mentoring is extensive, there is a need for more research to clarify the concept of mentoring and demonstrate its effectiveness in promoting student achievement (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Jacobi, 1991).

To address this concern, South Central University (all names in this paper are pseudonyms) implemented a First Year Experience (FYE) Peer Mentor Program as part of its first-year seminar (FYS) course in Fall 2019. The FYE Peer Mentor Program was designed to promote leadership development in sophomore-level students who are considered at-risk college students as they help prepare incoming FTIC students for a successful academic, personal, and social transition to college. There is ample empirical evidence that peer mentoring programs during the first year of college is beneficial for both the mentor (Beltman & Schaeben, 2012; Bunting & Williams, 2017; Dunn & Moore, 2020; Spaulding et al., 2020) and the mentee (Connolly et al., 2017; Flores & Estudillo, 2018;

Leidenfrost et al., 2014; Yomtov et al., 2017). The research goal of this study was to uncover emerging themes associated with the FYE Peer Mentor Program by analyzing the viewpoints of all individuals who are involved: FYS instructors, peer mentors, and FTIC students. Additionally, this study investigated the impact of the FYE Peer Mentor Program using common metrics for student success (i.e., final course grades and student retention rates).

FYS at South Central University

Since 2008, South Central University has offered a FYS course as part of the first-year experience to introduce FTIC students to the college environment. Over the past 12 years, the FYS course has been refined through several iterations in response to student needs. At the time of this study, the FYS course was designed to enhance and support students' academic and social transition to college and counted as one semester credit hour (SCH) of the State's required general education core curriculum. All FTIC students were required to enroll in a FYS course during their first 16-week fall or spring semester, as well as transfer students who earned less than 12 SCHs of post-high school college credits, and students under the age of 25. FTIC students enrolled in FYS courses aligned with specific disciplines in their selected majors (i.e., agriculture, business, humanities, natural and applied sciences, social sciences) and attended face-to-face class sessions held weekly.

FYS instructors at South Central University play a vital role in supporting FTIC students with their transition from high school to college. During FYS class sessions, FYS instructors create active learning environments, promote meaningful interactions about substantive matters, intellectually challenge students, and model and develop successful student behaviors and skills. FYS instructors establish student-centered classroom communities by interweaving content with hands-on, minds-on learning activities that address seven curricular components (i.e., academic advising, belonging, career exploration, communication, learning skills, personal responsibility, well-being), introduce students to the vast resources and opportunities available at South Central University, and share specialized disciplinary knowledge and expertise.

The FYE coordinator at South Central University monitors student success in the FYS course closely and shares relevant data regularly with executive leaders, particularly since South Central University serves an increasing number of at-risk college students. For analysis purposes, the Fall 2017 semester served as an appropriate baseline year for FYS data due to revisions made with the State-approved academic curriculum. As shown in Table 1, the FYE coordinator and executive leaders became concerned about the considerable increase in percentage of students who received a final grade of a D, F, or Withdrawal (i.e., DFW) in their FYS course and the reductions in student retention rates.

Table 1.
Student Success in FYS

FTIC Cohort	Final Grade A	Final Grade B	Final Grade C	Final Grade DFW	Spring Retention Rate ^a	Fall Retention Rate ^b
Fall 2017	74.55%	10.77%	6.13%	8.55%	88.87%	69.37%
Fall 2018	48.44%	17.81%	11.68%	22.07%	86.83%	64.86%

^a fall-to-spring retention rate

^b fall-to-fall retention rate

FYE Peer Mentor Program at South Central University

To address the concerns about student success in FYS, South Central University developed a new initiative under the direction of the FYE coordinator, the FYE Peer Mentor Program. The purpose of the FYE Peer Mentor Program was twofold: to promote student success among FTIC students in FYS and to promote leadership development in sophomore-level students who are considered at-risk (i.e., first-generation, Pell eligible, and/or members of an underrepresented racial/ethnic group). In the FYE Peer Mentor Program, sophomore-level students who completed the FYS course in their first semester at South Central University successfully and considered at-risk college students were invited to serve as peer mentors.

Students who accepted the invitation to serve as a peer mentor were hired as student workers who were eligible to work up to 10 hours per week at the pay rate of \$8 per hour. Peer mentors were assigned to work with an instructor who teaches a FYS course in their major. Once given their FYS assignments, peer mentors introduced themselves to the FYS instructor and scheduled an

introductory meeting to establish agreed upon duties and responsibilities for the FYS class. For example, the peer mentor may answer questions FTIC students ask during class, take attendance, share information via the learning management system, or co-teach a lesson with the FYS instructor. During the introductory meeting, peer mentors also made arrangements to meet with the FYS instructor on a weekly basis to help with planning instruction for class sessions. Beyond the FYS class, peer mentors made weekly contact with each FTIC student enrolled in their assigned FYS course to foster connections and give support during the first year of college. Weekly contact encompassed making phone calls, sending text messages, and holding in person gatherings. Peer mentors documented all interactions with FTIC students outside of the FYS class in the campus-wide student success management system. Throughout the semester, the FYE coordinator communicated with peer mentors via in person meetings, emails, and text messages to answer questions, brainstorm mentoring ideas, and provide guidance.

Methods

Research Design

This study explored key outcomes and impact on student success metrics associated with participation in a pilot study of the FYE Peer Mentor Program. To do so, a case study research design was employed that collected both qualitative and quantitative data. This

research design permitted access into the experiences and viewpoints of research participants, thereby allowing for holistic understandings about the phenomena under study (Stake, 2006). As noted by Yin (1984), case study methodology is appropriate to “investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” using “multiple sources of evidence” (p. 23). Previous researchers have used case study methodology to investigate peer mentoring within higher education contexts (Goodrich et al., 2018; Packard et al., 2014; Snowden & Hardy, 2012; Yaman, 2019), including during the first year of college (Abbot et al., 2018; Antoniadou & Holmes, 2017; D’Abate, 2009).

Context

This study was conducted at the main campus for South Central University, a regional, public institution of higher education located in the South Central Region of the United States. At the time of this study, South Central University served 13,178 students enrolled in 100 undergraduate and graduate degree programs. South Central University’s student body was mostly comprised of full-time undergraduate students. At the beginning of the Fall 2019 semester, South Central University welcomed a cohort of 2,073 FTIC students (see Table 2 for student demographic information).

Table 2.
2019 FTIC Cohort Demographic Information

Category with Respective Characteristics	<i>n</i>	% of Category
Gender		
Female	1,276	61.55%
Male	797	38.45%
Ethnicity		
White	1,369	66.04%
Hispanic or LatinX	459	22.14%
Black or African American	128	6.17%
Multiracial	77	3.71%
Asian	16	0.77%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	9	0.43%
Not Reported	9	0.43%
Foreign	5	0.24%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	0.05%
First Generation Status		
Not First Generation	1,074	51.81%
First Generation	980	47.27%
Not Reported	19	0.92%
Pell Eligibility		
Not Pell Eligible	1,281	61.79%
Pell Eligible	792	38.21%

Participants

FYS Instructors

The pilot study of the FYE Peer Mentor Program included seven FYS instructors. Of these individuals, consent to participate in this study was provided by four FYS instructors who were full-time faculty members and one FYS instructor who was a graduate teaching assistant (see Table 3). Each FYS instructor participant was the instructor of record for one or more sections of FYS in their discipline within their academic college during the fall semester in which this study was conducted. Prior to this study, four of the five FYS instructors had previous experience with teaching FYS courses

at South Central University or previous institutions of higher education.

Table 3.
FYS Instructors

Instructor Name	Demographic Characteristics	Highest Degree	Position Held	FYS Course Assignments
Dr. Linda Smith ^a	Female, White, Not First Generation	Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)	Associate Professor & Assistant Dean in the Office of the Provost	1 section of FYS in the Department of Education with 23 FTIC students
Dr. Lois Healey	Female, White, First Generation	Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)	Professor & Associate Dean in the College of Liberal Arts	1 section of FYS in the Department of Communication with 20 FTIC students
Mr. Jim Kane ^a	Male, White, First Generation	Master of Science (in progress)	Graduate Assistant Teaching II in the Department of Management	1 section of FYS in the Department of Management with 58 FTIC students
Mr. Joe Morris ^a	Male, Hispanic, First Generation	Doctor of Philosophy (in progress)	Instructor & Contract Director in the Department of Social Work	1 section of FYS in the Department of Social Work with 25 FTIC students
Dr. Kelly Payne	Female, White, Not First Generation	Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)	Professor & Associate Dean in the Department of Kinesiology	1 section of FYS in the Department of Kinesiology with 45 FTIC students.

^a Assigned FYE peer mentor also provided consent to participate.

FYE Peer Mentors

The pilot study of the FYE Peer Mentor Program included seven peer mentors. Of these individuals, consent to participate in this study was provided by five peer mentors (see Table 4). All peer mentor participants were female, sophomore-level students. Each peer mentor was appointed to work with an instructor who taught one or more FYS sections aligned with their major. As shown in Table 4, four of the peer mentors completed their duties with one

FYS section, and one peer mentor completed their duties with three FYS sections.

Table 4.
FYE Peer Mentors

Student Name	Demographic Characteristics	Degree Major	FYS Course Assignments
Lexie	Female, Black, Not First Generation	Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice	3 FYS sections in the Department of Criminal Justice with 67 students
Maisie ^a	Female, Hispanic, First Generation	Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education	1 FYS section in the Department of Education with 23 FTIC students
Carrie	Female, Black, First Generation	Bachelor of Science in Nursing	1 FYS section in the Department of Nursing with 34 FTIC students
Madeline ^a	Female, White, First Generation	Bachelor of Business Administration in Management	1 FYS section in the Department of Management with 58 FTIC students
Kayla ^a	Female, Black, First Generation	Bachelor of Science in Social Work	1 FYS section in the Department of Social Work with 25 FTIC students

^a Assigned FYS instructor also provided consent to participate.

FTIC Students

FTIC students at South Central University who were enrolled in one of the FYS sections affiliated with the FYE Peer Mentor Program were also invited to take part in this study. Of 272 FTIC students who were enrolled in 10 FYS course sections, 49 FTIC students provided consent to participate (see Table 5).

Table 5.
FTIC Students

Category with Respective Characteristics	<i>n</i>	% of Category
Gender		
Female	37	75.51%
Male	12	24.49%
Ethnicity		
White	35	71.43%
Hispanic or LatinX	11	22.45%
Black or African American	3	6.12%
First Generation Status		
Not First Generation	30	61.22%
First Generation	19	38.78%

Data Collection

As suggested by Yin (2014), multiple sources of data were collected in this study to investigate the FYE Peer Mentor Program broadly and promote the development of converging lines of inquiry. Data were collected over a four-month period from participants in the form of interview data, documentary information, and questionnaire responses. Below is a description of each data collection approach.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each FYS instructor and peer mentor at two distinct points during the fall semester: (1) between the fifth and seventh week of instruction and (2) after the last week of instruction. During each interview, a researcher-created interview guide was used that included open-ended questions to elicit information about the background of each participant and their viewpoints and experiences with the FYE Peer Mentor Program in a two-way, conversational manner (see Figure

1). Each semi-structured interview was audio recorded so the researcher could focus on building rapport with interviewees and making field notes. Once all semi-structured interviews were conducted, the researcher completed manual verbatim transcriptions from the audio recordings.

Figure 1.
Questions from Interview Guides

FYS Instructors	Peer Mentors
<i>Background Questions (Phase 1 only)</i> 1. Tell me a little about your background. 2. Tell me about your experiences with teaching the FYS course. 3. Why did you elect to participate in the FYE Peer Mentor program?	<i>Background Questions (Phase 1 only)</i> 1. Tell me a little about your background. 2. Tell me about your first-year experience. 3. What is your major? 4. What are your professional goals? 5. Why did you elect to participate in the FYE Peer Mentor program?
<i>Main Questions (Phases 1 & 2)</i> 1. Describe your experiences with the FYE Peer Mentor program. 2. How are you engaging with the peer mentor? 3. How is the peer mentor engaging with students in the FYS course? 4. What is going well with the FYE Peer Mentor Program? 5. What benefits are you experiencing with the FYE Peer Mentor Program? 6. What challenges are you encountering with the FYE Peer Mentor Program?	<i>Main Questions (Phases 1 & 2)</i> 1. Describe your experiences as a peer mentor. 2. How are you engaging with the FYS instructor? 3. How are you engaging with the students in the FYS course? 4. What is going well with the FYE Peer Mentor Program? 5. What benefits are you experiencing with the FYE Peer Mentor Program? 6. What challenges are you encountering with the FYE Peer Mentor Program?

Documentary Information

Documentary information was also collected from peer mentors throughout the four-month data collection period. Documentary information came from a wide range of sources and included:

- copies of administrative records, such as term grade point averages (GPAs), FYS course final grades, fall-to-spring retention rates, and fall-to-fall retention rates;
- email correspondence between the peer mentor and the researcher, their assigned FYS instructor, and/or FTIC students enrolled in FYS courses;
- physical artifacts, which encompassed teaching aids and mentoring tools used by the peer mentor during interactions with FTIC students; and
- reflective notes documenting ideas, questions, and thoughts among peer mentors during their mentoring experiences.

Peer mentors submitted documentary information to the researcher in electronic formats by email (i.e., .doc, .docx, and .pdf files, forwarded email messages, .jpg images) and provided the researcher with shared access to cloud-based files stored in Google Drive.

Questionnaire

Lastly, data were collected from FTIC students using a researcher-created, web-based questionnaire in Google Forms (see Figure 2). The questionnaire consisted of five open-ended questions intended to garner insights from FTIC students about engagement with their peer mentor and the FYE Peer Mentor Program. The researcher sent a recruitment email to FTIC students during the last two weeks of classes prior to the end of the semester that described

the research goals for this study, provided informed consent, and included a link to the questionnaire.

Figure 2.
FTIC Student Questionnaire

FTIC Student Questionnaire

You had a first year experience (FYE) peer mentor in your FYS class this semester. Please complete the following questionnaire to share your viewpoints.

What expectations did you have for your peer mentor?

Your answer

How did you engage with your peer mentor?

Your answer

What benefits did you experience from having a peer mentor in class?

Your answer

What challenges were associated with having a peer mentor in class?

Your answer

Please share any other thoughts you may have about your peer mentor and/or the FYE Peer Mentor Program.

Your answer

Submit

Data Analysis

Once data were collected, qualitative and quantitative analyses were performed in two separate phases. Qualitative data analysis occurred during the first phase and included data from the following sources: transcriptions from semi-structured interviews held with FYS instructors and peer mentors, documentary information, and responses from the questionnaire received from FTIC students. Qualitative data were organized into separate files by case and all relevant data were placed in a logical order. The researcher then used thematic analysis within each case to identify themes that emerged (Yin, 2014). During within-case analysis, the researcher read and re-read case-related data carefully and assigned important information distinct codes (Boyatzis, 1998). Next, the researcher reviewed codes within a case to generate themes that described and interpreted the phenomenon under study. After completing data analysis for each case, the researcher analyzed themes across cases to detect patterns (Yin, 2014).

Once qualitative data analysis was completed, an external reviewer conducted an audit to assess the reliability of information and confirmability of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The external reviewer was a member of the researcher's professional network who was employed at a different regional, public institution of higher education located in the same region of the United States. The researcher selected this external reviewer to perform a

systematic review of both the process and product of this study because they were experienced with qualitative research methods and knowledgeable about peer mentoring.

Quantitative data analysis occurred during the second phase and included data from documentary information, specifically administrative records. Descriptive data analysis was used to report FYS final course grades, term GPAs for the fall and subsequent spring semesters, fall-to-spring retention rates, and fall-to-fall retention rates for peer mentors and FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course with a FYE peer mentor. Additionally, independent samples *t*-tests were performed to assess whether there were significant differences with student success metrics between FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course with a FYE peer mentor and FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course without a FYE peer mentor.

Findings

The findings presented in this section identify key outcomes and impact on student success metrics for the FYE Peer Mentor Program at South Central University. Findings are organized below by phase in which respective analyses were performed to offer a clear understanding of findings in relation to the research goal of this study. Qualitative data analysis produced three major themes that are presented below with illustrative and salient quotations from research participants to represent interpretations. Quantitative data

analysis revealed findings for student success metrics (i.e., FYS final course grades, term GPAs, and retention rates) among FTIC students that were summarized below using descriptive and inferential data from statistical testing.

Qualitative Findings

Theme 1: Academic Support for FTIC Students

Within this theme, participants described ways in which the FYE Peer Mentor Program provided academic support for FTIC students. For example, FYS instructors noted various mechanisms that peer mentors used to reinforce learning among FTIC students during the FYS class. Dr. Healey shared that her normal approach for communicating academic expectations typically involves reviewing assignment guidelines with students well before the due date. Dr. Healey stated that she also emphasizes the importance of getting an early start on bigger, more involved projects. However, Dr. Healey recognized, “Students hear me, but they don’t hear my message.” To overcome this issue, Dr. Healey coordinated with her assigned peer mentor, Savannah, to develop strategies that make these moments more meaningful to FTIC students. To enhance the communication of academic expectations, Savannah would share their personal experiences and perspectives as a first-year student to facilitate understandings among FTIC students. Dr. Healey explained:

So, now I can make eye contact with Savannah, and she will pop right up and say, 'Savannah's tips!' And, she'll just dive in as a communicator — she's not afraid of this moment—and say, 'Well, most people are not going to start this. And, here's what happened to me my freshman year. And, here's what I think you should consider.' So, she's this fresh voice that students hear on a different level. They're connected, they're engaged, and it's meaningful to both her and to them.

By elevating the student perspective with peer mentors, FTIC students were able to develop clear understandings of expectations for course requirements, such as assignments, and productive student behaviors that lead to academic success. One FTIC student stated that having a peer mentor was beneficial because "professors may have forgotten what it's like to be a college freshman. My peer mentor gets it because they were there only a short while ago." Similarly, another peer mentor, Carrie, shared how she helped FTIC students in the FYS class contend with anxiety and pressure associated with the first year of college. Carrie divulged that FTIC students may "crunch under pressure." She described a particular situation in her assigned FYS class after an academic advisor made a guest presentation about advising services. While explaining

graduation requirements in the degree program for nursing, Carrie observed that several FTIC students "just folded" and recounted:

I felt like I folded, too, because when the advisor talked about all of the requirements, I was just like, 'Oh, my goodness – this is a lot!' And, then the advisor started talking about summer classes. Personally, I don't like summer classes because you don't get the full 16 weeks to fully understand content. So, a lot of students felt like they were being rushed to graduate. But, I calmed them down later and told them, 'If you just stay on track, then you should still graduate on time.'

While the academic advisor offered what they deemed as good advice from a staff member perspective, FTIC students appreciated having access to a peer mentor for advice. FTIC students found value in "getting advice from another student going through the same degree program" and "who is kind of on the same level." Findings also showed that peer mentors offered academic support to FTIC students in courses beyond the FYS class. As sophomore-level students, peer mentors had recent experiences with the freshman-level courses required in their degree programs. Thus, peer mentors acknowledged that they consistently offered FTIC students course insights and tips to promote their academic success. To illustrate, Maisie was aware of a particularly rigorous freshman-level chemistry course in which FTIC students in her degree

program often experience academic struggles. Maisie recalled how several FTIC students reached out to her to convey challenges and issues they were encountering with the instructor in this course. Maisie told these FTIC students that she had had this instructor before and explained “it’s something that you just have to get through because she’s very unique.” Maisie also shared helpful resources for “getting through the class” and gave these FTIC students periodic encouragement by reminding them that “once you get through the class, it’s like, ‘Ok – I’m never going to have to take that course again!’” FTIC students appreciated being able to contact a peer mentor “who shared their experiences as a freshman honestly” and “gave little nuggets of advice about how to succeed in the first semester.”

Theme 2: Leadership Development for Peer Mentors

Within this theme, participants described how the FYE Peer Mentor Program promoted leadership development among peer mentors. This was most notably recognized by the FYS instructors. Mr. Kane taught the largest FYS course section in this study, which had an enrollment of 59 students. To assist with such a large course enrollment, Mr. Kane explained that he met with his assigned peer mentor, Madeline, before every class session to develop a plan for instruction. In class, Madeline helped with attendance and assumed the role of a “teaching assistant” to “stand up in front to do quick demonstrations and check in with students.” Mr. Kane also added

Madeline to the course in the learning management system (LMS) as a teaching assistant so she could help students with technical questions, such as uploading documents to designated assignment links. Mr. Kane shared that he has seen Madeline “go from kind of timid to where she’s like – she jumps in front of people! This has developed her leadership skills immensely.”

In this same manner, Dr. Payne identified ways in which her assigned peer mentor, Norberto, assumed leadership roles in and beyond the FYS class with FTIC students. Dr. Payne divulged that the FYS course section Norberto was assigned to was “by far the most challenging group I have ever dealt with, and I’ve been teaching [college] classes since 1988!” With this FYS class, Dr. Payne coordinated with Norberto to manage challenging student behavior using a “divide and conquer” strategy. Dr. Payne explained:

So, I walk around a lot, and I go back to the back and to the middle of the class and put my arms around students just to get them to refocus. I may stand there or press down on their shoulders gently to get their full attention. I’m not calling them out, but I am trying to redirect their behavior. So, when I do this, Norberto knows that he needs to go and do the same in other corners of the room where the behavior is happening.

Beyond the FYS class, Dr. Payne relayed that Norberto made himself easily accessible to FTIC students in the FYS class. Dr.

Payne stated, “He’s very approachable. He shows up at the dining hall, library, and rec center. The students know who he is and can meet up with him.”

The peer mentors also understood that the FYE Peer Mentor Program enhanced the development of specific leadership abilities and skills within themselves. Lexie remarked that “being a peer mentor has helped me with speaking out more and being about to talk around larger groups of peers.” In addition, Lexie attributed the expansion of her professional network to the working relationship developed with her assigned FYS instructor. Lexie reflected that her assigned FYS instructor “became a mentor to me” and would “introduce me to different people that I didn’t know. He also told me about internships, ride alongs with police officers, and other things I can do to prepare for my future career.”

Theme 3: Sense of Belonging and Social Support for FTIC Students

Within this theme, participants expressed feelings of acceptance and security that derived from actions associated with the FYE Peer Mentor Program. Dr. Smith shared that her assigned peer mentor, Maisie, “definitely had a great influence on how [FTIC] students adjusted to their first year [of college].” Dr. Smith explained:

As an instructor, I am mainly focused on the academic piece. I am well aware of which students demonstrate understandings in class, as well as which students master objectives on assignments.

However, I am much less knowledgeable about how my students feel at [South Central University]. And, I am not quite sure that some of my students would be comfortable confiding anxieties, insecurities, or feelings like they don’t belong here. I think some would, but there are some who would not want to look so vulnerable in front of a professor. Having Maisie as a peer mentor has been fantastic because she has gone out of her way to help students feel connected, especially outside of class.

Dr. Healey also noted that having a more experienced peer be a “set of eyes and ears” was extremely beneficial for first year college students. Findings also showed a wide range of ways in which their peer mentors helped foster a sense of belonging on campus. For example, Maisie repeatedly asked FTIC students to share an inspiring quote with each other in their GroupMe text messaging group. Norberto encouraged FTIC students to meet him at the campus recreation center to work out together. Lexie developed Google Form surveys to send to FTIC students periodically as check in tools for feelings of belongingness. FTIC students also noted that their peer mentors “ate lunch with us after class,” “invited us to go to football games,” “kept us informed about events and student organizations,” and were available to “answer any questions we had.”

Quantitative Findings

In this study, 2,140 students were enrolled in a FYS course at the beginning of the fall term. Prior to conducting quantitative data analyses, FYS course data were inspected carefully to identify student members of the Fall 2019 FTIC Cohort. During this inspection, 67 students from previous FTIC cohorts were identified and removed from data analysis. These students likely enrolled in the FYS course to replace an unsatisfactory grade or fulfill this general education core requirement that may have been overlooked during their entry semester at South Central University. Therefore, data analysis was limited to include only the 2,073 student members of the Fall 2019 FTIC Cohort (see Table 2).

FYS Final Course Grades for FTIC Students

Among the 272 FTIC students enrolled in FYS courses with a peer mentor, final grades were as follows: 161 students (59.19%) earned an A; 51 students (18.75%) earned a B; 33 students (12.13%) earned a C; and 27 students (9.93%) earned a D, F, or W. Among the 1,801 FTIC students enrolled in FYS courses without a peer mentor, final grades were as follows: 1,047 students (58.13%) earned an A; 332 students (18.43%) earned a B; 185 students (10.27%) earned a C; and 237 students (13.16%) earned a D, F, or W. Independent *t*-tests were performed to assess whether FYS final course grades differed significantly between FTIC students who were enrolled in FYS courses with a peer mentor and FTIC students who were enrolled in

FYS courses without a peer mentor. Results showed that the mean final course grades for the FTIC students in FYS courses with peer mentors was slightly lower than the comparison group ($M = 1.73$, $SD = 1.02$; $M = 1.78$, $SD = 1.08$, respectively). Additionally, there was not a statistically significant difference in final course grades between study participants and the comparison group, $t(-.812) = 1.84$, $p = .42$.

Term GPAs for FTIC Students and Peer Mentors

Among the 272 FTIC students enrolled in FYS courses with a peer mentor, the mean for end of term GPA in Fall 2019 was 2.64. At the end of the subsequent Spring 2020 semester, the mean for end of term GPA was 3.02, which was an increase of 0.38 points. However, the mean for end of term GPA decreased to 2.61 for students who remained enrolled during the Fall 2020 semester. This same pattern for end of term GPA was visible among the 1,801 FTIC students enrolled in FYS courses without a peer mentor (Fall 2019: 2.65, Spring 2020: 3.12, Fall 2020: 2.68). Independent samples *t*-tests were performed to assess whether GPA differed significantly between FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course with a peer mentor and FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course without a peer mentor. Results showed that there was not a statically significant difference in term GPA for Fall 2019 [$t(.115) = 1.50$, $p = .91$], Spring 2020 [$t(-1.617) = 0.79$, $p = .11$], or Fall 2020 [$t(-$

.604) = .382, $p = .54$] between study participants and the comparison group.

Retention Rates

Among the 272 FTIC students enrolled in FYS course with a peer mentor, 242 FTIC students returned in the subsequent spring semester and 193 returned for a second fall semester, resulting in a fall-to-spring retention rate of 88.97% and a fall-to-fall retention rate of 70.96%. Among the 1,801 FTIC students enrolled in FYS courses without a peer mentor, 1,557 FTIC students returned in the subsequent spring semester and 1,237 returned for a second fall semester, resulting in a fall-to-spring retention rate of 86.45% and a fall-to-fall retention rate of 68.68%. Independent samples t -tests were performed to assess whether fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention rates differed significantly between FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course with a peer mentor and FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course without a peer mentor. Results showed that there was not a statistically significant difference in fall-to-spring retention rates [$t(.807) = 2.70$, $p = .42$] or fall-to-fall retention rates [$t(.589) = 0.59$, $p = .79$] between study participants and the comparison group.

Discussion

This study used a case study methodology to explore key outcomes and impact on student success metrics associated with participation in a pilot study of the FYE Peer Mentor Program at

South Central University. In the FYE Peer Mentor Program, at-risk, sophomore-level college students were employed as peer mentors in FYS courses to assist the FYS instructor with promoting a smooth transition to college among FTIC students. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews, documentary information, and a questionnaire from which qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted. Qualitative findings characterized the FYE Peer Mentor Program as a vital support mechanism for FTIC students academically and socially, as well as a promising way to promote leadership development in at-risk college students who serve as peer mentors. Quantitative findings showed that FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course with a peer mentor earned higher final course grades and had higher fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention rates than FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course without a peer mentor. However, no statistically significant differences were found in FYS final course grades or retention rates between the two groups. Because this study lacked a comparison group for peer mentors, no quantitative analyses were conducted with student success metrics related to the peer mentors. However, it is noteworthy to acknowledge that four of the peer mentors who participated in this study have maintained satisfactory GPAs and progress in their selected academic degree programs. Additionally, all five peer mentors have maintained continuous enrollment to date at South Central University.

Qualitative findings presented in this study aligned with a large body of literature (Lane, 2020; Lennox Terrion, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012) and empirical studies (Albright & Hurd, 2018; Collings et al., 2014; Flores & Estudillo, 2018; Heirdsfield et al., 2008; Lenz, 2014; Sanchez et al., 2006; Yomtov et al., 2017) that tout the importance of peer mentoring to strengthen “students’ feelings of belonging, connectedness, perceived academic and social support, and familiarity with campus resources and facilities” (Yomtov et al., 2017, p. 40). Snowden and Hardy (2012) further purported that “peer mentorship adds value to the learning experience” and “enhances engagement within the higher education community” among FTIC students (p. 90). Thus, the qualitative findings reported in this study have suggested that the FYE Peer Mentor Program is an effective strategy to enhance the transition to college for FTIC students.

While the quantitative findings presented in this study highlighted increases in FYS final course grades and retention rates among FTIC students who were enrolled in a FYS course with a peer mentor, there was no statistically significant difference with these student success metrics when compared to their counterparts. Additionally, the quantitative findings showed an inverse relationship with term GPA—FTIC students in the comparison group had higher term GPAs than FTIC students in the intervention group. Although research studies have reported statistically

significant relationships between peer mentoring and student success metrics (Budny et al., 2010; DeMarinis et al., 2017; Leidenfrost et al., 2014), Bonin (2016) asserted that the “peer mentors’ effect on the academic performance of undergraduate students remains statistically unclear” (p. 20).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

As with any research endeavor, there were limitations with this study that should be acknowledged. First, this study employed a case study methodology for a single case, which may pose methodological concerns for rigor and generalizability (Yin, 2014). To address this limitation, future research should study the key outcomes and impact on student success metrics for initiatives such as the FYS Peer Mentor Program using different research methodologies, as well as case study methodologies, in different contexts. Another limitation of great importance involves the time frame in which this study was conducted. Quantitative data related to student success metrics were collected for two long semesters following the implementation of the pilot study. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 outbreak was declared a global pandemic in March 2020 (American Journal of Managed Care, 2020), which may have had a negative effect on data collected. A replication study should be conducted in a post-COVID-19 pandemic world to assess the accuracy of findings reported in this study.

Conclusion

This study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge for peer mentoring as a higher education strategy to help FTIC students transition to the college environment (Plaskett et al., 2018) and promote the development of leadership dispositions and skills among the at-risk college students who serve as peer mentors (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Woelk & Pennington Weeks, 2010). A unique aspect to this study was the intentionality of inviting at-risk, sophomore-level students to serve as peer mentors. Typically, at-risk college students are identified as the mentees in peer mentoring programs because they have a higher probability of experiencing academic and social achievements (Horton, 2015). However, this study empowered students who are first-generation, Pell eligible, and/or members of an underrepresented racial/ethnic group to be the knowledgeable and skilled upperclassmen who assisted with providing a smooth transition to college for incoming FTIC students (Plaskett et al., 2018).

With respect to peer mentoring programs, D'Abate (2009) emphasized the importance of clarifying the role of peer mentors to strengthen the quality of support and fully realize potential benefits. Since this was South Central University's initial attempt with implementing the FYE Peer Mentor Program, there was a relatively loose programmatic structure. To strengthen the FYE Peer Mentor Program at South Central University, continuous improvement

efforts will be made to enhance the selection of peer mentors (Holt & Fifer, 2018), as well as peer mentor training and supervision (Holt & Lopez, 2014). By doing so, peer mentors will have a clearer understanding of their role and responsibilities and may experience enhanced leadership development. As presumed by Holt and Fifer (2018), enhancing core skills used by peer mentors to facilitate the smooth transition of their mentees to college "will have a more pronounced and positive effect" on key outcomes and student success metrics among FTIC students (p. 87).

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Student Perceived Benefits of Embedded Online Peer Tutors

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Abstract

In fall of 2017, the Center for Academic Program Support at the University of New Mexico revamped its Online Learning Assistant (OLA) Program, which focuses on embedding undergraduate peer tutors in multidisciplinary fully online courses. Students who had an OLA during the Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters, were surveyed to better understand the perceived benefits of having this type of support in their courses. Survey results showed that by engaging with the OLA, students felt their coursework improved, they were more confident in the material, and engaged more in the course. This study should be of interest to learning center practitioners, faculty, and researchers focused on online academic support.

Keywords: Online tutor, peer tutor, learning center/s, embedded

Introduction

Prior to 2020, one in seven students in the United States was taking at least one course online (Allen & Seaman, 2016). With the sudden move to online in 2020 due to Covid-19, colleges and universities have faced unique challenges as they support an increasing number of faculty and students who are teaching and learning online. To comply with social distancing measures, in a matter of days universities had to cancel, postpone or move their in-person instruction online (Johnson, Veletsianos, & Seaman, 2020). Many learning centers had to increase their online academic support and some even started providing online academic services for the first time. Now that the world has experienced this sudden thrust into online learning and teaching, as we move into the future, online learning will no longer be something a few students will choose to do. It is then important that higher education, in particular, learning centers explore new support methods and improve the quality of their services as learning and teaching continues online (Toquero, 2020). One way to enhance academic support for online students is through the use of embedded online tutors.

The nature of distance education requires that students be self-directed and self-reliant (Allen & Seaman, 2016). Online learning can feel like an isolated endeavor for students, especially those new to it (Richardson, Maeda, Lv, & Caskurlu, 2017; Son, Hegde, Smith,

Wang, & Sasangohar, 2020)). Peer tutors have been at the forefront of providing academic support for distance learners for many years now (LaPadula, 2003; Mcpherson & Nunes, 2013; Felder-Strauss, Franklin, Machuca, Self, Affil & Lockwood, 2019). Research, which has primarily focused on in-person tutoring has shown that students who use peer tutoring benefit in various ways (Colver & Fry, 2016; Martin & Bolliger, 2018). Students who have access to a tutor benefit from varied perspectives on a topic and can address problem areas in the content that they would have otherwise ignored (Evans & Moore, 2013). In addition, they tend to have reduced anxiety, greater satisfaction, and more transferable skills (Evans & Moore, 2013; Martin & Bolliger, 2018). A peer tutor can provide personal, social, academic and psychological support for students and can aid in promoting positive student outcomes (Munley, Garvey, & Mcconnell, 2010). Learning centers then can provide effective support for online students by using online peer tutors within courses (LaPadula, 2003; Mcpherson & Nunes, 2013; Bourelle, Bourelle, & Rankins-Robertson, 2015).

While there is extensive research that focuses on the benefits of tutoring, previous research that emphasizes online embedded peer tutors is scarce (Bourelle et al., 2015; Bourelle & Bourelle, 2015; Marshall, Valentic & Rasmussen, 2019). Thus, further research is needed to provide higher education and learning center

practitioners with a better understanding of the use and benefits of embedded online peer tutors in diverse disciplines.

Embedded Online Tutoring

Online tutoring has been traditionally provided through a learning center's virtual drop-in environment, online appointments, or a combination of both. In addition to drop-in and appointments, embedded tutoring has also been a tutoring modality used in in-person courses and a few online courses; however, research has shown that simply placing a tutor into an course is not enough (Martinovic, 2009; Bourelle & Bourelle, 2015; Ramirez-Wrease, 2016). The utilization of online tutors is typically very low since students reach out to the tutor only if they have a question with their homework (Martinovic, 2009; Ramirez-Wrease, 2016). Rarely will they reach out to gain further knowledge of the course material (Martinovic, 2009). An approach that focuses on the training of instructors prior to teaching an online class with an embedded tutor and focused tutor development can create positive results for embedded tutoring programs (Bourelle et al., 2015; Bourelle & Bourelle, 2015).

Online Learning Assistants

In 2017, the Center for Academic Program Support at the University of New Mexico, revamped its embedded online tutoring program to a new model called the Online Learning Assistant (OLA) Program, which focuses on embedding undergraduate peer

tutors into courses in multiple disciplines. The Online Learning Assistant (OLA) model was adopted, modified and expanded for multidisciplinary courses from the Bourelle et al. (2015) Teaching Assistant model. OLAs are undergraduate and graduate peer tutors who engage with undergraduate STEM and non-STEM courses. For the purposes of this study the terms OLA and peer tutor/tutor will be used interchangeably. The OLA model focuses on an instructor, tutor and student-centered approach to student success. In this model the role of "tutor" was re-defined and expanded. Thus, the following three areas of scope for OLAs were incorporated: academic support, online learning strategies, and community building/social presence.

In addition, as part of the model, faculty attend a one-hour orientation, where they learn about the three areas of focus for OLAs and brainstorm ways in which they can incorporate the tutor into their curriculum. Faculty continue to receive support from the learning center staff during the semester through one-on-one meetings with the program supervisor. OLAs are also trained based on the three areas of focus. They receive trainings that cover best online tutoring practices, providing effective feedback, creating and leading review sessions, the learning management system, among others. The subjects supported vary by semester, depending on course offerings. The support of the OLAs is customized to the

needs of the course and its students. This model allows OLAs to become a part of the course rather than an add-on.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived benefits for students who worked with an OLA in one of their courses. The guiding question and sub questions for this study were as follows:

What are the perceived benefits for students who engage with an Online Learning Assistant in a fully online course?

- Did students perceive that working with an OLA helped improve their performance with the course material?
- Did students perceive that working with an OLA increased their engagement with the course?

Methods

To better understand the student perceived benefits of working with an OLA in an online course, a case study survey was conducted similar to Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010. The population of interest were undergraduate students who had taken a course with an OLA in Spring 2020 and/or the Fall 2020 semester. In Spring 2020, the program supported the following number of undergraduate general education/ introductory courses: English courses (9), Economics (3), History (2). These courses were already scheduled to be taught online prior to the Covid-19 closures. In Fall 2020, given the move to online learning, the program supported additional courses that historically had been taught in-person but

were moved to a fully online modality. The following number of undergraduate general education/introductory courses were supported: English courses (11), Economics (2), Biology (3), Chemistry (3), Physics (3), Sociology (2), History (3).

Researchers designed an online survey focused on exploring students' perceptions of academic and course engagement benefits as a result of working with an OLA. The survey was anonymous to encourage more candid responses and a higher likelihood of response. At the end of the semester a survey link was emailed to students who had taken a course with an OLA by the program supervisor. Students were encouraged to respond without incentive or penalty associated with completing the survey, relying on voluntary response. The anonymous survey contained eight questions, including matrix, multiple choice, and open-ended questions; a copy of the complete survey is in the Appendix. The survey was kept short to encourage students to respond. Data was excluded for individuals who started the survey but did not complete it, also for those who did not consent to participate in the study. In addition, data was also excluded for students who expressed that they did not work with the OLA in the course. Data reports were exported from the Opinio survey software and analyzed in Excel and SAS.

Results

The survey was sent to a total of 372 students in Spring 2020 and in Fall 2020 to 1,482 students. There was an increase in surveys sent Fall 2020 due to the addition of new courses to the program, some of which had high enrollments of 250+ students. In Spring 2020, the total response rate was 12.9% (N=48) and the rate of usable responses was 9.4 % (N=35). Among those who responded to the survey, two did not consent to be included in the study and 11 did not answer any content questions. In Fall 2020, the total response rate was 5% (N=87) and the rate of usable responses was 4 % (N=60). This made for an overall total response rate of 7.3% and a usable response rate of 5.1%. Among those who responded to the survey across both semesters, two did not consent to be included in the study and 32 did not answer any content questions.

Out of those that completed the survey and consented to participate in Spring, five students (10.4%), responded they had not interacted with the OLA in their course and in Fall three (3.4%) students responded the same, demonstrating that even with the option available not all students will choose to actively utilize this type of support. The responses of those who did not interact with the OLA were not considered in the following results given that they could not provide data related to their experience working with an OLA.

The results for those students who completed the survey, interacted with the OLA in their course, and consented to participate in the study are below. It is important to note that the responses in the matrix for question three were split into two types of questions for analysis purposes. Questions pertaining to perceived academic/content improvement are in Table 1. Most students felt having an OLA had contributed to their learning in their class on all four measures included in the survey. A majority of students both semesters (Spring/Fall) reported being able to work on similar problems on their own after working with an OLA (82.1%), 75.8% felt they had a deeper understanding of the material and learned something new from their OLA, and 82.1% felt their work quality had improved.

Table 1.

Responses to perceived academic/content improvement questions for students who indicated they had used the OLA. (Percentage (number of respondents))

Because of my OLA:	% Yes	% No	% NA
<i>I learned something new</i>	73.7 (70)	12.6 (12)	7.4 (7)
<i>I was able to work on similar problems on my own</i>	82.1 (78)	4.2 (4)	7.4 (7)
<i>I have a deeper understanding of the material</i>	75.8 (72)	8.4 (8)	9.5 (9)
<i>The quality of my work has improved</i>	82.1 (78)	5.3 (5)	7.4 (7)

Question three matrix responses pertaining to perceived course engagement are in Table 2. While students felt more supported (84.2%) and that they got more out of their course (76.8%) with an OLA in their class, fewer students felt the OLA contributed to their engagement with peers (48.4%).

Table 2.

Responses to perceived course engagement improvement questions for students who indicated they had used the OLA.

Because of my OLA:	% Yes	% No	% NA
<i>I felt more comfortable participating on discussion boards</i>	63.2 (60)	11.6 (11)	18.9 (18)
<i>I felt more supported in my coursework</i>	84.2 (80)	4.2 (4)	6.3 (6)
<i>I was more connected to my course peers</i>	48.4 (46)	23.2 (22)	22.1 (21)
<i>I got more out of my class</i>	76.8 (73)	6.3 (6)	11.6 (11)

Question four in the survey asked if students were able to engage with an OLA when work became difficult. The majority said 'Yes' (90% (27) in Spring & 86.7% (52) Fall). We also asked if students would ask questions of their OLA that they did not feel comfortable asking the instructor in Spring we found only 20.7% (6) used their OLA for this purpose with an increase in Fall with 38.3% (23) of respondents saying yes.

Table 3 shows responses to question six which asked students to respond on a Likert scale. Both semesters 76.8% of students strongly agreed or agreed that the use of the OLA contributed to them feeling more connected to the class, while 5.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The majority of students also agreed and strongly agreed that they felt more engaged in their learning having an OLA (83.2%), while 4.2% disagreed. Also, 80.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that working with the OLA contributed to them feeling more confident in their ability to solve problems in their class, while 2.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 3.

Responses to questions on OLA contribution to student engagement for students who indicated they had used the OLA.

Working with my OLA has contributed to:	% Strongly Agree	% Agree	% Disagree	% Strongly Disagree	% Unsure
<i>Being more connected to my class</i>	36.8 (35)	40.0 (38)	4.2 (4)	1.1 (1)	11.6 (11)
<i>Being more engaged in my learning</i>	48.4 (46)	34.7 (33)	4.2 (4)	0.0 (0)	6.3 (6)
<i>Being more confident in my ability to solve problems</i>	50.5 (48)	29.5 (28)	1.1 (1)	1.1 (1)	10.5 (10)

Table 4 provides a selection of open-ended responses for both semesters from question seven, 'Would you like to tell us anything else about your OLA?' While this is not a complete list of responses, these are all indicative of received responses and those

with the most specific feedback. No open-ended response was critical of the OLA experience.

Table 4.
Qualitative responses from participants.

Would you like to tell us anything else about your OLA?	
Student A	"Having a tutor has helped understand the material. My grammar and spelling have bettered over the course thanks to the OLA."
Student B	"Constantly provided great feedback and thought-provoking questions"
Student C	"The feedback they give is great because you can get help on a rough draft from someone that in my opinion has the same quality of criticism as my professor, before having to turn in the final draft".
Student D	"Enjoyed working with her and liked having someone available that was not in charge of the class. We had a great instructor as well and they worked extremely well together."
Student E	"She did a great job and maintained very clear communication. Her emails and the information she provided was very helpful and made me feel more connected to the class during COVID and the unusual circumstances".

Limitations

As all studies, this study faces various limitations. First, given the Covid-19 circumstances many students and instructors were taking or teaching online courses for the first time. This changed the dynamic of students and instructors who would have traditionally chosen to take online courses. The way an OLA was effectively embedded into the course also varied across faculty who were new to teaching online and those who had previous experience. In addition, the low response rate of the surveys is a limitation of this study. The low responses were expected given that during this time students had an overload of email communication due to studying remotely during the pandemic (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). The

survey was sent during the last week of the semester (both semesters), when students are preoccupied with final exams or projects and are also receiving additional university surveys for their courses. The voluntary nature of the survey may also lead to self-selection bias, this limitation is one that is expected and common in research on tutoring (Colver & Fry, 2016). While self-selection bias and the low response rate can be a concern, research has found that higher education surveys with response rates as low as 5% do not pose a bias issue into the interpretation of the data (Fosnacht et al., 2017). Still, we recognize the need to employ different methods that may result in a higher response rates such as sending survey reminders for future studies. The results from this study are not generalizable, given the context-dependency of case studies and the small sample response size (Rossman et al., 2017). However, the results do give insight into current theory and practice even with these limitations.

Discussion

In three years of using this model, we find that embedded tutoring has been highly effective across disciplines and curricula, as instructors, OLAs and learning center staff work closely together. Since 2017, over 3,400 students have been served. While previous research has shown that peer tutoring has extensive benefits (Colver & Fry, 2016; Martin & Bolliger, 2018), this study sought to understand the perceived benefits by those students who engaged

with an online embedded tutor. Based on student responses from students who worked with an OLA either Spring 2020 and Fall 2020, this study found that students benefited by feeling more supported in their coursework, more connected to their courses and were able to have a deeper understanding of the material.

Many students perceived that working with an OLA improved their performance with the course material. It was found that 90% of students felt more confident in the course material because of working with the OLA and 82% said the quality of their work had improved. This is important given that during the semesters this study is focused on, the quality of work for students declined and students had difficulty completing assignments online (Son et al., 2020). One of the respondent's shared, "Having a tutor has helped me understand the material. My grammar and spelling have bettered over the course thanks to the OLA". We also see in the study that when a tutor is embedded into the course, students are more likely to reach out. Close to 90% of respondents also said that they had reached out to the OLA when work in the course became difficult. With student's often being hesitant to seek help, especially online (Martinovic, 2009), the combination of accessibility and availability allows for the seamless inclusion of the OLA into the online course. This in turn encourages students to seek help when needed the most.

In addition, students reported that working with the OLA improved their engagement with the course. With the shift to courses being taught primarily online, students who would have not chosen to take an online course otherwise, had no choice. Along with this sudden shift to fully online, students in both Spring and Fall semesters were facing decreased motivation, self-efficacy and cognitive engagement in addition to feelings of isolation (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Son et al., 2020). Many of the courses supported by OLAs Spring and Fall semesters, primarily STEM courses had traditionally been taught in large lecture halls and had enrollments of over 200 students, making it even more difficult to support and engage students when shifted online. However, in this study we see that close to 80% of the students who worked with an OLA felt more supported and engaged in their courses. As one student wrote, my OLA "...did a great job and maintained very clear communication. Her emails and the information she provided was very helpful and made me feel more connected to the class during covid and the unusual circumstances." Students also reported feeling that they got more out of the course. One of the roles of the OLA is to help create social presence, so that students will feel more connected and engage more deeply with the course. This is done through reaching out to students, providing review sessions, and engaging with students one-on-one. Thus, having a tutor that is easily accessible as a part of the course can help in keeping students

engaged and supported by providing individualized support that may not otherwise be available in the course.

Conclusion

As online teaching and learning continues to grow, embedded online tutoring can be a tool for universities, especially learning centers to provide effective individualized tutoring support for students. While little research has focused on this area of tutoring support, the findings of this study are meant to help researchers and practitioners better understand the benefits of supporting online learners through embedded peer tutors. The findings are of interest given the multidisciplinary data sample. In addition, the study data was collected during a global pandemic where online courses were composed of new and experienced online learners. It was found that students perceived benefits included, the ability to work on problems on their own, deeper understanding of course material and increased quality of work. This is in line with the benefits found in studies that have looked at in-person tutoring and some focused on embedded online support (Evans & Moore, 2013; Bourelle & Bourelle, 2015; Martin & Bollinger, 2018; Marshal et al., 2019).

One of the most important findings especially given that students were navigating a global pandemic during both semesters that data was collected, is that of students feeling more connected to their class, increased confidence with the material and feeling more

engaged in their learning because of working with the OLA in their course. While we know that tutors across the field are effective, embedding them into fully online courses can help in countering the feelings of isolation and decreased motivation students may feel.

Thus, the use of embedded peer tutors can be a beneficial approach for learning centers to support online students. The benefits go beyond academics and having tailored support at the reach of the students can help enhance a student's learning experience. The opportunities for future research in this area are limitless. More studies are needed that explore further the academic and social benefits of embedded online tutors as well as training. Future research can focus on looking at differences in benefits and efficacy of embedded tutors across disciplines. In addition, studies can also focus on the participation of faculty and their perspective on working with embedded tutors in their courses.

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Appendix A

Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 CAPS Student OLA User Survey

1. By clicking continue below, you will be agreeing to participate in the above described research study.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please think about your time working with an OLA (Online Learning Assistant) in your online class.

2. In which subject(s) did you have an OLA? (please include their name/number if you know it).

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3. Q3: Because of my OLA:

	Yes	No	N/A
I learned something new	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to work on similar problems or concepts on my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a deeper understanding of the material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The quality of my work has improved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt more comfortable participating on course discussion boards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt more supported in my coursework	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I was more connected to my course peers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I got more out of my class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. I was able to engage with my OLA when work became difficult.

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Did you ever ask the OLA a question you did not feel comfortable asking your instructor?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Working with my OLA has contributed to my:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
being more connected to my class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
being more engaged in my learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
being more confident in my ability to solve a problem or find the support I need.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Would you like to tell us anything else about your OLA? (optional)

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8. Is there any other support you would like to see in your online courses? (optional)

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Book Review: *Become Your Own Fact-Checker* (Eric Sentell, 2020)

Jenny Rowe
Trinity University

Become Your Own Fact-Checker (2020) scans the contemporary media landscape with a critical eye and, as its name suggests, empowers its readers to do the same. Written by Eric Sentell, Ph.D., Instructor and General Education Coordinator at Southeast Missouri State University, this text is intended as a brief, digestible introduction to how one might discern valid arguments from the widespread misinformation and propaganda found in cable news and social media. How do we know what to believe? Sentell asks. And how do we recognize when we are being manipulated? It is a timely question, of course, and these are pressing issues. It is not a coincidence that this book appears two years after "misinformation" became Dictionary.com's 2018 word of the year.

Sentell pitches this book to two primary audiences. First, he addresses any reader concerned with sorting out legitimate material from the plethora of misinformation found online. In this sense, the book is a sort of how-to guide for separating fact from fiction. Secondly, and perhaps more pertinent to readers of the *Learning Assistance Review*, the book offers teachers of academic argument who might lack the necessary background in media literacy and

rhetoric a helpful guide for introducing students to critical thinking and analysis. One might describe it as a short, buzzy take on the traditional rhetorical handbook. One could use it, for example, to teach students how to avoid argumentative pitfalls in their writing and argue ethically and reasonably. Its brevity is by design; as the author notes, this book "is brief and to the point so that you can learn what you need and begin applying it as soon as possible" (1).

Become Your Own Fact-Checker is primarily organized in three sections, which gradually introduce readers to the basics of argument and critical thinking. Chapters 1-7 cover the difference between assertion and argument, the role of emotion and logic, "the value, use, and limits of skepticism," the nature of belief, and the rhetoric of polarization (2). Chapters 8-17 offer deep dives into the logical fallacies, all of which are illustrated by engaging with familiar social and political issues (i.e., abortion, gun control, climate change). A third and final section of the book, Chapters 18-22, outlines the importance of audience analysis and ethical awareness. Each of the 22 chapters is divided into two parts: an introductory section that acquaints the reader with an idea and then a "Go Deeper" section, which provides "more applications of the information as well as tips and techniques" (2).

In its brief, 100-page investigation into contemporary media operations, this text offers readers an enjoyable alternative to staid discussions of rhetoric found in more traditional textbooks. Sentell's

breezy, conversant, and periodically irreverent prose is engaging and friendly; his tongue-in-cheek analyses of social media memes and cable news segments are balanced nicely by the seriousness with which he talks about the genuine impact of misinformation on our lives.

At times, the text echoes the 2008 book *True Enough: Learning to Live in a Post-Fact Society* by Farhad Manjoo, which, although longer and geared toward a slightly different purpose, also focuses its discussion on contemporary examples of how people are swayed to believe things that aren't entirely true (hence, they are "true enough"). Manjoo refers to the concept of "truthiness," made famous by talk show host Steven Colbert on his cable news satire program *The Colbert Report*, which refers to the quality of something seeming genuine despite lacking evidence. Sometimes spurious arguments seem authentic to us, Manjoo argues, simply because they confirm our pre-existing beliefs. In one of Sentell's most engaging moments, he notes a similar tendency among people who willingly consume and disperse memes on social media without fact-checking them. The memes themselves, Sentell argues, so powerfully convince the audience of their truth because they tap into and confirm some "existing belief, value or attitude" and that *feeling* of confirmation is "good enough for the people who reshare them" (24; emphasis added).

Moreover, these people "don't consider, or they don't care, whether [the memes are] factual or logical," Sentell notes because the sharers' own culture already confirms the messages and world view (24). Of course, written in 2008, *True Enough* appeared at the mere cusp of the contemporary turn toward fierce social and political polarization; thus, Engell's 2020 update is welcome and relevant. I can see these two texts pairing nicely in a course.

One highlight of the text is Chapter 4, entitled "Skeptics Ruin Everything, Except When They Save Everything," which urges readers to develop a healthy, productive skepticism towards their own information consumption. Here, Sentell convincingly demonstrates how readers can apply "the idea of nurturing a healthy skepticism to communicating with others" (27). When persuading an audience, Sentell explains, we need to begin by asking "small questions," which "ask the audience to simply consider another possibility, explanation, or perspective," instead of provoking with "big questions" that "ask the audience to change their entire view immediately" (28). This is excellent advice for beginning writers of argument. I imagine that this distinction between big and small questions might be useful as a course concept to return to throughout a semester. Chapter 5, "What is Belief," furthers this stimulating discussion and provides a helpful graphic to describe how belief systems work. The graphic (and the text that accompanies it) describes a series of concentric circles,

beginning with a "core" center and moving out toward "negotiable beliefs," or beliefs that "you wouldn't give up easily, but which you would consider changing slightly if given sufficient reason to do so." The final circle, indicating "periphery beliefs," describes those "preferences, opinions, and insignificant beliefs" that you don't think much about—that you'd consider changing easily (33). This schema provides an excellent way to prepare students to compose arguments through audience analysis. Will you address your audience's core beliefs that *aren't likely to change*? Or will you focus on those arguments where you might gain some traction? The text makes the answer very clear: "focus on the negotiable beliefs and try to help your audience join you in that focus" (35).

Other highlights of the text include Chapters 21 and 22 on Ethical Argument and Audience Awareness. Here, the author makes a convincing case for why writers are responsible for arguing ethically, even if non-ethical arguments are sometimes more powerful. Logical fallacies "exist because they work," Sentell concedes, noting that he too is sometimes tempted to "spark outrage" or use "the slippery slope fallacy to argue against something I don't want to see happen" (89). These types of nuanced concessions are missing from many argument textbooks, and it was refreshing to hear them made here. Too often, logical fallacies are presented as the sole domain of advertisers and con men, but, in reality, most people use them and are swayed by them daily.

Admitting that avoiding logical fallacies takes restraint, Sentell urges readers and students of writing to commit to using fair, balanced evidence as well as sound reasoning.

In the final review, *Become Your Own Fact Checker* is a light, enjoyable read that engages with a familiar contemporary landscape and is immediately applicable to readers' experiences surfing the web and consuming news media. I think the book would be well-placed in a first-year seminar class where the students were just beginning to think about critical reading. The familiarity of the examples would allow even reticent students to engage with their prior knowledge. Sentell's discussion of the fallacies is perfectly set up for an assignment where students might scour the net for examples of each. In a classroom setting, some readers may find that the examples provided by Sentell are perhaps too heavily-weighted towards a critique of right-wing politics and ideology (there is a lot of discussion of Trump and Fox News, for example). Overall, I believe students would respond well to this clean, punchy introduction to fact-checking and argumentation.

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Effects of SI Administration Staffing and Support on SI Program Outcomes

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between the Supplemental Instruction (SI) administrative hours at various colleges and universities and program outcomes (attendance rate, the difference in the average final grades, and the difference in the rate of Ds, Fs, and withdraws). All regression models were insignificant, but training-related hours per SI leader were statistically significant in one model and positively influenced the attendance percentage. This study also explored the relationship between funding and the beforementioned outcomes but netted no significant relationships. Small sample size limited these findings, so future studies should explore separate administrative constructors and collect larger samples.

Keywords: Supplemental Instruction, SI, learning assistance, program administration, SI administration, program outcomes, higher education

Effects of SI Administration Staffing and Support on SI Program Outcomes

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is an academic assistance program primarily used in post-secondary institutions to support student academic success. Dr. Deanna Martin designed SI at the University of Missouri – Kansas City to decrease attrition rates for courses with high numbers of students who withdraw from specific courses (Hurley et al., 2006). SI provides regularly-scheduled, voluntary study sessions for students enrolled in traditionally challenging courses (Arendale, 1994; Hurley et al., 2006). The purpose of this study is to examine the influence and relationship of SI program administrative tenets and financial support for SI programs on the outcomes of an SI program.

SI programs generally have positive outcomes for high-risk courses. High-risk courses are selected because of a higher rate of students who earn Ds, Fs, or withdraw (DFW rate); a high course enrollment (Arendale, 1994); and a perception of difficulty by the students (Martin & Arendale, 1992). When reviewing the literature on SI, Hurley and Gilbert (2008b) describe how SI programs are positively related to academic outcomes such as reducing attrition, increasing graduation rates, increasing grades, and gains in knowledge. Because of its success in these areas, the SI model has been replicated by institutions worldwide (Arendale, 2010) and verified by the Department of Education as an exemplary

educational program (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a; Martin & Arendale, 1992).

The key feature of SI programs is SI sessions, which are regularly scheduled for the students enrolled in the targeted class (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a). Sessions are led by the SI leader, who is usually a student who has taken the targeted course and performed well (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a). The SI leader sits in the course again to align their SI sessions with the course content, reinforce their content knowledge, and model good student behavior during the class by listening and actively taking notes (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a). Another key figure in SI programs is the SI faculty member who assists the program administrators in selecting an SI leader (Martin & Arendale, 1992), provides the leader support in planning sessions, and encourages student attendance to SI sessions (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a). SI programs are managed by a staff member responsible for hiring and selecting SI leaders, training leaders, coordinating SI placement, assisting leaders, and conducting program evaluation (Martin & Arendale, 1992).

There is a void in the literature regarding the optimization and prioritization of supervision in SI programs. Program administrators are given some guidance on the level of supervision needed from the literature, but this guidance might be unrealistic or unsubstantiated with studies. For example, it is claimed that one full-time SI program supervisor cannot adequately supervise more

than three or four leaders without some assistance (Wilcox, 2008). This figure is, in practice, often unrealistic due to tight budget climates and is only supported through a description of the supervisor's responsibilities. The International Center for Supplemental Instruction (International Center), based at the University of Missouri – Kanas City, provides additional guidance for an SI program seeking accreditation, which is seen as the standard of best practice. The International Center suggests that SI programs need to have a clear focus on planning, supervision of SI leaders through observation, significant and ongoing training for leaders, and program evaluation (International Center for Supplemental Instruction, 2019a). Sometimes, the level of these activities is recommended in the rubric for accreditation (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2018); however, these recommendations do not guide programs on prioritizing these activities. Thus, there is a gap in our understanding of how SI administrator activities and a program's level of support related to the program's outcomes and prioritizing those responsibilities. This study seeks to add to our understanding of the effective administration of SI programs.

Literature Review

SI was created in the 1970s to support courses with higher rates of attrition (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a). SI targets high-risk courses rather than high-risk students to support students in a non-remedial

manner, and because it serves students in groups versus individually, it is more cost-effective than traditional one-on-one tutoring models (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a). The creation of SI was timely in higher education. Families were expecting more from post-secondary institutions due to rising costs and lower student outcomes, such as graduation rates increased accountability from the government and accrediting bodies (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). However, as SI approaches 50 years since its inception, examining its administrative structure for efficiency and effectiveness in promoting student academic outcomes is needed.

There are three main groups of individuals in SI programs: the SI leader, the SI supervisor, and faculty member of the targeted course (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a; Martin & Arendale, 1992). The SI leader is collaboratively selected for the position by the faculty member and SI supervisor (Martin & Arendale, 1992). Once hired, the SI leader attends class again and plans and holds scheduled review sessions outside of class (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a). SI faculty members must be willing partners in the SI program and work with their SI leader regularly to assist them with session planning (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a). An SI supervisor is generally trained by the International Center (Wilcox, 2008) and, if possible, full-time (Ainsworth et al., 1994). An SI supervisor leads regular programming activities such as training SI leaders, observing SI sessions, planning program logistics, conducting program evaluation, and fostering

relationships with stakeholders across campus (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a). The literature on SI programs provides further guidance on these administrative activities.

Training is vital for all learning assistance professionals (Arendale, 2010), and training is a significant aspect of an SI supervisor's workload (Wilcox, 2008). In general, SI program supervisors are expected to lead approximately eight to 16 hours of training for SI leaders each semester (Wilcox, 2008). These training sessions cover various topics such as learning theory, collaborative learning, and how to lead sessions (Lipsky, 2006; Martin & Arendale, 1992; Zaritsky & Toce, 2006). Other writers discuss the importance of ongoing training to help leaders continue to use effective strategies in sessions (Hurley et al., 2006).

Next, SI program supervisors are expected to assist SI leaders through observations and supporting planning for sessions. Observations of SI sessions help SI leaders improve their sessions by providing a chance for feedback and individual training (McDaniel, 2008). Bolman and Deal (2013) indicated that effective organizations provide feedback to improve performance and on-the-job training. SI program supervisors are recommended to observe the first three SI sessions at the beginning of the term and then weekly or biweekly for the remainder of the term (Wilcox, 2008). For SI program accreditation, SI program supervisors are encouraged, at the highest level of performance, to observe SI leaders at least ten

times if they are new leaders and eight times if they are returning (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2018). Planning support for SI sessions is also a part of the supervisor's responsibilities. SI leaders are expected to plan each session and work with their supervisor and faculty member(s) to plan SI sessions (Hurley et al., 2006).

The SI supervisor is responsible for a full range of administrative duties. Supervisors have significant responsibilities in managing the hiring processes and ensuring potential SI leaders meet the qualifications for the position (McDaniel, 2008). Assessment and evaluation of the SI program is also critical (Hurley et al., 2006) and adds to the program's creditability (Wilcox, 2008). Other administrative responsibilities include determining courses, maintaining faculty relationships, and marketing SI to students (Martin & Arendale, 1992; Wilcox, 2008). Lastly, supervisors are responsible for the program's logistics, such as scheduling sessions and supervision of the daily operations (Hurley et al., 2006).

Beyond the administrative responsibilities, there are the costs associated with running an SI program. Generally, SI leader salaries are the highest cost to an SI program (Martin & Arendale, 1992; Wilcox, 2008). Other costs include supplies (Widmar, 1994) and release time or salaries for administrative personnel (Wilcox, 2008). Some programs use experienced SI leaders to help with the supervision of SI leaders to reduce salary costs for administration

(Martin & Arendale, 1992). Despite these costs, SI is largely seen as a low-cost and efficient program due to its group-based approach (Wilcox, 1992; Zerger et al., 2006).

SI programs have several measurable outcomes. The first measure of success is the attendance percentage. SI sessions are usually voluntary for students to attend (International Center for Supplemental Instruction, 2019b); thus, the percentage of students who attend at least one SI session is one indicator of program success. Also, Arendale (2000) studied the influence of SI program constructs on program outcomes, including participation rate, and found that SI supervisor involvement was significantly related to participation rate. Thus, exploring administrative hours and financial support and their relationship with participation would further support this finding.

Beyond attendance percentage, there are other standard measures consistent in the evaluation of SI programs. Hurley et al. (2006) described comparing the rate of students who earn a D, F, or withdraw from a course of the students who attend at least one SI session and the students who do not attend any SI sessions. Another measure compares the average final grade of the students who attend SI sessions with the students who do not attend any SI sessions (Hurley & Gilbert, 2008a). These are considered consistent outcomes to measure SI program success.

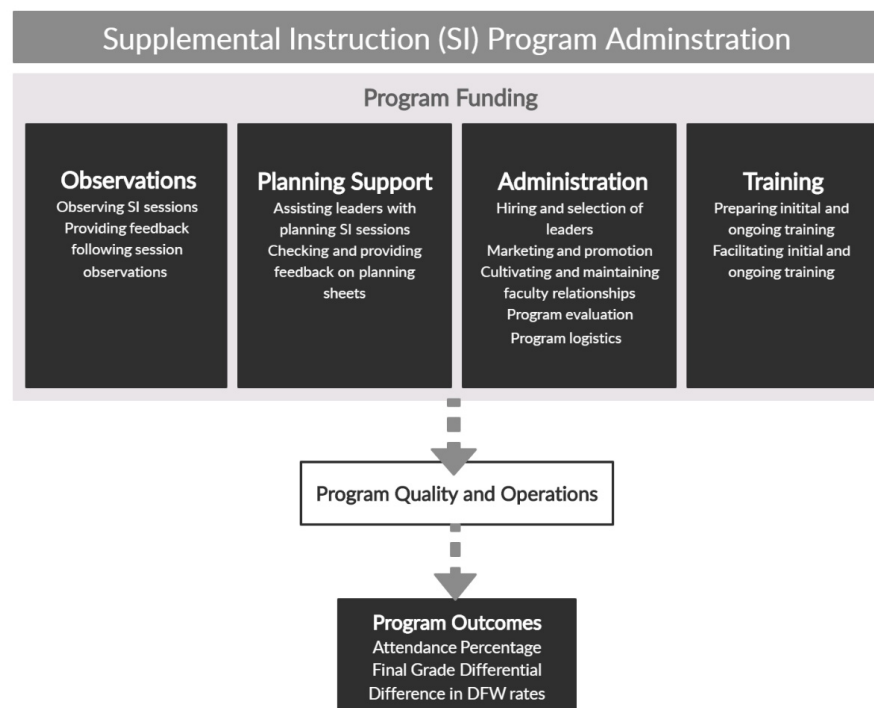
There is limited guidance and research on the administration and financial support of SI programs. Wilcox (2008) suggested that one SI program supervisor can only supervise at most four SI leaders before needing assistance, reasoning that there is little time left between observation, planning, training, and managing the program. However, they do not cite any research substantiating this ratio. Arendale (2000) explored how aspects of SI programs such as observations, class attendance of the SI leaders, session activities, and training impact program outcomes (the participation rate, the difference in DFW rates, the difference in average grades, and satisfaction of SI program by administrators). Arendale (2000) found that SI supervisor involvement and leader training were significantly related to program success, but he did not indicate these areas' optimal levels. Similarly, there has been no discussion on how financial support affects SI program outcomes in the literature. Thus, this study seeks to add to our understanding of effective administration and support of SI programs.

Research Questions

This study uses SI program-level data for a specific semester or term from various institutions. The percentage of students served from each program, final average grade differential between the students who attend SI and those who do not, and the difference in the DFW rates of SI session attendees and non-attendees were collected where available and serve as the dependent variables in

this study. The independent variables in this study relate to the SI program's supervision and support during that specific semester. The independent variables include the average observation hours per SI leader, average hours spent assisting with planning per SI leader, the average training-related hours per SI leader, average supervisory hours per SI leader, and average funding per SI leader. For a complete definition of terminology used, please refer to Appendix B. Figure 1 visually explores the possible relationships between these variables.

Figure 1.
SI Administrative Tenets and Program Outcomes



The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between the observation hours per SI Leader, planning hours per SI leader, training hours per SI leader, administrative hours per SI leader, and funding per SI leader for an SI program (from now on referred to as "the supervision and support of the SI program") and the percentage of students enrolled in an SI course that attend at least one SI session?
2. What is the relationship between the supervision and support of the SI program and the final grade differential between students who attended SI sessions and students who did not?
3. What is the relationship between the supervision and support of the SI program and the difference in DFW rates of students who attended SI sessions and those who did not?

Methodology

Setting and Participants

This study took place between January and March 2020. The target audience was higher education institutions with an SI program in North America. SI programs in North America exist at all types of post-secondary institutions so that data could be from a two- or four-year school as well as public or private entities. At the time of writing, there are over 1,000 institutions with an SI program in North America.

The International Center has a website with institutions with a trained SI supervisor and a list of accredited programs. These program websites were mined to create a list of institutions that could potentially have SI programs. To generate more potential SI program contacts, a list of higher education institutions in states in the Midwest was created to explore potential SI programs. Each institution's websites were examined for evidence of an SI program or SI-like program for contact information. If there was an SI program, the email and phone number, if found, were added to a list to use for contact. The survey and reminders were also posted on two listservs commonly used by SI professionals, which provided another way to reach potential SI programs.

From the list of programs, approximately 575 individuals were emailed from over 550 institutions, and 36 of those completed the survey (roughly a 6.3% response rate). From the listservs or other means, approximately 12 additional SI programs responded to the survey. If institutions replied to the survey invitation email to indicate that they could not fill out the survey, the typical reasons included being new to SI program administration, that the institution does not have an SI program, they did not have time to complete the survey, or that they did not have access to data needed to complete the survey. Table 1 shows the frequency of institutions and the demographic characteristics of the institutions that

responded to the survey. One institution was Canadian, while the rest were located in the US.

Table 1.
Institutional Characteristics of the Survey Respondents

		Frequency
Was the institution public or private?	Private	9
	Public	53
	Unknown	1
Was the institution a 2-Year or 4-Year Institution?	2-Year	14
	4-Year	48
	Unknown	1
Was the SI program accredited by the International Center?	No	38
	Unsure	4
	Yes	21

A majority of the SI programs that responded to the survey were from public, four-year institutions. In 2018, public higher education institutions represented approximately 40.5 % of the institutions in the US, and four-year institutions accounted for approximately 67% of higher education institutions (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). In contrast, the data collected was approximately 84% public and 76% four-year institutions. The percentage of four-year institutions collected seems similar enough to represent, but the data collected might be biased towards public institutions. Not all responses were complete, and others provided information that would suggest that their data would be skewed or unusable. Thus, the program responses were reviewed, and responses were

removed if the program used different attendance criteria to classify SI attendees (e.g., SI attendees needed to attend three times before being counted in that group), or if there was evidence of extra credit or required attendance to SI sessions that were included in the program's data. These institutions would have influenced the analysis as these criteria would have affected the program outcomes directly.

Additionally, responses were checked for reasonableness and adjusted if needed. For example, a program with 70 SI leaders suggested their funding level was 20 dollars, which did not make sense, so the funding level was removed from that program's response and left blank. After removing these responses and adjusting for specific values, 47 institutions/data points remained in the study.

Survey Design and Implementation

Significant care was used when designing and implementing the survey. The initial survey was designed with good survey design practices, such as avoiding biased phrasing, focusing questions on a single thought, and placing easy-to-answer questions at the end (Fink, 2017). Additionally, Fink (2017) and Newcomer and Triplett (2015) recommended pilot testing a survey to gather feedback on the design and clarity of questions. Thus, the initial draft of the survey was sent to two SI program supervisors for initial review

and feedback. Their suggestions were incorporated, and they were asked to review the survey again to provide additional feedback. A final pilot testing round included experts at the International Center, four former or current SI program supervisors trained in the SI model, and two higher-level administrators whose units include SI programs. Using experts in the field to examine the survey can increase the validity of the results (Creswell, 2014), so these processes added validity to the instrument. The feedback from these pilot testing processes was incorporated before distribution. See Appendix A for the final version of the survey.

Initial emails and follow-up emails were sent to the list of program contacts inviting them to fill out the survey. In total, most programs had about a month to respond to the survey.

Data Analysis

To control for SI program size, the independent variables (observation hours, planning support hours, training-related hours, administration hours, and program funding) were divided by the number of SI leaders actively working that term for that program. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the variables and outcomes in this study. Linear regression was the primary method of analysis. Linear regression is an analysis method to measure the linear relationship between at least two predictor variables (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). Field (2018) outlines several regression models' assumptions, including additivity and linearity, independence of

errors, homoscedasticity, normal distribution of errors. Of these assumptions, one possible concern is program funding and the assumption of independence. The values for observation hours, training-related hours, planning support hours, and administrative hours depend on program funding because funding dictates how much administrative time is spent on these areas. Several programs also indicated that calculating funding was a challenge when responding to the survey. Given this and the violation of the independence assumption, program funding was examined separately with each dependent variable. For the remaining four independent variables, other possible concerns for multiple linear regression include multicollinearity and outliers (Field, 2018). All these assumptions were met except for some possible outliers, which are addressed later.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics of the Variables and SI Leaders

	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Average Final Grade	46	0.62	0.40	0.03	2.00
Differential* Difference in the DFW Rates (%)	45	16.38	10.28	0.12	55.00
Attendance Percentage (%)	46	37.91	15.03	7.84	71.10
Observation Hours Per SI Leader	48	7.42	7.05	0.36	30.30
Training Hours Per SI Leader	48	3.13	3.86	0.29	20.45

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Planning Hours Per SI Leader	48	3.49	4.98	0.00	22.50
Administration Hours Per SI Leader	46	17.93	20.62	0.64	104.17
Funding Per SI Leader	43	\$3,091.26	\$1,648.05	\$93.75	\$8,333.33
Number of SI Leaders	48	25.67	19.945	3	83

*Values are presented in GPA format using a four-point scale (4 = A, B = 3, etc.)

The sample size also played a significant role in this study. The sample size needed for a study depends on several factors. Miles and Shevlin (2001) suggest using a power analysis for determining the appropriate sample sizes for any study or experiment. This process uses the significance level, the desired effect size in the population, and desired power level (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). In this study, the significance level is set at 0.05, and the study seeks to uncover large effect sizes. Lastly, the power level was set to 0.8, which Cohen (1988) suggests is conventional (as cited by Miles & Shevlin, 2001).

Additionally, the needed sample size for the study is affected by the number of predictors in the regression model (Miles & Shevlin, 2001), which in this study is four. With four predictor variables, a significance level of 0.05, a power level of 0.8, and the ability to detect large effect sizes, this analysis needs a sample size of at least 40. Thus, this study has a sufficient sample to detect large effects for

the four predictor variables. Next, the assumptions of multiple linear regression are explored.

As mentioned earlier, there were potential concerns related to outliers. Outliers were uncovered using residual plots, as recommended by Miles and Shevlin (2001). For the model examining attendance percentage as the dependent variable, two outliers were discovered by inspecting the residual plots. There was one outlier for the model examining DFW rates, while in the model examining differences in final grades, three outliers were identified. Miles and Shevlin (2001) suggest determining why an outlier occurs. With these responses, there was insufficient evidence to suggest that there was a measurement error. Thus, Miles and Shevlin (2001) present a dilemma: including the outlier might influence the model but excluding it might be inappropriate. Therefore, Miles and Shevlin (2001) recommend running the analysis twice and reporting the results with the outliers included and not included. This strategy was used in this study. The new datasets with the outliers removed were also checked for multiple linear regression assumptions, and no additional concerns were noted.

As funding was separated from the other predictor variables, a separate analysis was conducted using that variable with the dependent variables. Correlations measure the linear relationship between two variables (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). Thus, the correlation

would be an effective way of measuring the potential relationship between program funding and program outcomes. According to Field (2018), two assumptions are considered when calculating a correlation: linearity and normality. Both assumptions were checked before proceeding, and no concerns arose. Thus, the correlation was used to analyze the SI program's funding as it relates to the outcomes of the SI program.

Findings

Research questions organize the findings in this section. However, since the analysis related to funding was separated, it is addressed in a separate subsection.

Attendance Percentage

Multiple linear regression was used to determine if there was a relationship between the supervision and support of the SI program and attendance percentage. As addressed in the previous section, there were two outliers in the dataset, and the following results included those outliers in this analysis. A non-significant regression equation was found, $F(4, 39) = 2.573$, $p = .053$, with an $R^2 = .209$, which suggests the model accounted for approximately 20.9% of the variance in the sample. None of the model variables are statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ except for training hours per SI leader, $p = .027$. Table 3 gives the regression coefficients and standardized beta values.

Table 3.
Coefficients for Regression Model for Attendance Percentage with Outliers Included

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	β	t	
Constant	39.850	3.904		10.208	<.001*
Observation					
Hours Per SI Leader	-0.040	0.320	-0.019	-0.126	0.900
Training Hours Per SI Leader	1.259	0.550	0.333	2.290	0.027*
Planning Hours Per SI Leader	-0.611	0.449	-0.207	-1.359	0.182
Administration Hours Per SI Leader	-0.160	0.105	-0.220	-1.531	0.134

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

For the next analysis, the two outliers were removed from the dataset, and the regression equation was calculated again with attendance percentage as the dependent variable. In this new analysis, a significant regression equation was not found, $F(4, 37) = 1.296$, $p = .289$, with an $R^2 = .123$, which suggests the model accounted for approximately 12.3% of the variance in the sample. Additionally, none of the model variables were statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. Table 4 gives the regression coefficients and the standardized beta values for this new model.

Table 4.
Coefficients for Regression Model for Attendance Percentage with Outliers Excluded

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	β	t	
Constant	40.947	4.429		9.245	<.001*
Observation					
Hours Per SI Leader	0.022	0.348	0.011	0.062	0.951
Training Hours Per SI Leader	0.653	1.231	0.088	0.531	0.599
Planning Hours Per SI Leader	-0.656	0.464	-0.234	-1.415	0.165
Administration Hours Per SI Leader	-0.161	0.107	-0.233	-1.502	0.142

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Average Final Grade Differential

A similar process was conducted using the average final grade differential as the dependent variable instead of the attendance percentage. The same independent variables were included. Also, similar to the models created with the attendance percentage, three outliers were discovered when checking the assumptions. This model was conducted with those outliers included. The regression equation was not statistically significant, $F(4, 39) = 1.480$, $p = .227$ with an $R^2 = .132$. This model accounted for roughly 13.2% of the variance. None of the variables included in the model were statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ as well. Table 5 gives the

regression coefficients and the standardized beta values for this model.

Table 5.
Coefficients for Regression Model for the Average Final Grade Differential with Outliers Included.

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients β	t	Sig.
Constant	0.605	0.108		5.585	<.001*
Observation Hours Per SI Leader	-0.015	0.009	-0.272	-1.690	0.099
Training Hours Per SI Leader	-0.005	0.015	-0.053	-0.351	0.728
Planning Hours Per SI Leader	0.022	0.012	0.287	1.803	0.079
Administration Hours Per SI Leader	0.003	0.003	0.156	1.038	0.306

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

The three outliers were removed from the dataset, and the regression model was created again. Again, the regression model was not significant, $F(4, 36) = .914$, $p = .466$, with an $R^2 = .092$ which is about 9.2% of the variance. Additionally, none of the variables were significant in the model at $\alpha = 0.05$. Table 6 gives the regression coefficients and the standardized beta values for this new model.

Table 6.
Coefficients for Regression Model for the Average Final Grade Differential with Outliers Excluded

	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients β	t	Sig.
Constant	0.605	0.078		7.771	<.001*
Observation Hours Per SI Leader	-0.012	0.008	-0.302	-1.546	0.131
Training Hours Per SI Leader	-0.008	0.011	-0.111	-0.695	0.491
Planning Hours Per SI Leader	0.005	0.012	0.082	0.425	0.673
Administration Hours Per SI Leader	0.002	0.002	0.172	1.061	0.296

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Difference in the DFW Rates

Lastly, a regression analysis was run using the difference in the DFW rates between the students who attended at least one session and the students who did not attend any SI sessions as the dependent variable with the same independent variables used for the attendance percentage and average final grade differential models. In this model, only one outlier existed, and it was included for this first model. A non-significant regression equation was the result, $F(4, 38) = .902$, $p = .472$, with an $R^2 = .087$. This model accounted for about 8.7% of the variance in the data. Additionally, none of the independent variables in the model were significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. Table 7 gives the regression coefficients and the standardized beta values for this new model.

Table 7.
Coefficients for Regression Model for the Difference in the DFW Rates with Outliers Included

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	β	t	
Constant	19.024	2.658		7.158	<.001*
Observation Hours Per SI Leader	-0.028	0.214	-0.022	-0.133	0.895
Training Hours Per SI Leader	-0.031	0.370	-0.013	-0.084	0.934
Planning Hours Per SI Leader	-0.357	0.301	-0.196	-1.186	0.243
Administration Hours Per SI Leader	-0.091	0.070	-0.202	-1.293	0.204

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

For the last regression analysis, the sole outlier was removed from the dataset. The regression model was created using the DFW rates' difference as the dependent variable with the same independent variables. This model was not significant, $F(4, 37) = .721$, $p = .583$, with an $R^2 = .072$ which is approximately 7.2% of the variance in the sample. Again, none of the independent variables were statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. Table 8 gives the regression coefficients and the standardized beta values for this model.

Table 8.
Coefficients for Regression Model for the Difference in the DFW Rates with Outliers Excluded

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	β	t	
Constant	16.211	2.126		7.626	0*
Observation Hours Per SI Leader	0.059	0.166	0.061	0.358	0.722
Training Hours Per SI Leader	0.086	0.287	0.048	0.299	0.766
Planning Hours Per SI Leader	-0.283	0.233	-0.204	-1.211	0.234
Administration Hours Per SI Leader	-0.061	0.055	-0.178	-1.116	0.272

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

SI Program Funding

SI program funding and its potential relationship with the SI program's attendance percentage, the average final grade differential, and the difference in the DFW rates were examined via Pearson correlation. None of these relationships were statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. Both of the correlation coefficients for the relationship with per SI leader funding and the average final grade differential, and a difference in DFW rates were positive. In contrast, the correlation coefficient with attendance percentage was negative. Table 9 shows the correlations of these values with the corresponding p -values.

Table 9.
Pearson Correlations with Per SI leader Funding by Program Outcome

	<i>r</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>N</i>
Average Final Grade Differential	0.257	0.105	41
Difference in DFW Rates	0.032	0.844	40
Attendance Percentage	-0.220	0.167	41

Discussion

None of these models were statistically significant, suggesting that other factors explain the SI program outcomes variance. Arendale (2000) learned significant relationships between participation rate in SI sessions and the program constructs, which included SI supervisor involvement, SI leader involvement, SI leader training, and institutional involvement. When drilling that down further, SI supervisor involvement was significantly related to higher participation rates. Because this study focused on SI supervisor activities and did not involve the other constructs, these other constructs explain some of the model's variances. Moreover, Arendale (2000) recommended that further research include national studies of SI programs with constructs such as institutional or student characteristics were not incorporated in this study. Finally, this research only had a sufficient sample size to detect large effects according to a power analysis based on Miles and Shevlin's (2001) work. Therefore, it is possible that medium or small effects of the constructs exist, but the sample size was insufficient to

detect those effects. Nonetheless, there are some results to explore further from this study and possible areas of future research.

Attendance Percentage

Neither regression model using the attendance rate as the dependent variable was statistically significant; however, the model including the outlier showed that training hours per SI leader was significant. This result suggests that every additional hour of training/training planning time conducted per SI leader will net a 0.65% boost in the SI sessions' attendance rate across the program. This result should be treated with caution, however, as the model itself was not significant. If significant, the model only accounted for approximately 21% of the variance in the data. However, the model including the outliers was approaching statistical significance with $p = .053$, which might suggest this model's variables can be influential with more data to detect smaller effects. Both of those effects were erased with the outliers removed, suggesting that the outliers were influential on the model. Given the prevalence of training in the literature on leading SI programs, it is perhaps unsurprising that training time per SI leader showed up as a significant result in one of the models. In the supervisor manual handed out by the International Center, strategies to boost attendance are addressed with supervisors (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2019). McDaniel (2008) discussed scheduling ongoing training for SI leaders to provide

support for each other. Such support might be influencing the SI leader's performance and thereby increasing attendance percentages. This result might also be a result of better attendance tracking. McDaniel (2008) recommends discussing data collection, such as attendance at sessions, as part of pre-term training. That emphasis in training might result in better tracking of attendance; consequently, attendance percentages would go up. Lastly, Bolman and Deal (2013) discuss training in the context of effective organizations. Thus, training might result in better organizational outcomes, in this study, attendance rates. Surprisingly, administrative hours per SI leader was not significant in either model related to attendance. Arendale (2000) found that participation rates were significantly related to the specific SI program supervisor constructs questions on conducting program evaluation. Administrative hours in this study captured the time spent conducting program evaluation, so this study's insignificant results somewhat run contrary to Arendale's (2000) findings.

Difference in Average Final Grade

Neither model—the one with or without outliers—was statistically significant. This finding suggests that other factors influence the average final grade differential. It is worth noting that observation hours per SI leader and planning hours per SI leader were approaching significance in the model that included outliers with $p = .099$ and $p = .079$, respectively. These results also

approached statistical significance, so it might suggest that these variables have a medium or small effect on the average final grade differential. However, observation hours per SI leader showed a negative effect on the difference in average grades, while planning hours per SI leader showed a positive effect.

Stout and McDaniel (2006) describe observations and debriefing as part of a performance evaluation process for SI leaders. Even though observations are described as developmental (Stout & McDaniel, 2006), it is possible that SI supervisors conduct more observations when performance is lagging. This type of coaching or supporting relationship is recommended by the coaching and directive leadership styles when follower competence is low (Blanchard et al., 1985). Additionally, the rubric for accreditation of SI programs recommends a greater number of observations for newer SI leaders (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2018), who are likely less competent than their more experienced peers. Thus, the number of observations could be weighted for less competent leaders and skew results negatively. Nonetheless, this finding merits additional exploration and future studies should examine the relationships between observation hours of sessions and measures of program performance.

In contrast, planning support for SI sessions might result in higher quality sessions. McDaniel (2008) suggested that supervisors assist SI leaders in planning that uses effective pedagogy and

encourages the use of lesson plan formats. Thus, these planning processes may influence the quality of SI sessions and the performance of the students who attend sessions and thereby increase the difference in the average grades between the students who attend SI sessions and those who do not. Similar to observations, future research should explore planning support systems. In the second model, outliers were removed. The near significant effect was removed for these variables; subsequently, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that these two constructs truly affected the difference in average grades. Nonetheless, future research should explore these constructs to see if there are smaller effects.

Difference in the DFW Rates

Neither regression model was significant when exploring the relationships between administrator activities and the difference in the DFW rates of the students who attend SI sessions compared to the students who do not attend SI sessions. Hurley and Gilbert (2008a) described SI program evaluation processes, which include examining the difference in the average final grade between the SI session attendees and non-attendees as a measure of student learning while examining the differences in DFW rates as a measure of attrition for that course. The results in these models suggest that SI administrator activities do not significantly affect the attrition in these high-risk courses. As suggested earlier, the sample size was

sufficient to detect large effects, but not small or medium effects; thus, supervisory activities may have a medium effect or small effect on attrition for these courses.

Program Funding

When examining the correlations of the program outcomes (average final grade differential, the difference in the DFW rates, and attendance percentage) with SI program funding per SI leader, there were no significant correlations. The relationship between funding and both the average final grade differential and difference in DFW rates were positive, $r = .257$, and $r = .032$, respectively. According to Field (2018), we can calculate the effect size of each of these by squaring them; thus, $R^2 = .066$ for the relationship between the average final grade differential and per SI leader funding, and $R^2 = .001$ for the relationship between the difference in the DFW rates and per SI leader funding. Cohen (1988) suggests that $R^2 = .02$ is a small effect size while $R^2 = .13$ is a medium effect size (as cited in Miles & Shevlin, 2001). Thus, even if the results were statistically significant, the effect size for the relationship between funding per SI leader and average grade differential is small. The relationship between per SI leader funding and the difference in the DFW rates is minimal if it exists at all. Similarly, the relationship between funding per SI leader and attendance percentage was negative, $r = -.220$, $R^2 = .048$, which is a small effect size. These effects should be

treated cautiously, as there were no statistically significant correlations in the analysis.

Understanding these relationships is challenging. Bolman and Deal (2013) describe organizations as groups advocating for limited resources. One would suspect that being able to advocate for program resources successfully would improve the program outcomes. This result is modestly true for the relationship between funding per SI leader and the average grade difference, but not for attendance percentage. Hurley and Gilbert (2008a) indicate that SI faculty involvement is critical to the program's success. Faculty can easily refer students to an SI program (Martin & Arendale, 1992); thus, attendance percentage as an outcome might be more related to faculty involvement than program funding. Bolman and Deal (2013) suggest that its size influences an organization's structure, so attendance percentages may be affected more by institutional size than by funding. Possibly, large institutions have more resources while smaller institutions have less. Still, larger institutions would have larger class sizes, while smaller institutions with smaller class sizes would refer students to SI sessions more easily. Regardless, more research should be conducted on funding and program outcomes. Before conducting this study, the International Center was consulted and suggested funding in the study (J. Collins & M. Cross, personal communication, August 8, 2019). This vein of

research should be continued as it has significant implications for the field.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. The first set relates to the quality of the data collected. First, the data collected was from a convenience sample, which refers to "people who are willing to complete the survey are also available when you need them" (Fink, 2017, p. 99). This type of sampling can introduce bias in the results because the sample may not be representative of the population. The institutions' demographic characteristics appeared to be relatively representative regarding four-year institutions (see Table 1), but there was a bias towards public institutions. Second, although the survey was vetted by experts, as suggested by Creswell (2014) and pilot tested as suggested by Fink (2017), there was room for misinterpretation of the questions, so it is possible that the respondents misinterpreted the questions when responding. While there was insufficient evidence to remove the outliers mentioned earlier, they may be outliers because the respondents misinterpreted the question and responded accordingly.

Third, several programs responded via email or within the survey context to indicate that they tracked their data differently, such as classifying SI attendance as those who attend three or more sessions versus one or more. Those results were excluded when it

was known. Still, some of the respondents may have included their data without sharing those differences in their calculations, which could have introduced errors into the data. Lastly, as mentioned several times, the sample size is a possible limitation. With a larger sample size, multiple linear regression may have been able to detect small and medium effect sizes (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). It should also be noted that data collection for this study was interrupted by international events that disrupted educational operations, which affected the total number of respondents, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.

The second set of limitations concerns characteristics or qualities outside the data collection process. For example, institutional size or classification was not included in the analysis. There is a possible relationship between the institution's characteristics and SI program outcomes, especially since our sample was biased towards public institutions. Additionally, as funding for SI programs is primarily salaries (Wilcox, 2008), the funding might be contingent on the cost of living in the areas surrounding the institution rather than a marker of institutional support. Besides those, there were also differences in institutional practices as it pertains to their SI program. Wilcox (2008) recommends flexibility in the model for newer SI programs as they adapt SI to their institution. Several institutions included in the study were different in ways they adapted the SI model, such as the number of SI leaders per

enrollment, number of sessions offered each week, differences in class attendance, and others. If any of those differences directly affected the outcomes of the program, the response would have been excluded; otherwise, the response was included. Thus, these differences could be related to SI program outcomes more than this study's constructs.

Delimitations

There are a few delimitations of the study. The first was the assumption that supervisory characteristics would be related to SI program outcomes while not including other aspects of SI programs. For example, faculty involvement is seen as critical to an SI program's success (Hurley et al., 2006), but this study did not include a measure of that involvement. Some of the recommendations from Arendale's (2000) dissertation included national studies involving student characteristics or institutional characteristics. Thus, these are possible future areas of study but were also delimitations of this study. Second, the institutions in this data set were collected from North American institutions. Any institutions that filled out the survey as part of other international contexts were excluded. Third, in the survey, the hours reported included paraprofessional staff, such as experienced SI leaders who serve to mentor or assist in program management. Respondents were asked to lump the hours of professional and paraprofessional staff together, implying no difference in the quality of those hours.

There may be a difference between professional and paraprofessional staff, but there is a lack of research to determine what differences exist and the impact on program outcomes.

Recommendations for Practice

Because of the lack of statistical significance within the variables studied, this study does not offer many practice recommendations. The findings around training hours per SI and attendance percentage provide one recommendation. Based on this study's findings, SI program supervisors should consider prioritizing training-related activities when trying to boost SI attendance percentage. As McDaniel (2008) suggests, spending time discussing data collection during training is essential. This emphasis in training makes sure that leaders collect accurate attendance data. Spending time discussing the important role of SI leaders in attendance and working on strategies during training to promote session attendance is another recommendation. For example, the SI supervisor manual discusses SI marketing strategies to boost attendance and includes distributing handouts, offering sample tests, and writing SI times on the board every class period (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2019). Reviewing these strategies with SI leaders during training could be a valuable method of boosting session attendance. Besides the focus on attendance strategies, SI supervisors could focus on other aspects of training that could produce higher quality sessions or processes that would boost

attendance. One example might be creating a welcoming and inclusive environment in sessions to help students feel comfortable. Besides using training to boost attendance, there might be some considerations for SI programs to insert more planning support processes to support SI leaders and promote program outcomes. Still, this research did not substantiate that finding.

Further Areas of Study

This research provides multiple opportunities for additional areas of study. The first exploration area would be examining the supervisory constructs individually and controlling for other characteristics or constructs. For example, exploring the relationship of planning support or observations with course outcomes when controlling for training, funding, and administrative support at one institution could control outside variances present in this study. Studies such as these would help refine what practices are critical to an SI program's success and efficiency. Additionally, future research should explore what aspects of training-related activities are associated with attendance percentage to help supervisors prioritize their work. Given the near significance of planning support and observation hours on the difference in average final grades, future research should explore these constructs further. In particular, research should investigate the potential negative relationship between observation hours and the difference in average final grades.

The second area of recommended further study would be to explore mixed-method approaches of program effectiveness. Creswell (2014) suggests three possible mixed-method designs, convergent parallel mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative research are conducted at the same time and compared); explanatory sequential mixed methods (quantitative analysis informs qualitative data collection); and exploratory (qualitative analysis informs quantitative data collection). Any of these three approaches might help explore supervisory constructs more deeply and inform additional studies on how they influence program outcomes. Such approaches might produce informative findings through sequential research methodologies.

Lastly, future studies should continue to collect data on a national or international level. For example, this study analyzed data in North American contexts, but a similar study could be conducted with SI programs in Australia. Additionally, these studies could include other important characteristics, such as institutional characteristics, faculty involvement, and other key factors that are theoretically linked to an SI program's success. With such studies, a longer and more robust data collection process is likely warranted to ensure sufficient sample sizes to detect small and medium effects and a representative sample.

Conclusion

This study explored the relationships between SI program supervisory constructs and financial support with program outcomes through multiple linear regression and correlation. While no significant models or correlations were detected, the training hours per SI leader were significantly related to the program's attendance percentage. This finding suggests that every hour added for training-related activities per SI leader will net an increase of slightly more than a half of a percent in the program's attendance percentage. This finding suggests that training-related hours should be a critical component of an SI program supervisor's activities. Supervisors should focus on attendance strategies and creating high-quality sessions during training to boost attendance for the program. This study was limited by several factors but mainly sample size, measurement of constructs, and the exclusion of other potential factors that may influence an SI program's success. Future study areas should focus on the individual supervisory constructs and design studies that are longitudinal and consist of various research methodologies.

The cost of higher education has been increasing, and the accountability from governments and individual families for student success is increasing (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Huisman and Currie (2004) suggest that higher education accountability is also related to how funds are used efficiently. As SI programs look to

expand or justify their continued funding, additional research is needed to evaluate program impact, support continued operational efficiency, and continuously improve program quality. Studies such as these lead conversations around effectiveness and efficiency to provide the best possible programming for student success.

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Appendix A

SI Program Survey

This survey is designed to collect data for a research study about the effect of SI program administrator activities and funding on program outcomes. We are conducting this study to determine what SI program supervisory activities are the most critical for program outcomes, the optimal level of those activities, and to assist in prioritizing these tenets. The research is conducted as part of a dissertation at the University of Missouri – Columbia.

We invite you to take part in this research study because of your potential affiliation with an SI program. If you do not feel you can answer the following questions or do not feel you are the appropriate person, please pass this survey along to the current SI supervisor at your institution.

Anyone who leads a Supplemental Instruction (SI) in North America based on the model created at the University of Missouri – Kansas City are invited to complete this study. You are assisting SI program administrators in learning how their activities affect program outcomes. By participating in this research, the results of the research will help SI program administrators lead their programs. The results of the study could help administrators find gaps in their current practice and subsequently advocate for resources. If SI programs are seeking to expand or implement new SI programs, the findings will help them do that.

Your participation in this research should only take approximately 10-15 minutes if your data is readily available. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. You may stop at any time and decide not to complete the survey, and your responses will not be recorded. Only one survey response per program per semester/term is needed.

Participants who choose to include their email when completing this survey will receive a copy of the findings. There are no other known benefits to participate in the study.

The information we collect about your SI program will be kept anonymous, and no identifiable information for the institution or program will be present in the results of the study. Additionally, the data will be stored on the researcher's computer behind password protection.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kirk Skoglund at kaskhn@mail.missouri.edu or the dissertation advisor, Dr. Timothy Wall, at timwall@nwmissouri.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Missouri – Columbia Institutional Review Board (IRB) by phone 573-882-3181 or email irb@missouri.edu.

Definition of Terms

- **Administrative staff** – any personnel associated with an SI program who assists in the program administration, including training, observations, session planning, program evaluation, data collection, and logistics. These personnel include SI mentors, graduate assistants, professional staff, and clerical staff.
- **SI Mentors** – program assistants that may assist with a variety of SI program tasks, including observations, assisting SI leaders with planning, assisting with training, data collection and evaluation.

To complete this survey, you will need access to the following information:

For a given semester or term, the following data points:

- **Average grade differential*** defined as the difference in the average final course grade of the entire SI program for a given semester using a four-point scale (4=A, B=3, etc.) between the students who attended at least one SI session compared to the students who did not attend any SI sessions.
- **The difference in DFW rates*** for the entire SI program defined as the difference between the rate of students who earn a D, F, or withdrew from a course and attended at least

one SI session and the students who earned a D, F, or withdrew from a course and did not attend any SI sessions

- **Percentage of students who attended at least one SI session*** for the entire SI program for SI-supported courses.
- **Approximate number of training hours, number of SI Leaders, number of observation hours, administration hours** (see guided questions below for more details.)
- **Approximate amount of funding devoted to the SI program for a given semester** (see the guided questions below for more detail.)
- *If you are missing this data point and cannot calculate it, you may leave it blank.

Guided Questions

For these questions, consider a specific semester or term for which you have the data listed above for your entire SI program.

1. What term or semester are you using? (e.g. Fall 2019 or Winter/Spring 2018)
2. What is the average final grade differential for your SI program during the designated semester or term? Calculate by taking the average final course grade of all the students who did not attend any SI sessions using a four-point scale (4=A, 3=B, etc.) and subtract it from the average final grade using a four-point scale (4=A, 3=B, etc.) for all the students attended at least one SI session. For example, if the average

final grade of the SI attendees was 2.00 and the average final grade of the students who did not attend SI sessions was a 1.50, the difference would be $2.00 - 1.50 = 0.50$, and you would enter 0.50.

3. What is the difference in DFW rates for the institution's entire SI program during the designated semester or term?
Calculate by subtracting the rate of students who earned a D, F, or withdrew from a class who attended at least one SI session from the rate of the students who earned a D, F, or withdrew from a class of the students who did not attend any SI sessions. For example, if the DFW rate of the student who attended SI sessions was 15% and the DFW rate of the students who did not attend SI sessions was 33%, the calculation should be $33 - 15 = 18\%$ and that should be entered for this question.
4. What is the percentage of students who attended at least one SI session for the entire SI program for the given semester or term? Calculate by taking the total number of students who attended at least one SI session divided by the total number of students enrolled in SI supported courses.

Please estimate how many administrative hours were *spent in total* on the following activities in a given semester or term:

5. **Total Observation Hours:** The approximate number of hours spent observing, preparing to observe, and debriefing with

SI leaders following observations. These hours can include peer observations, observations by SI mentors or program assistants, and observations by professional or paraprofessional staff.

6. **Total Training Hours:** Any administrative hours planning and delivering training, including initial or pre-semester and any ongoing training. This figure includes the actual training time. Do not duplicate planning time. Occasionally, staff members work together to plan training, only double that time if each staff member is working on separate tasks.

7. **Total Planning Support Hours:** All administrative hours devoted to assisting SI leaders with planning SI sessions. This figure does not include faculty members' assistance with planning or an SI leader's individual planning time, only administrative time dedicated to assisting SI leaders with planning.

8. **Total Administrative Hours:** Any hours by office staff, SI leader, SI Mentors, graduate assistants, or professional staff devoted to SI program evaluation, faculty meetings, data collection, and tracking, report writing, room scheduling, emailing, etc. These hours should not include training, observations, or planning activities.

9. **Total Funding for the SI program for a specific semester and term:** The approximate total amount of funding, including

the salaries of all SI leaders and administrative staff, and operational costs of the SI program. If administrative staff have multiple roles, account only for the portions working for the SI program. For example, if 25% of an administrator's time goes to the SI program, only 25% of his/her salary should be used in this calculation. Additionally, if it makes sense to divide your annual budget by the number of terms/semesters to calculate the cost for a semester, please feel free to do that.

Other Questions

10. How many SI Leaders were employed and actively holding sessions by your institution's program during the given semester/term?
11. Was your institution's SI program accredited/certified by the International Center for Supplemental Instruction during that semester/term? (Yes/No)
12. Which adaptations, if any, differentiate your implementation of SI from the model presented by the International Center for Supplemental Instruction at UMKC? Please elaborate on them here.
13. Your institution's name?
14. Is your institution considered...? (public or private)
15. Is your institution considered....? (4-year or 2-year?)

16. What is your name (if provided will only be used for follow-up/clarification purposes)?
17. What is your preferred email (if provided will only be used for follow-up/clarification purposes)?
18. What is your phone number (if provided will only be used for follow-up/clarification purposes)?

Thank you for completing the survey questions. Please click the arrow key to submit your responses.

Appendix B

Terms and Definitions

1. Administrative hours – any hours by office staff, SI leader, SI program assistants or SI mentors, graduate assistants, or professional staff that are dedicated to SI program evaluation, faculty meetings, data collection, and tracking, report writing, room scheduling, emailing, etc. This figure does not include training, observations, or planning activities.
2. Difference in DFW rates – the difference between the rate of students who earn a D, F, or withdrew (DFW) from a course and attended at least one SI session and the DFW rate of the students who did not attend any SI sessions
3. Grade differential – the difference in the average final grade of the entire SI program across all their courses for a given semester using a four-point scale (4=A, B=3, etc.) between the

students who attend at least one SI session compared to the students who did not attend any SI sessions.

4. Observation hours – the approximate number of hours spent observing, preparing to observe, and debriefing with SI leaders following observations. These hours can include peer observations, observations by SI mentors or program assistants, and observations by professional or paraprofessional staff.
5. Planning hours – all administrative hours devoted to assisting SI leaders with planning SI sessions.
6. Total Funding – the approximate total amount of funding, including the salaries of all SI leaders and administrative staff and operational costs of the SI program.
7. Training hours – administrative hours planning and delivering training and/or professional development, including initial and any ongoing training. This figure includes the actual training time as well as time planning it.

Supporting the Social Integration of Online Doctoral Students through Peer Mentoring

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Abstract

The problem of online doctoral student attrition has led institutions to explore solutions to support student completion. According to Tinto's model of institutional departure, learners' social and academic integration must be addressed to increase retention. At online institutions, learners' social integration can be challenging because of fewer personal interactions. Learning centers are in a unique position to create online peer mentoring programs to foster learners' social integration by offering opportunities to build community through social media and virtual events. In this article, the authors provide an overview of how such a program has been developed, implemented, and assessed.

Supporting the Social Integration of Online Doctoral Students Through Peer Mentoring

Completing a doctoral degree can positively impact an individual's career and income (Brill et al., 2014), as those with a doctoral degree have low unemployment rates and high weekly median incomes (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Although a doctoral degree is a positive investment that comes with many benefits, attrition rates within these programs are high and can negatively impact individuals and institutions. Students who leave before completion are affected by an accumulation of student debt, while institutions may be negatively impacted as attrition rates are often tied to accountability (Eaton, 2011). Given the potential adverse effects of attrition, institutions must develop plans to address this issue. Viewing the challenges of online doctoral students, such as feelings of isolation (McCracken, 2004), through the lens of Tinto's (1975) model of institutional departure provided us insights into how to support learners' social integration through the development of an online doctoral peer mentor program.

The Doctoral Student Experience

Completing a doctoral degree is not an easy task, as it comes with many academic, personal, and financial challenges along the way. Riger et al. (2017) noted that traditional face-to-face doctoral programs face attrition rates up to 50%, while online doctoral programs report attrition rates up to 5% higher (Shaw et al., 2016).

Not only must doctoral students develop knowledge and skills to become experts in their field of study, but they must also develop their own research identity (Lamar & Helm, 2017) and adapt to the norms and expectations of their field (Foot et al., 2014). However, many students may not be prepared to handle aspects of a doctoral program (Hunter & Devine, 2016), which can lead to high levels of anxiety (Coffman et al., 2016) and emotional exhaustion (Hunter & Devine, 2016) that may lead to dissatisfaction and withdrawal (Pyhalto et al., 2012).

Although doctoral students face many challenges, researchers have identified factors that can contribute to success and persistence. Researchers have found positive relationships with supervisors (Gube et al., 2017), high self-efficacy (Litalien & Guay, 2015), reflective coping practices (Schacham & Od-Cohen, 2009), self-motivation (Stubb et al., 2012), and positive writing strategies (Castelló et al., 2009) can all positively influence student success and retention. Doctoral students also benefit when they feel they belong in their program and have opportunities to connect with peers (Gray et al., 2015). These factors highlight that, to be successful, doctoral students need to believe they can complete their program, have sufficient skills and strategies, and have social support.

The Challenge of Online Doctoral Student Retention

In addition to the experiences discussed above, online doctoral students often face further challenges that can impact their experience and success. For example, students new to the online learning environment may face challenges adjusting to the different educational setting, including technical difficulties (Harrell, 2008), which may prohibit them from socially interacting at a level that creates a sense of community. Many universities provide support for online students when it comes to technology by offering dedicated technical support and resources. However, more is needed beyond technical support for students to feel comfortable and acclimated; students need information about university resources, effective academic skills, and proper NetEtiquette (Harrell, 2008). These topics could be covered within a well-designed orientation program to help students begin their programs strongly, but online learners face a larger ongoing problem that can lead to withdrawal – isolation (McCracken, 2004). Those feelings of isolation may not be addressed within the standard structure of an online program.

Online programs are often structured to allow for increased flexibility rather than ample opportunities for connection and collaboration. This flexible model means that online doctoral students may not have the opportunity to collaborate with faculty members on research, participate in lab meetings, or attend

conferences with peers in their program (Denman et al., 2018), which can lead to feelings of isolation (Ames et al., 2018). In general, students in online programs do not have the opportunity to have “informal interactions occurring naturally in face-to-face environments” across campus, limiting their ability to build relationships (Koole & Stack, 2016, p. 44). This lack of connection with peers is problematic, as researchers have identified social integration and belongingness as critical factors in student retention and persistence (Rovai, 2003). Because of the natural isolation of online learning, institutions must be proactive and intentional in supporting online learners to become socially connected to peers.

Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure

After reviewing the challenges of online doctoral student retention, it is important to consider a student retention model that can help learning center administrators best support online doctoral students academically and socially. Tinto's (1975) model of institutional departure considers an individual's family background, personal experiences, and pre-university education as the beginning attributes in a student's decision to retain or drop out. Nicoletti (2019) described this combination as “baggage” that has a relevant impact on both (a) the motivations that push individuals to join an institution of higher education to get a degree and (b) the delineation and strengthening of the student's expectations and convictions regarding the completion of the course (p. 57).

Additionally, Tinto considers academic factors, such as academic performance and intellectual development, and social factors, such as peer and faculty interactions, that will impact the student's decision to continue or depart from a program (Nicoletti, 2019).

In the context of supporting social integration, if administrators can better understand how the "baggage" that Nicoletti (2019, p. 57) described impacts students, they can do their best to create programs that support students socially as they start an online course or program. As Nicoletti (2019) shared, the more a student is integrated into both academic and social spheres, the greater their commitment to the institution and the greater their commitment to the goal of persistence and completion of the course. To best support students, it is vital for administrators to understand doctoral students enter their programs with a variety of background experiences, motivations, ranges of academic and social situations, and capacities for teaching, research, and scholarly productivity, which result in varying developmental progression rates (Ward & Gardner, 2008). Learning centers must be aware of the differences and similarities of the student population they are supporting to create impactful programming to address learners' academic and social integration.

Once the student population is understood, administrators can build a program to purposefully create an environment for social integration that encourages online learners to connect, understand

the resources available to them, learn their new roles as scholar-practitioners, and capitalize on their purpose for being in their selected academic program. In online programs, creating a sense of belonging with a structured environment to make connections is critical; as Tinto (2017) stated, "...students have to become engaged and come to see themselves as a member of the community of other students, academics, professional staff who value their membership..." (p. 3). Developing a program that allows for meaningful engagement, a sincere connection between peers, and opportunities to build on skills for academic success brings value to the student experience and can support their success and persistence.

Applications of Tinto's Model to Peer Mentoring Programs in the Online Setting

Tinto's model highlights the importance of both academic and social integration. Institutions can support academic integration through a well-designed curriculum and other scholarly opportunities, but as Thomas et al. (2014) noted, online learners' social integration is often overlooked. However, learning centers are in a unique position to address the gap of social integration at online institutions by creating peer mentoring programs. Traditional programs have found that peer mentoring programs can increase mentored students' sense of connectedness and integration (Yomtov et al., 2017), buffer the transition into the university (Clark

et al., 2013), and help to support retention (Collings et al., 2014). Given the positive outcomes of peer mentoring programs, the Academic Skills Center at Walden University developed a peer mentor program to support new online doctoral learners.

Structure of an Online Doctoral Peer Mentor Program

Peer mentors can take on different roles at universities, with some providing tutoring support or working in an advising role. In alignment with other programs designed to help students adapt to a new level of education (see Clark et al., 2013), our peer mentors do support the academic integration of learners by sharing information about university programs and services to support success. However, the Doctoral Peer Mentor Program at Walden University leans heavily on Tinto's model to also emphasize the social integration of new online doctoral learners. The peer mentors within our program focus on helping mentees make social connections, adapt to their new identities as scholar-practitioners, and build academic and noncognitive skills necessary for success. Building social connections is a key focus within our mission statement and program offerings. In our program, mentors provide advice and support to mentees using their own experiences and relevant resources from across the university, moving beyond peer mentoring roles that may focus solely on learners' academic development.

It is the peer mentors and staff leadership who drive the program initiatives. The following sections will provide more details about the Academic Skills Center, program leaders and peer mentors, and student demographic information for those who have connected with the mentor team. This additional information may be helpful to others interested in replicating a similar program.

Academic Skills Center

The Doctoral Peer Mentor Program is part of the Academic Skills Center at Walden University, an online university offering undergraduate and graduate degrees, certificates, and lifelong learning opportunities across a variety of fields and programs. In addition to the Doctoral Peer Mentor Program, the center offers individual and group tutoring support in multiple areas, including statistics and math, and offers interactive modules and resources on a variety of skills, such as time management, stress management, and reading strategies. All programs in the center are designed to align with the vision of empowering students to build confidence and self-efficacy in skills essential to their success at Walden University and beyond.

Staff Leadership

The Doctoral Peer Mentor Program's leadership team consists of the Academic Skills Center director, associate director of mentoring and tutoring, and the program coordinator. The center's director escalates initiatives and budget requests to university leadership,

while the associate director and program coordinator work closely on short- and long-term program goals, program plans, hiring, and ongoing development. The associate director acts as an ambassador of the program, communicating with key stakeholders within the university on issues that impact the program's success, including advising, enrollment, and faculty. The coordinator works closely with the peer mentor team to organize and manage the mentee cohorts within a Blackboard classroom, to support and oversee the mentor's communications with students, to collect monthly program data, and to organize all synchronous and asynchronous activities offered by the mentor team. It takes staff leadership at every level to ensure that mentors are offering the best social support available in providing new doctoral students a positive experience as they are starting their programs.

Doctoral Peer Mentors

Doctoral peer mentors at Walden University serve as graduate assistants within the Academic Skills Center. All peer mentors are successful doctoral students who have completed at least one year of their program and have attended a required academic residency, a face-to-face learning experience designed to supplement online coursework and allow students opportunities to connect with faculty, staff, and peers. They also have previous mentoring, coaching, or teaching experience. We intentionally hire doctoral peer mentors who represent the variety of colleges within the

university, including The Richard Riley College of Education and Leadership, College of Health Sciences, College of Management and Technology, College of Nursing, and College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Based on program feedback, mentees prefer to connect with a peer mentor enrolled in the same program. The program coordinator manually matches mentors and mentees, first trying to match them based on academic program. When this is not possible, perhaps due to mentor bandwidth, the coordinator matches mentees with a peer mentor in the same college. When there are multiple peer mentors from the same program or college, mentees from those program areas are randomly assigned to those mentors, with a focus on balancing the cohort numbers. Currently, there are no other set criteria used to identify and match mentors and mentees. However, if a student reaches out to request a specific mentor, we can typically accommodate those requests.

As of January 2021, we have 13 mentors representing 11 different doctoral degree programs across all five colleges at Walden. Beyond the degree programs our mentors represent, they all have different professional experiences that add value to our program and their interactions with students. Some of the mentor professions include social work, business, higher education, epidemiology, nursing, psychology, teaching, clinical research, and counseling. The peer mentor staff represents the diverse ethnicity of Walden's student body (see Walden, 2020), which resonates well with all new

incoming doctoral students. New students can relate to their mentors in one way or another based on shared academic program, professional experiences, or ethnic background. Doctoral peer mentor positions are posted on Walden's external job board online, and we do accept referrals from faculty; however, the position is so popular there is typically an abundance of qualified applicants for the positions. The doctoral peer mentor positions require 40 hours of work per month, for an average of 10 hours per week. The position offers plenty of flexibility so mentors can support new students around their own schedules and academic work. Once hired, mentors complete FERPA training and a doctoral peer mentor self-paced training module covering position expectations and best practices, attend virtual meetings with the program coordinator, and complete a peer mentor training checklist. The training checklist is designed to help new peer mentors become more familiar with university-wide resources and services, read research on peer mentoring, and set-up and use tools necessary for their role, including their email and the appointment system. Beyond the initial training, best practice documents are shared with the mentors and revisited regularly during monthly team meetings. Monthly team meetings allow the team to connect, share ideas, ask questions, and encourage one another as they support their peers. A thorough training program and consistent team check-ins have created a solid foundation for maintaining a diverse and well-

balanced team of mentors who have the capacity to support a cohort of approximately 75 new mentees from Walden's student body each term start.

Mentees

The mentees who participate in the Doctoral Peer Mentor Program are newly enrolled doctoral students at Walden University. Before each term start, new doctoral students can request a doctoral peer mentor by completing an online request form. Like the peer mentors, mentees in the program represent a wide variety of colleges at Walden, as illustrated in Table 1. Of program mentees, 75% are female, and 23% are male, consistent with the larger student population (Walden University, 2020). More details regarding the ethnicity of program mentees are provided in Table 2. This data demonstrates the great diversity of students peer mentors connect with and build a relationship with during the beginning stages of the students' doctoral program.

Table 1.
College Representation in Mentoring Program

College Name	Student Representation
College of Social and Behavioral Sciences	50%
College of Education and Leadership	18%
College of Health Sciences	16%
College of Nursing	9%
College of Management and Technology	7%

Table 2.
Ethnicity of Students in the Doctoral Peer Mentor Program

Ethnicity	Student Representation
Black or African American	51%
White	30%
Unknown	8%
Hispanic or Latino	7%
Asian	2%
Two or more races	1%

Mentors and mentees connect in various ways beginning no earlier than one week before the start of classes. Mentors reach out via email to introduce themselves and begin sharing information with mentees. Throughout the term, mentors send out weekly emails with tips and resources on a variety of topics, from adjusting to doctoral life, handling procrastination, overcoming the imposter phenomenon, and communicating with faculty, to name a few. Sending out motivational and informational emails has been shown to positively impact online learners' retention (Huett et al., 2008).

Although researchers have found a positive impact of motivational and informational emails, there are no known studies related to the impact of such emails on online learners' social integration. Given our specific mission to support social integration and the importance of such integration, as Tinto (1975) highlighted, we expanded the program to include additional opportunities for mentees to create social connections and community.

Fostering Social Integration of Online Doctoral Students

Mentees within the Doctoral Peer Mentor Program have many opportunities to connect with their assigned mentor and other mentors and mentees in the program. For example, the program includes individual synchronous appointments, live webinars, Monthly Meetups, and a private Facebook group. Throughout the following sections, we share more details about each of these program elements, including challenges and changes made to each, and relevant data regarding student use and engagement.

Individual Appointments

All mentees have the option to schedule an individual synchronous virtual call with any of our mentors using an online appointment system. To create an interactive experience for the mentors and mentees, it is vital to use online technology that functions well for one-on-one conversations and group interactions and is already known to users. It is essential to use technology mentees are familiar with, as using unfamiliar technology can lead

to a poor user experience (Watts, 2016) or even a hesitation to use or learn new technology (Alarbi et al., 2018). Initially, our program used Skype for Business for synchronous calls, but this tool resulted in confusion and frustration for mentees and mentors. To improve the experience, we began using Blackboard Collaborate for synchronous appointments instead. Blackboard Collaborate is already available to all learners across all Walden Blackboard courses, and therefore something mentees and mentors are already familiar with. Since this change, mentors and mentees have reported far fewer difficulties with appointments, allowing students to connect with mentors easily and, as described by Ladyshevsky and Pettapiece (2015), fully experience the media richness the tool provides via its audio-visual capabilities. We have also noticed an increase in attended appointments since beginning the appointment system and switching to Blackboard Collaborate, from 40% in January 2020 to 53% in December 2020. While this data shows us there has been a reduction in the number of mentees not showing up for scheduled appointments following the changes noted above, we continue to discuss potential adjustments to this option to decrease missed appointments further and increase student engagement with this opportunity.

Live Virtual Events

Mentees also have the option to attend live webinars hosted by peer mentors throughout the year. In these live events, mentors share their own experiences alongside tips and strategies on a variety of topics, such as time management, procrastination, and the capstone project. Mentors highlight their challenges and how they overcame them to be successful and answer mentee questions shared within the chat. Since developing and hosting live events where the focus is on the student experience, our center has seen increased engagement and excitement from attendees in the chat, highlighting students' desire to hear from other students. For additional feedback and data on webinars starting in 2021, we have chosen to add poll questions at the start and end of each presentation to capture attendees' feedback about how the session has helped them. For example, for a webinar on finding balance, we might ask attendees if they feel they balance schoolwork and other aspects of their lives. At the end of the session, we might ask students if they learned new strategies to improve their sense of balance. We will be able to adjust presentation content throughout 2021 as we receive feedback from webinar attendees.

Mentees can also attend Monthly Meetups, which are less structured than our live webinars. Each hour-long session has a theme, and mentees can submit questions for mentors ahead of time and ask their questions during the session. The mentors who host

the session spend the hour answering questions and discussing the topics of interest from attendees. When we began hosting Monthly Meetups, we used Adobe Connect as the platform. Although we saw great engagement during the sessions, throughout all of 2019, we had 53 mentees attend the Monthly Meetups, for an average of 4 attendees per month. In August 2020, we moved these sessions to Zoom to allow for a more informal exchange of ideas using video and audio. Since this change, 96 mentees joined the sessions from August 2020 to December 2020 alone, for an average of 16 attendees per month and a total of 144 total attendees for 2020. We cannot conclude a cause-and-effect impact of implementing Zoom, as the COVID-19 pandemic may also have influenced mentees' desire to connect with others due to extended stay-at-home orders throughout 2020. However, regardless of the reason, our optional events throughout the year have allowed mentees to hear real experiences from peers, listen to strategies others use to overcome challenges, and share their own experiences and questions.

Facebook

While we offer many opportunities for connection, social media has been a critical focus for our program. Researchers have found positive results when looking at the impact of social media on various student experiences. Yu et al. (2010) found that online social networking, such as Facebook, positively supported peer relationships and acceptance and fostered a commitment to the

institution among undergraduate students. Similarly, Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. (2014) found that online doctoral students who connected with peers on social media outside of the classroom had a higher sense of connectedness. Previous research suggests that such sharing on Facebook positively impacts connectedness levels, especially in situations where individuals may not be able to interact personally (Köbler et al., 2010). In traditional doctoral programs, informal conversations between peers are essential to feeling connected (Lamar & Helm, 2017). Within our online setting, it appears the Facebook group has become a conversation space that can mimic those informal conversations that happen on campus. Online doctoral learners in this group can build social connections and relationships as they can reach out with questions or share their challenges in a group where they receive timely responses filled with support, advice, and resources from peers and mentors.

Mentees are informed about the opportunity to join our program's private Facebook group when they first join the program and reminded of this space throughout their participation as a mentee. The total group size has grown, in line with the program's expansion, from 248 members in January 2019 to 1004 members in December 2020. In 2019, 31% of mentees who joined the Doctoral Peer Mentor Program opted to join the private Facebook group. As of December 2020, 32% of mentees who joined the program in 2020

opted to join the Facebook group. Group members represent all colleges, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.
Facebook Group Members by College

College	Student Representation
College of Social and Behavioral Sciences	33%
College of Health Sciences	24%
College of Education and Leadership	18%
College of Management and Technology	17%
College of Nursing	9%

The interactions within the group have also shifted over time. Early in the group, the program coordinator and associate director led most of the conversation by posting encouraging images, event reminders, and helpful resources. Peer mentors acknowledged they were often unsure of what to post within the group and how often to create a new post. This sparked conversations regarding what type of content prompted responses from mentees; a review of posts in the group revealed those conversations that shared humor related to the doctoral journey or quotes and images related to overcoming challenges received the most reactions. This review of posted content and reactions provided information peer mentors could use when thinking about what to share in the group. Additionally, in line with existing research that suggests social media groups should be led by peers rather than staff or faculty

(Rosenberg et al., 2016), we created a daily schedule for peer mentors to share and post in the group. This change resulted in a consistent peer mentor presence in the group, and there was less confusion about how often an individual peer mentor should post. Over time, peer mentors have grown comfortable in this space and helped create a more peer-to-peer space for sharing.

Facebook Group Findings. Mentees have also grown comfortable in the Facebook group as they regularly share frustrations, triumphs, and words of encouragement, resulting in a more peer-led, dynamic conversation. During December 2020, there were 122 mentee-initiated conversations, accounting for 83% of all main posts within the group, compared to only 78 during December 2019 (79% of all main posts) before the changes mentioned above were implemented. In addition to our internal program data, the office of institutional analysis at Walden University completed an analysis of the program to investigate the impact on retention. The institutional analyst found those students who were in the Facebook group had statistically significant higher retention rates than those mentees not in the group, with 91% of mentees in the group retaining to their second term, compared to only 77% of mentees not in the Facebook group. The institutional analyst looked at a full year of the program, and this trend in increased retention was observed through all four terms of study analyzed. These results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4.
Retention of Mentees in the Facebook Group vs. Mentees Not in the Group

	Mentees in Facebook Group	Mentees Not in Facebook Group
First Term Retention	91%	77%
Second Term Retention	83%	65%
Third Term Retention	74%	53%
Fourth Term Retention	78%	51%

Although we cannot conclude a cause-and-effect relationship between joining the Facebook group and retention, these results are consistent with previous research showing the positive impact of social media connections on student retention (see Morris et al., 2010). These findings also align with Tinto's (1975) conclusions about the importance of social integration on student retention, as those within this group can connect and share in an informal space outside of the classroom. Those students who opted to join their peers in this additional social space showed increased retention compared to peers not engaging in this way.

Program Evaluation and Mentee Feedback

Creating a peer mentoring program does come with investments, both in time and money, but based on previous research showing positive effects of such programs (see Clark et al., 2013; Collings et al., 2014; Yomtov et al., 2017) and the data and feedback collected so far for our program, they are worth the investment. As shared in the previous sections, we have made several changes to the program based on research and internal program data, which is an essential

component of any program (Culp, 2005) and has been a strength of ours. Beyond data shared in previous sections, mentees have shared their feedback and experience through program surveys. Since the program's launch in 2018, the program coordinator has distributed surveys to all mentees at the end of each term that contains both Likert-scale questions and open-ended questions. A summary of quantitative feedback from distributed surveys is provided in Table 5. Although most respondents shared positive responses, some mentees disagreed or strongly disagreed with some of the Likert-scale questions and shared additional feedback in later portions of the survey. Some mentees wanted a more personal connection with a peer mentor beyond email, others shared that live events conflicted with their personal schedules, while some noted they did not have the time to interact with their peer mentor. Some of the concerns shared are ones we can work to address, and, in some cases, we have already taken initial steps to better support mentees. For example, we have started offering more live events per month on different days of the week and at various times, to try and accommodate different schedules.

Table 5.
Mentee Feedback - Program Survey Results

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel supported by my peer mentor	7%	8%	11%	35%	38%
I feel connected to Walden University	5%	7%	12%	42%	34%

In addition to this feedback, mentees also shared positive experiences and suggestions. In that open-ended space, one mentee wrote: “my mentor is engaged, responds proactively and provides valuable insight. I appreciate their encouragement as well.” Another mentee shared: “my mentor was there for me and helped me realize that the path to completing my doctorate was to be completed as a journey and not as a race.” Based on this feedback, it is evident that mentees value the peer mentor relationship and are building connections. In some cases, the experience of a mentee in the program can motivate them to seek out a peer mentor position later in their journey, indicating a desire to continue building connections, as demonstrated by this mentee’s feedback:

Just having someone in addition to my family that is in my corner cheering me on has been a big benefit to me. It causes me to want to be involved in being a peer mentor after I have progressed some more in my program.

This mentee is not alone in their desire to serve as a peer mentor, either, as five of the current peer mentors were previously mentees; they found value in their experience and wanted to pay it forward to other new students. These responses represent a small sample of mentee feedback, but they highlight the potential positive effects of such a peer mentoring program. Not surprisingly, the positive feedback and the mentee retention results sparked interest from other program level leadership at Walden to include peer

mentoring at the undergraduate level which not only provides new students a mentor, but undergraduate students the opportunity to apply for peer mentoring positions. Although the creation of a new peer mentoring program requires time and new staff members, the potential influence on online students' experience, as exhibited in the mentee feedback above, is worth the time and effort.

Conclusion

Social integration for new online doctoral students can significantly impact the student experience per Tinto’s (1975) institutional model of departure. It is critical for administrators in online higher education to create programs that foster an environment for connection, a sense of community, and a support network to strengthen the bond an online adult learner has with their doctoral institution. To encourage connections, we have designed multiple avenues for mentees to connect with mentors and peers. Throughout all of the interaction mediums offered to mentees, there is a focus on helping new students become connected to others and the institution, thereby supporting learners’ social integration. Through the Doctoral Peer Mentor Program, we hope mentees will form a network of support that will nurture their social needs as they start, progress, and complete their doctoral journey.

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Renewal in Learning and Writing Center Leadership: Advice from Coaching Expert Richard Boyatzis

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Abstract

Many directors of learning and writing centers minimize their ability to remain current with the field, conduct research, and delineate their job duties due to pressing daily demands. Scholars urge them to do so in light of the needs of students, new directors, and university restructuring. This article presents the four-step renewal process of coaching expert Richard Boyatzis whose Intentional Change Theory combines neuroscience, psychology, and management literature. Directors assess their work lives, recognize defense mechanisms, articulate original dreams for their work, and set a learning agenda. The value of Boyatzis' work is in the respect it affords the individual, allowing each director to set unique goals.

Keywords: leadership, learning centers, writing centers, goals, research

Renewal in Learning and Writing Center Leadership:

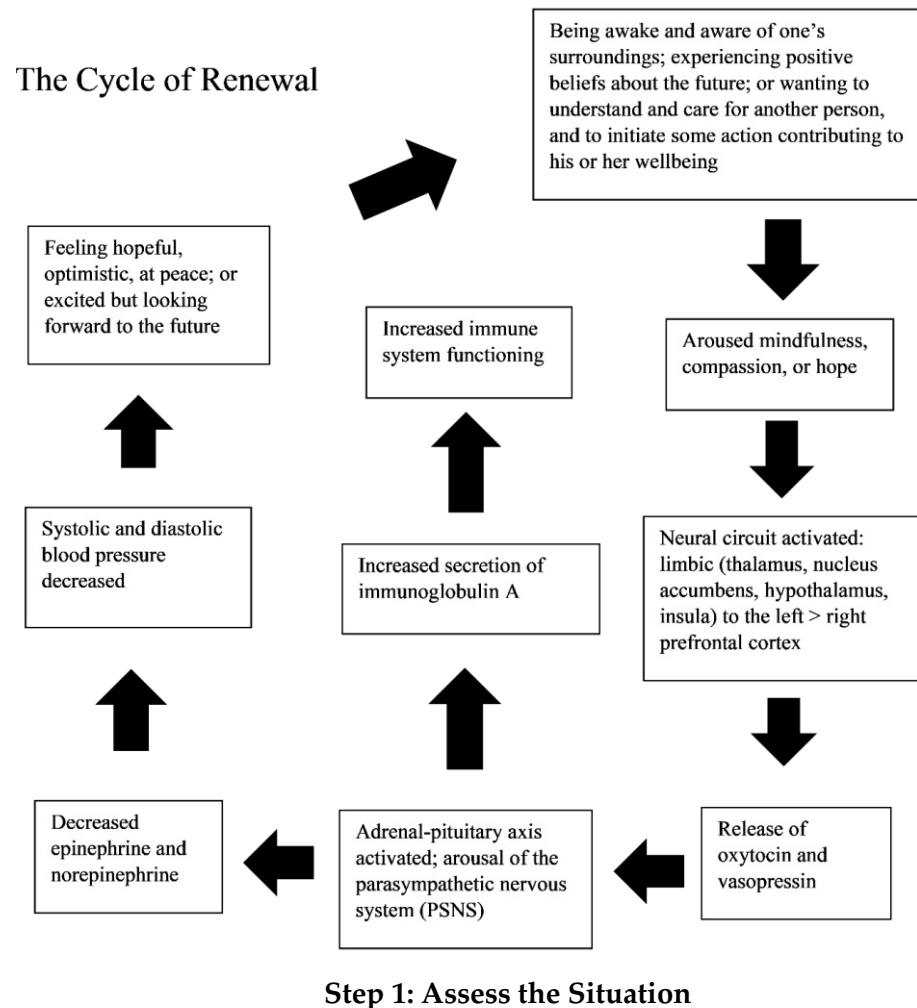
Advice from Coaching Expert Richard Boyatzis

Learning and writing center directors (LAWCDs) have been warned many times and in many places: scholars have cautioned that we must find time to read journals (Eodice, 2015), to conduct research (Frizell, 2019; Geller & Denny, 2013; Wynn Perdue & Driscoll, 2017), and to accurately describe our duties (Casswell et al., 2016). These experts say that if we do not, especially in these times of restructuring, we risk allowing our field and our positions to be described and taken over by others (such as human resources or other agents). These scholars understand only too well why it is so difficult to do so—they state how overwhelming our daily lives are. To address this stress, a number of LAWCDs have contributed to an entire collection articulating the need for self-care (Giaimo et al., 2020). All these scholars care deeply for the future of learning and writing centers because it hinges on the leadership shown in research and in our own articulation of the most important aspects of our work. This article seeks to address one aspect of this problem: even if we know we should shape our future, and even if we address our own serious need for rest, the question remains, how do we individually articulate the goals we have for leadership in our centers and in our field—the goals that work for our individual centers and the ones that speak to the needs of the field at large?

This article offers a holistic four-step process taken from the work of coaching expert Richard Boyatzis.

An internationally known scholar with nine books and 200 articles, Boyatzis drew from neuroscience, psychology, and management literature to shape his Intentional Change Theory. A tenet of this theory is that intentional change occurs when a leader articulates heart-felt hopes for the future that shape a learning agenda needed to accomplish them (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006, p. 624). Most relevant to LAWCDs is the focus Boyatzis (2005) placed on individual physical, mental, and spiritual wellness (Figure 1). Theories of management and leadership are outdated (Petriglieri, 2020) as they shifted from learned leadership skills (Lewin, 1944), to in-born traits (Stogdill, 1948), to aspects of the environment (Fielder, 1964), or the ability of a leader to motivate (Bass, 1985). None of them addresses the pressing overwhelming demands of the daily life of LAWCDs, many of whom are minorities and women. Instead, Boyatzis (2005, 2013) coached individuals to do the following (a) assess the overwhelming demands, (b) understand their own defense mechanisms, (c) listen to themselves, and (d) set a learning agenda. Below is each of the four stages of intentional change structured with learning and writing center goals in mind.

Figure 1.
Cycle of Renewal (Boyatzis, 2005, p. 212)



To begin to set goals, LAWCDs first need to understand their daily lives. The chart below (Figure 2) offers us a chance to evaluate our situations. Giving too much results in what Boyatzis (2005) termed the *sacrifice syndrome* that refers to a state of being where “dissonance is the default” (p. 6). This kind of stress “can become chronic over time, because our bodies are just not designed to deal

with unremitting pressures that go along with the leadership role” (Boyatzis, 2005, p. 40). To mitigate the stress, some leaders develop “defensive routines—bad habits that keep us in denial about what is really going on inside us and around us” (Boyatzis, 2005, p. 40).

Figure 2.
The Sacrifice Syndrome Chart (Boyatzis, 2005, pp. 54-55)

Sacrifice Syndrome Indicators

Am I:

- Working harder with less result?
- Getting home later or leaving home earlier each day?
- Feeling tired, even after sleeping?
- Having trouble falling asleep, or waking up in the middle of the night?
- Finding less time (or no time at all) for the things that used to be enjoyable?
- Rarely relaxed, or only really relaxed with alcohol?
- Drinking more coffee?

Have I noticed changes in myself or my relationships, such as:

- I can no longer really talk about my problems with my spouse.
- I don't care what I eat, or whether I eat too much or too little.
- I can't remember the last time I had a long conversation with a trusted friend or family member.
- My children have stopped asking me to attend their functions or games.
- I no longer attend my place of worship or find time for quiet contemplation.
- I don't exercise as much as I used to.
- I don't smile or laugh as much as I used to.

Do I:

- Have frequent headaches, backaches, or pain?
- Routinely take over-the-counter antacids or painkillers?
- Feel as if nothing I do seems to matter anymore, or have the impact I want?
- Feel as if no one can understand what I need to do, or how much work I have?
- Sometimes feel numb or react to situations with inappropriately strong emotions?
- Feel too overwhelmed to seek new experiences, ideas, or ways of doing things?
- Frequently think about how to “escape” my current situation?

In their workbook on renewal in leadership, McKee et al. (2008)

noted that

even if we ignore, deny, or pretend we can live with constant sacrifices, stress almost always leaks out somewhere, in us and with others. We can become stuck in a negative spiral,

inadvertently and sometimes unknowingly creating dissonance in our relationships and our organizations. (p. 51)

Directors may not ever recognize such stress or their reactions to it because, as McKee et al. (2008) related, the position of a leader often means that “real connection and real relationships are very hard to find and keep. All too often this translates into cautiousness or callousness—and very little straight talk” (pp. 50-51). Likewise, our tutors may not feel comfortable sharing their observations with us. Often, the sacrifice syndrome begins with a failure—small or great—that signals something is wrong. Boyatzis termed this failure a “wake-up call,” something that can happen as a result of any of the items on the chart in Figure 2.

Step 2: Identify Defensive Routines

Once LAWCDs establish whether or not they experience the sacrifice syndrome, the next step is to identify defensive routines (Figures 3 and 4) in order to establish how these behaviors affect us and those around us (McKee et al., 2008, p. 62).

Figure 3.

Defensive Routines Chart (McKee et al., 2008, pp. 60-61)

My Defensive Routines: How I Cope with Pressure and Problems

Step 1: What do you tend to do when under pressure? Check all that apply to you.

Approach and Internalize

- ☐ I get to work earlier and stay at work later
- ☐ I continue to add new projects or take on more roles despite a realistic shortage of time or results
- ☐ I constantly remind myself of my own or others' high standards for me
- ☐ I expect everyone to perform to my high standards
- ☐ I can never say “no”

Avoid and Internalize

- ☐ I move further inside: my office, my projects, my thoughts and concerns
- ☐ I become detached from relationships with colleagues, friends, and family
- ☐ I communicate less than usual and only about what I feel is essential
- ☐ Only my mission and goals seem important
- ☐ I don't need input from others
- ☐ I feel that other people just get in the way

Approach and Externalize

- ☐ I am the only one who knows the answer
- ☐ If anyone disagrees with me I will disregard them or make them sorry for disagreeing
- ☐ My closest friends and advisers always agree with me
- ☐ I never waver on decisions

Avoid and Externalize

- ☐ I focus on negative aspects of situations
- ☐ I wear anger and disappointment as a badge of honor
- ☐ I criticize or become cynical with those who want things to change or have hope
- ☐ I blame my mood/circumstances on the situation or someone else
- ☐ I enjoy being with like-minded people and talking about what we think is wrong

Step 2: Circle the five check marks that indicate your primary ways of dealing with life and work when you are stressed. These are defensive routines—they help you defend yourself from the stressors and may inhibit change. The next step will help you unravel the impact of these habits.

Step 3: On the chart below, list your top five defensive routines and note whether they are linked with approaching or avoiding issues or your feelings, and whether you tend to internalize or externalize your responses. Then, write some notes about how your routines affect you, people close to you, and possibly your organization.

Figure 4.*Isolating the Top Five Defensive Routines (McKee et al., 2008, p. 62)*

My Defensive Routines	Approach, Avoid, Internalize, Externalize	How this affects me: mind, body, emotion, spirit	How this affects my team/close colleagues, family	How this affects the degree of resonance or dissonance in my environment

Once LAWCDs understand the influence of their own defensive routines on those around them, they can choose to mitigate the influence. Additionally, this understanding opens the way to renewal.

Step 3: The Renewal Cycle

Once leaders have understood their responses to intense stress, they can begin the renewal cycle that cultivates mindfulness, hope, and compassion—all of which “evoke responses within the human body that arouse the parasympathetic nervous system, reversing the effects of the stress response and arousal of the sympathetic nervous

system” (Boyatzis, 2005, p. 211). The parasympathetic nervous system opposes the flight-or-fight response of the sympathetic nervous system that prepares us to face dangers. Mindfulness, hope, and compassion promote connections with others, which Boyatzis (2005) claimed is the heart of renewal physically and psychologically: “Attachments cause a decrease in the sympathetic nervous system reactivity via oxytocin and vasopressin’s release from the hypothalamus” (p. 211). Increased neural activity comes through compassion, which leads to “elation” (p. 211). Boyatzis advised leaders to keep a journal where they note how they feel (mindfulness), what they hope for regarding their position and goals, and how they can develop compassion for both themselves and others they serve (Figure 5).

Figure 5.*Renewal Concerns*

Mindfulness	Hope	Compassion
How do you feel right now? Check in briefly.	What is the hope you originally had regarding the work in your writing center? What’s blocking that (if it’s blocked)?	How can you extend compassion toward yourself and your students?

Mindfulness

LAWCDs might experience shock at how they feel once they stop the sacrifice syndrome and key into their day-to-day feelings. Mindful of daily demands, they can begin to cultivate awareness of spontaneous defensive reactions. According to McKee et al. (2008), mindfulness refers to

living in a state of full and conscious awareness of one's whole self, other people, and the context in which we live and work. This means developing our intellect, taking care of our bodies, using the power of our emotions, and attending to our spirituality. We define mindfulness as being awake, aware, and attending—to ourselves and to the world around us. Mindfulness enables us to pay attention to what is happening to us, and to stop the Sacrifice Syndrome before it stops us. Being mindfully aware of ourselves and our surroundings, human and environmental, invokes the capacity for renewal. (p. 73)

Such mindfulness leads to “more cognitive flexibility, creativity, and problem-solving skills” (McKee et al., 2008, p. 74) that expand to compassionate behavior toward themselves and the entire learning and writing center environment.

Hope

Dreams a leader once had about a particular business—why a leader entered the field in the beginning—are at the center of Boyatzis' (2005) theory. In the workbook, McKee et al. (2008) suggested leaders write in a journal to reawaken these dreams. Once in touch with them, LAWCDs then can align their current situation with the hopes they had originally. This process can bring their focus back to what really matters as opposed to what might be troubling them currently.

Compassion

Three aspects of compassion need to be cultivated: “understanding and empathy for others' feelings and experiences, caring for others, and the willingness to act on those feelings of care and empathy” (Boyatzis, 2005, p. 179). In a journal, LAWCDs can cultivate compassion through imaginative exercises where we picture someone who needs compassion and see them through an average day.

Step 4: Establishing Learning Goals

When LAWCDs compare their defensive routines to their hopes, they should be able to craft learning goals to decrease that gap. However, “The goals should build on your strengths, as well as challenge you to overcome limitations” (Boyatzis, 2005, p. 165). Along with setting a learning agenda, McKee et al. (2008) suggested setting milestones for progress (Figure 6). Milestones are “noticeable markers that indicate your progress toward your goal” (p. 165). The workbook is very helpful for planning out long-term goals.

Figure 6.
Learning Agenda and Milestones

Statement of My Learning Goal:		
Milestone 1:	Milestone 2:	Milestone 3:
Action Steps:	Action Steps:	Action Steps:
Key People to Help Me:		

Scenario: Creating Leadership and Renewal

What follows is an example of how the application of Boyatzis' (2005) Intentional Change Theory created renewal in one writing center. Previously housed under the Provost's Office (and currently under the English Department as an Academic Support Unit), our Midwestern urban writing center has four-to-six graduate assistants on a stipend from the English Department who tutor 20 hours a week; they are enrolled in either our MFA or MA in Literature program. When four of them several years ago had debilitating physical and mental health issues and could no longer perform their duties, I could not have them removed (as, technically, I did not hire them), despite many discussions with my supervisor, the department head, and the graduate students themselves. The center was chaotic, and I began reading *Resonant Leadership* (2005) in my library carrel at lunchtime. I'd been given the book by a business

graduate student I had tutored who used his work in her dissertation (Butko, 2016); we both were amazed at his holistic approach to leadership that highlighted individual differences.

My subtle wake-up call was noticing a reluctance to go to the gym (saying to myself that all the parking spaces were full when I knew another lot was open) (Step 1: Assess the Situation). Using the worksheet on the sacrifice syndrome, I noticed that I had indeed decreased the time I spent exercising and increased the time I spent working as well as the amount of coffee I drank. From the second worksheet on identifying defensive routines, I admitted that I spent more time in my office instead of being out with my tutors, telling myself I was working on an assessment project. My top defensive routines in worksheet three showed my tendency to retreat, or as Boyatzis would say, to internalize stress and avoid it (Step 2: Identify Defensive Routines). This tendency left my family and coworkers alone, and it meant I neglected the problem. From the worksheet on the renewal cycle, I began Boyatzis' process of cultivating each day mindfulness, hope, and compassion in a small journal I kept in my library carrel. Though I spent just a few minutes each day writing, I was unnerved to see how deeply disturbed I was—and yet, as soon as I began, I felt I could do something about all this. My hope for a peaceful, productive workplace revived, and the compassion I felt for my graduate students empowered me to address my own and others' behaviors

(Step 3: The Renewal Cycle). This journal also allowed me to begin a learning agenda (Step 4: Establishing Learning Goals).

For learning goals, I wanted to know more management techniques. At the time, our Human Resources Department offered a six-month leadership course that I took that had many management strategy lessons (Step 4: Establishing Learning Goals). Another goal I set was to get advice about the particular aspects of the staff problems I was having through various support systems offered in my university, such as our Counseling Center and our Employee Assistance Program (Step 4: Establishing Learning Goals). This support, along with that of the lawyer in the Office of Institutional Equity and the English Department Head and the Graduate Studies Director, enabled me to draw up a code of professional behavior that stopped all the problems I was having (Step 4: Establishing Learning Goals). This code is supported by the English Department, which means that any graduate students not abiding by this code must meet with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Head after two warnings and risk losing employment. This learning agenda resolved the entire problem, provided me with the training and support I needed, and did result, as Boyatzis related, in lowering stress and creating caring relationships. Our Writing Center is now a peaceful and productive place. Without the research of Boyatzis' guiding my work, I would have sought personal counsel alone, but I doubt I would ever have

reached the completion and peace that I found because it trained me to spot defensive mechanisms before they grow and to craft learning agendas.

What about the bigger challenges facing LAWCDs mentioned in the introduction—the need to read journals, conduct research, and delineate job duties so that our field advances in a time of restructuring? Boyatzis (2005, 2013) would encourage LAWCDs to take stock of individual hopes for our professional and personal lives. He would ask them to hold this “ideal” next to the reality of daily work and home lives. That gap between the two, he said, would be the place to formulate learning goals based on his four-step Intentional Change Theory.

Let us imagine LAWCDs in urban settings who work through the sacrifice syndrome and defensive routines worksheets to discover that they hope to maximize the value of tutorials for non-traditional students. They need to be mindful of how they feel about current tutorials for this group, articulate hopes, and have compassion for all involved. With this compass, they can frame potential research projects and ask for help from peers at conferences.

Limitations

These worksheets do not substitute for the lengthy searching that Boyatzis advises. Boyatzis himself noted that this process of renewal can be daunting. Realistically, the process takes years. Other

limitations include experiencing dissonance for which some LAWCDs might require psychological support.

Conclusion

If the application of Boyatzis' (2005) Intentional Change Theory resolved the scenario presented in this article, it could resolve more pressing needs of LAWCDs regarding research in this field and in delineating job duties. In five or 10 years, how do we see ourselves individually as leaders and as scholars? What do we want to offer our future young directors and our communities? If we maintain only what we do now and who we are now in a state of stress, Boyatzis warned there will be negative consequences in all areas of our lives as the stress most of us experience cannot be sustained indefinitely. The Intentional Change Theory might be exactly what LAWCDs need to consult in these worksheets and in his books and articles so that they can honor both their individual values and those of the field itself—a field that seeks to guide writers and aid communities.

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Diversity Training for Learning Center Student Staff: Developing a Framework of Diversity and Social Justice

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Abstract

As Black Lives Matter unfolded in 2020, many universities were the sites of organized protests, and in response, many institutions of higher education began (or continued with) the critical work of building diversity and social justice on campus. For many students, this issue was in the forefront as they prepared for fall semester and began to take a critical look at the oppressive structures and policies within their own institutions. For those of us who hire, train, and supervise student staff in the field of academic support services, it was a kairotic moment: the time was long past due to include issues of diversity, antiracism, and social justice in student training. We pose three questions.

1. Is diversity and/or social justice training necessary and important for learning center student staff? Why?
2. Do learning center administrators possess or have access to the necessary resources to deliver diversity training?
3. Is a framework needed for learning center administrators to determine what elements to include in diversity training; for example, a diversity framework versus a social justice framework? Which is appropriate for learning center student staff?

To answer these questions, we have completed a brief review of relevant literature, offer an analysis of a survey we conducted among learning center administrators, examine Executive Orders affecting diversity training, and offer an in-depth look into the framework, sequence, and materials used in three practitioners' diversity/social justice training for learning center student staff, including an appendix with training materials. We conclude that diversity/social justice training is important for learning center student staff, as they work with a diverse group of students not only within the parameters of course content but on establishing college success skills, such as study habits, communicating with faculty, being proactive about seeking out resources, and perhaps most importantly, building critical thinking and reading skills. A great deal of time is spent in one-on-one and small group sessions, sometimes stretching throughout the entire semester. Tutors,

Supplemental Instruction leaders, academic coaches, mentors, and a diverse array of other learning center student staff will strive to establish a strong rapport based on trust and respect. To understand and appreciate the lived experiences of diverse students, to discover and reflect upon unconscious biases, and to gain tools for dismantling systems and structures that perpetuate racist policies--tools for now and in the future--is a critical aspect of establishing trust and respect. We further conclude that not quite half of respondents of our survey stated that they possessed adequate knowledge or training to provide diversity training to student staff. This does not mean that resources are not available: almost 75% of respondents reported that resources/staff are available on campus to support diversity training initiatives. Finally, we conclude that a theoretical framework is a necessary precursor to the development of diversity training for learning center student staff. We offer best practices in diversity training that have emerged from our research as well as a flowchart to assist learning center administrators in conceptualizing diversity/social justice training. Ultimately, we strive to provide a diversity training framework that will protect freedom of belief, speech, agency, differing political viewpoints, and open discourse among all students while examining the history, policies, and practices of our society and particular institutions for signs of unequal and

unjust distribution of power and resources--and examine our own selves for implicit biases that contribute to an unjust environment.

Keywords: learning center, diversity training, social justice, student staff, higher education

Diversity Training for Learning Center Student Staff: Developing a Framework of Diversity and Social Justice

"As a future educator, it is important that I understand these systemic differences so that I can fight against them and advocate for all of my students. This movement and my education have helped me to also recognize and acknowledge my implicit bias [so that I may] change my thinking."

- Peer tutor's response to social justice training (Kennedy, 2020)

In the midst of the worst pandemic in one hundred years, an extraordinary, unprecedented movement was spurred by the murder of George Floyd by Derek Chauvin, a Minneapolis police officer. Chauvin, abetted by fellow officers from the Minneapolis Police Department, knelt on Mr. Floyd's neck for over eight minutes, even after Mr. Floyd lost consciousness (Hill et al., 2020). The murder was captured on several videos and sparked the largest movement in the history of the United States, according to four polls released by a data science firm. An estimated 15-26 million people participated in Black Lives Matter protests during the spring and summer of 2020, a culmination of decades upon decades of

systemic racism and police brutality against black Americans. "It's hard to overstate the scale of this movement" (Buchanan, et al., 2020).

As Black Lives Matter unfolded in the momentous, chaotic year of 2020, cries for (and against) social justice dominated the media. Many universities were the sites of organized protests, and in response, many institutions of higher education began (or continued with) the critical work of building diversity and social justice on campus. For many students, this issue was in the forefront as they prepared for fall semester and began to take a critical look at the oppressive structures and policies within their own institutions. For those of us who hire, train, and supervise student staff in the field of academic support services, it was a kairotic moment: the time was long past due to include issues of diversity, antiracism, and social justice in student training.

Perhaps the decision to embark upon diversity/social justice training for student staff is the easy one. The difficulty lies in developing a deep understanding of what diversity training entails. Is it enough to build awareness? Or must we inspire critical consciousness and call to action? *Why?* How does that decision fit into the mission of our institutions and our learning centers? This may be particularly important in a time when many centers, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have budget reductions, and any new training may need to be justified.

Dana M. Stachowiak references Christine Clark in noting that diversity training in higher education is “generally understood as the body of services and programs offered to students, faculty, and staff that seek to ensure compliance with non-discrimination and related policy and law, and to affirm social membership group differences (broadly considered) in curricular, co-curricular, and workplace” (2015, p. 117). That seems like a good and noble endeavor, ensuring that our student staff is complying with non-discriminatory policy and respecting group differences. Raising awareness of diversity and equity, however, is only the first step: “What I am suggesting is that raising awareness is not enough; we must also raise critical consciousness, not only to diversity, but to issues of equity, power, and privilege and oppression, and move faculty from passive observers of diversity initiatives to active participants in social justice education. For transformative action to take place within a social justice education, critical consciousness is necessary” (p. 118). Stachowiak is referring to faculty here, but must we also prioritize raising this critical consciousness in order to inspire active participation in social justice education in our student staff? How must we define that nebulous term “critical consciousness”? Stachowiak draws from Paulo Freire and bell hooks:

I use the work of Paulo Freire and bell hooks, who Both explain it as having a critical awareness of one’s socialization and the structures that work to inform it. This awareness of our socialization requires us to be thoughtful about our positionalities and how those positionalities are influenced by culture and society. Critical consciousness is “an essential tool to help us recognize, understand, and work to change the social forces that shape our societies, ourselves, and the lives of our [students].” It entails ongoing action and reflection of the interrelatedness of diversity, social justice, and equity within the system of privilege and oppression of which we are all a part. (p. 199)

Many of us feel the impetus to begin this process but lack the theoretical framework or resources to do so. As we reflect on that framework, we are encouraged by a statement from a national organization devoted to college learning center practices. The National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA) has developed a statement of inclusivity, which demonstrates their commitment to “recognize, promote, and celebrate inclusivity in our profession and organization” (NCLCA Commitment):

The National College Learning Center Association

(NCLCA) represents a diverse body of educators who are dedicated to promoting excellence among learning center personnel. To that end, it is imperative to recognize and celebrate that our members are as diverse as the students we are called to serve. Moreover, given the divisive times we find ourselves in, NCLCA unequivocally stands proudly and firmly in support of our diverse peoples:

Our LGBTQ+ community;

Our Latin/x community;

Our African-American community;

Our Asian/Pacific Islander community;

Our native peoples; and

Our historically disenfranchised community including those who are underserved, underrepresented, underfinanced, and underperforming.

NCLCA recognizes the communities we serve as learning center professionals;

We recognize our professional members from these communities who are our friends, colleagues, and mentors; and

We recognize the communities and the history of the cities where we host our conferences.

We welcome you and we see you! (NCLCA Commitment)

As we embark upon this journey of creating (or revising) diversity/social justice training for our student staff, we find we are faced with three essential questions.

1. Is diversity and/or social justice training necessary and important for learning center student staff? Why?
2. Do learning center administrators possess or have access to the necessary resources to deliver diversity training?
3. Is a framework needed for learning center administrators to determine what elements to include in diversity training; for example, a diversity framework versus a social justice framework? Which is appropriate for learning center student staff?

To answer these questions, we have completed a brief review of relevant literature, discovering in this process that while publication of diversity and/or social justice training in the field of writing centers is promising, there is a regrettable dearth of research on this topic in the realm of learning centers/academic success units. Certainly, as evidenced by webinars and conference presentations, there are learning center/academic success administrators who are providing diversity and/or social justice training to tutors, Supplemental Instruction leaders, mentors, graduate students, and academic coaches. If the time

has come for this training to be an imperative, what also must be an imperative is publishing our foundational theory, praxis, and critical analysis of outcomes to ensure a wide distribution to colleagues, and, most importantly, to effect the change needed to dismantle systemic racism.

Next, we offer an analysis of a survey we conducted among learning center administrators designed to seek answers regarding diversity and/or social justice training for student staff. Is this training necessary? Does it already exist? What resources are available? What framework was used? Did the Trump Administration's EO 13950 result in changes in training, plans to develop training, or learning center funding? Hearing the voices of learning center practitioners is an essential step to understanding need, resources, and framework for diversity and/or social justice training.

We then examine the Trump Administrations' Executive Order "Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping" (EO 13950) and the ways in which this order impacted a learning center's ability to conduct diversity and/or social justice training at public institutions.

Finally, three practitioners offer an in-depth look into the framework, sequence, and materials used in their diversity/social justice training for learning center student staff, including an appendix with training materials.

A Short List of Organizations and Groups that Define Diversity and Provide Resources

Issues of diversity and social justice are commonly referred to as "DEI," or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. According to the Professional Development Offering of the eXtension Foundation Impact Collaborative, "diversity" can be defined as follows:

The presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective. Populations that have been-and remain-underrepresented among practitioners in the field and marginalized in the broader society. (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, para. 1)

"Equity" is the next step in the process, one where we make a commitment to promoting "justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems." In order to take action on equity, we must have a deep understanding of "the root causes of outcome disparity within our society." (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, para. 2) "Inclusion" is the desired outcome of learning about diversity issues and acting to achieve equity:

Inclusion is an outcome to ensure those that are diverse actually feel and/or are welcomed. Inclusion

outcomes are met when you, your institution, and your program are truly inviting to all. To the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization or group. (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, para. 3)

The Association of American Colleges and Universities recognize DEI as a fundamental goal of higher education, and they have developed initiatives such as publications, meetings, webinars, and other projects that assist in nurturing “a diverse, informed, and civically active society” (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusive Excellence, para. 1).

The National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) is an international leadership organization that provides training in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in community organizations, K-12 schools, college and university campuses, corporations and law enforcement (National Coalition, para.1). The core principles that shape NCBI’s training are building hopeful environments to welcome diversity, healing ourselves to change the world, becoming effective allies, empowering leaders to lead, changing hearts through stories, skills training leads to institutional change, sustaining the work requires ongoing support, and leaders deserve to be treated well (National Coalition, About NCBI section, para. 3-10). Current training offerings include a leadership diversity

institute, customized trainings, train the trainer workshops, and establishing college/university campus affiliates.

Within our own field of learning assistance in higher education there has been a recent promising development for the outlook of future publications. In 2020, David Arendale formed a writing group named “Colleagues of Color for Social Justice,” composed of 51 colleagues of color from across the nation employed in diverse positions, from university provosts to part-time adjunct college teachers. Along with co-convenor Mursalata Mohammed, the initial purpose of the group was established as “collaborating on writing and media projects involving learning assistance, developmental education, and GEAR UP/TRIO that intersect with race and social justice” (Arendale, 2020). The long-term goal is for this group to “continue doing good writing and multimedia creation for years to come through selecting projects of common interest.” Group projects include antiracism practices for peer study groups and development of a race glossary with examples for people working in the fields of developmental education, learning assistance, and GEAR UP/TRIO. Beginning February 2021, a CCSJ website will be published as a resource to distribute publications (articles, eBooks, audiobooks), and media projects (YouTube videos, podcasts, and other social media channel distribution) for no cost (Arendale, 2020).

Review of the Literature

Starting with Critical Race Theory

While the scope of this review is not meant to be an exhaustive examination of the issues of systemic racism and the immense complexity that comprises it, it is useful to begin our exploration with a brief discussion of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT emerged in the 1970's from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) as a response to perceived delays in civil rights advancements after the initial progress of the Civil Rights Movement (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). CLS was formed to question the U.S. legal system's role in "legitimizing oppressive social structures" (p. 4). CRT was grounded in the Civil Rights Movement and from its inception has had as its goal "social justice, liberation, and economic empowerment" through an examination of "unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources along political, economic, racial, and gendered lines" (p. 5). Seven key tenets emerge in CRT: the permanence of racism, experiential knowledge and counter-storytelling, interest convergence and theory, intersectionality, Whiteness as property, critique of liberalism, and commitment to social justice (p. 5-6).

Hiraldo (2010) notes that CRT can play a key role in revealing the social inequities that exist within the structure of higher education. While it is challenging to acknowledge the perspective that racism is

a "fundamental part of U.S. societal structure" (p. 57), it is the first step toward re-envisioning those structures.

By acknowledging racism, members of American society could recognize initiatives made by the government as improving the lives of people of color, but still benefiting the dominant. Examples of these programs include affirmative action, study abroad programs, and diversity initiatives.

CRT also provides a voice to the people who have been systematically oppressed (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). This is unlike other theories that analyze systemic oppression.

Critics claim that CRT does not include social class and gender as part of its framework due to its focus on race.

However, CRT scholars work to address the intersectionality of race and other social identities within their analysis (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Patton et al., 2007). One cannot

simply think about race, class, sexuality or gender

independent from one another. Acknowledging how these

various identities are interrelated furthers the complexity of these social constructions, which, if ignored, leaves

questions unanswered. For example, what happens when

thinking about social experiences? What happens when

these various identities do not align with social norms?

Essentially CRT places race at the center of the paradigm;

however, this does not necessarily mean that other identities are ignored. (p. 57)

Moving Toward Anti-racist Education

The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History & Culture "Talking About Race" section of the website offers a succinct overview of CRT without naming it as such:

In a society that privileges white people and whiteness, racist ideas are considered normal throughout our media, culture, social systems, and institutions. Historically, racist views justified the unfair treatment and oppression of people of color (including enslavement, segregation, internment, etc.). We can be led to believe that racism is only about individual mindsets and actions, yet racist policies also contribute to our polarization. While individual choices are damaging, racist ideas in policy have a wide-spread impact by threatening the equity of our systems and the fairness of our institutions. To create an equal society, we must commit to making unbiased choices and being antiracist in all aspects of our lives. (Talking About Race, para. 1)

Definitions of individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural racism are provided, along with specific strategies,

videos, and activities for antiracist education/training that may be particularly useful for learning center staff. One example is the development of a questioning framework which could prove effective during training moments in which open discourse is encouraged and opposing, emotional points of view emerge.

The questions include:

Seek clarity: "Tell me more about _____."

Offer an alternative perspective: "Have you ever considered _____?"

Speak your truth: "I don't see it the way you do. I see it as _____."

Find common ground: "We don't agree on _____ but we can agree on _____."

Give yourself the time and space you need: "Could we revisit the conversation about _____ tomorrow?"

Set boundaries. "Please do not say _____ again to me or around me." (Talking About Race, A

Questioning Frame of Mind section, para 13)

For those committed to the tenets of CRT, it may be jarring to examine counterarguments. However, to ignore these voices is to risk placing ourselves within an epistemic bubble, or worse, an echo chamber. When relevant voices have been left out of the conversation, whether by design or accidentally, the learner

exists in an epistemic bubble (Nguyen, 2018), which results in the omission of potentially relevant information and arguments. Other voices are simply not heard. An epistemic bubble can be popped by the inclusion of relevant voices, both like-minded and dissenting. In an echo chamber, however, relevant voices have been actively excluded and discredited. All outside voices are distrusted and actively undermined. If “a community’s belief system actively undermines the trustworthiness of any outsiders who don’t subscribe to its central dogmas”, it is likely an echo chamber (Nguyen, 2018, para. 17). Nguyen notes that trust plays a key factor in breaking away from an echo chamber. “In an epistemically healthy life, the variety of our informational sources will put an upper limit to how much we’re willing to trust any single person. Everybody’s fallible; a healthy informational network tends to discover people’s mistakes and point them out” (Nguyen, 2018, para. 27). In order to develop and maintain intellectual vigilance, we must ensure that we are not trapped in an epistemic bubble or echo chamber. Inevitably, there will be pushback and challenging, earnest questions from learning center student staff (and perhaps non-student staff) during diversity training. We cannot hope to foster the kind of open, frank discussion we are championing unless we practice intellectual vigilance by including relevant arguments, even if they are difficult voices to hear.

To that end, it is useful to define and present opposing viewpoints of Critical Race Theory. Ray Sanchez defines CRT as follows:

Critical Race Theory is a worldview that interprets everything through the lens of social and political power dynamics. It is an all-encompassing vision that views all cultural, political, and social institutions as oppressive and requires explicit and continuous anti-racism “work” to mete out its vision for a liberated humanity. It is a race-focused ideology which necessitates good works—a faith plus works if you will, and the only meritorious work is anti-racist work. In other words, it isn’t just a tool that describes the intersection of power, privilege, race, and racism. It is, at base, an overarching eschatological philosophy that claims that an oppressor group is tyrannizing or minoritizing an oppressed group and explicitly stipulates that “work” is required to change (i.e., deconstruct) society and Western institutions. (Sanchez, 2020, para. 3)

Sanchez defines a “New Racism” that is based on institutional power and systems of privilege. Because whites hold “systemic or structural hegemony, and that because they have a majority share of power, they perpetuate oppression” (para. 5). History

and society are simplified as one whole group—the oppressors, who are white, hold institutional power over another whole group—the oppressed, who are not white. A racist identity is ascribed to a group rather than an individual. This results in an erroneous lumping together of a multitude of European cultures, sub-cultures and customs into one “white-American super group” which pits the “haves,” or the whites, on one side (regardless of socio-economic status), and the “have-nots,” or the blacks (who cannot be racist because they don’t have institutional power) on the other. Sanchez warns that CRT will lead us into “concentric racialized circles of deconstruction” as we act to fulfill antiracist work by deconstructing every American institution. “As long as there are societal norms and mores that can be attributed to Western Civilization, or European culture, or perhaps even white Anglo-Saxon protestant ethics, CRT will view them as inherently privileging and empowering white oppressors” (para. 11).

Critical Social Justice

Ozlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo (2018) coin the term “critical social justice.” This approach is a critical take on social justice that maintains that society is divided in deeply unequal and significant ways, including stratifications of race, gender, ability, sexuality, and class. Those adhering to a theory of critical social justice will actively seek to change the embedded nature of this inequality in our society. Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay (2020) argue that

Critical Social Justice (a term they capitalize) does have merit in terms of bringing attention to identity issues that liberalism’s focus on the individual and universal can neglect, but is ultimately inferior to liberalism as a model for attaining social justice:

This is largely due to its complicated theoretical approach, which is actually deeply reductionist and bears little correspondence with reality. CSJ threatens individuals’ freedom of belief, speech, and agency, and their ability to make and evaluate arguments. It is divisive, alienating, and disempowering and brings out the worst of human nature, thus threatening to undo much of human history that has progressed to make genuine diversity, equality, inclusion, and social justice a reality. Critical Social Justice will never make real our innate desire for justice. (para. 33)

Pluckrose and Lindsay posit that proponents of CSJ believe that the general population does not possess the “critical consciousness” necessary to discern oppressive power systems, and therefore, the systems must be made visible. “... becoming able to see the largely invisible systems of power, privilege, and marginalization in this specifically ‘critical’ way is referred to as becoming ‘woke’” (para. 11). This approach rejects a liberal

position that anyone can argue for anything, and anyone can challenge that argument “while onlookers can evaluate these arguments on their merits, leading to the advance of knowledge and moral progress” (para. 12). CSJ supporters would argue against this liberal position with the belief that “knowledge is related to one’s position in relation to power and only the powerful will be heard . . . They frequently deny that liberalism, which included the Civil Rights Movement, liberal feminism, and Gay Pride, has produced any increase in racial, gender, or LGBT equality, but that oppression continues in more insidious and hidden forms” (para. 12).

Dan Subotnik, law professor and author of *Toxic Diversity: Race, Gender and Law Talk in America* (2005), argues that proponents of race and gender theory harm the cause for social justice by “almost deliberately misinterpreting racial interaction and data and turning white males into victimizers (page).” These theorists, instead of empowering minorities and women, divert their energies away from contributing to a social justice agenda. Subotnik posits that thoughtful Americans, regardless of race and gender, can handle frank conversations about difficult topics. He offers a critique of race and gender theory that challenges issues of single parenthood, the merit system in academic and business settings, gender privilege in the classroom, and crime (Publisher’s Notes). In regard to critical race theory (CRT), Subotnik claims that “discouraging

white legal scholars from entering the national conversation about race . . . has generated a kind of cynicism in white audiences which, in turn, has had precisely the reverse effect of that ostensibly desired by CRTs. It drives the American public to the right and ensures that anything CRT offers is reflexively rejected” (Subotnik, 1998, p. 697). He reiterates that whites must be a part of the conversation if change is to occur: “If the lives of minorities are heavily constrained, if not fully defined, by the thoughts and actions of the majority elements in society, it would seem to be of great importance that white thinkers and doers participate in open discourse to bring about change” (698).

In “How Diversity Training Hurts” (2016), Subotnik defines diversity training as a “distinct set of programs aimed at facilitating positive intergroup interactions, reducing prejudice and discrimination, and enhancing the skills, knowledge, and motivation of people to interact with diverse others” (p. 198). He acknowledged that these goals are undeniably admirable. In practice, however, “diversity training almost surely hurts, more than it helps, race and ethnic relations” (p.199). Subotnik identifies diversity training as a one-way street, on which “the emphasis rests on the perceived needs of ‘diverse others,’ about which whites must be educated” (p. 200). The result is that discussion is limited by driving countervailing sentiments underground, which limits interracial discussion and causes a

backlash from those who “demand a maximum of freedom to speak their piece, without being tutored in what they are allowed to say”(p. 201). Subotnik acknowledges that diversity training helps non-white students by boosting their self-esteem and promoting their visibility and confidence in academics, but that it is not clear if that “translates into intellectual growth” (p. 202). Furthermore, Subotnik claims that no evidence supports the claim that for whites, diversity training helps suppress feelings of racial superiority. He advises that “if circumstances require diversity training, then, professional racialists must not be allowed to control the discussion” (p. 204).

Subotnik defends his position by referencing President Obama’s town hall appearance at North High School in Des Moines, Iowa, in which Obama “bemoaned what some critics call the ‘new political correctness’ at colleges and universities” (Kingkade, 2017, para. 2).

The following is an excerpt of Obama’s speech:

‘I’ve heard some college campuses where they don’t want to have a guest speaker who is too conservative or they don’t want to read a book if it has language that is offensive to African-Americans or somehow sends a demeaning signal towards women,’ Obama said. ‘I gotta tell you I don’t agree with that either. I don’t agree that you, when you become students at colleges, have to be coddled and protected from

different points of view.’ The president said that when he was in school, listening to people he disagreed with helped to test his own assumptions and sometimes led him to change his mind.

‘Sometimes I realized maybe I’ve been too narrow-minded, maybe I didn’t take this into account, maybe I should see this person’s perspective,’ Obama said.

“That’s what college, in part, is all about.” (para. 3-5)

Agency, Open Discourse and Definitions of Terms

While CRT advocates seek to achieve social justice, liberation, and economic empowerment through an examination of unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources along political, economic, racial, and gendered lines, CRT detractors and advocates of liberalism seek to achieve social justice through individuals’ freedom of belief, speech, and agency, and their ability to make and evaluate arguments through open discourse among all races. A prevailing concern of the latter group is an institution of higher education suppressing speech and open discourse to avoid microaggressions or dismantling institutional structures only to replace them with ones that prove to be just as oppressive. A prevailing concern of CRT advocates is that actions such as microaggressions and the myriad of systemic and institutional racism will continue to oppress students of color and deny social justice.

But perhaps the goals of these groups are not mutually exclusive. Perhaps there is a way to protect freedom of belief, speech, agency, and open discourse among the races and those with differing viewpoints while examining the policies and practices of our institutions for signs of unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources--and our own selves for implicit biases that contribute to an unjust environment. Why can't there be a framework that does both?

Systemic Racism. To that end, it is useful to take a deeper dive into the definition of relevant terms as we establish a context for diversity and social justice training. Halimah Abdullah (2020) offers some succinct definitions within the context of the protest movement of the summer of 2020, starting with a useful distinction among systemic, structural, and institutional racism. *Systemic racism* is defined as “rules, practices, and customs once rooted in law” whose “residual effects reverberate throughout entire societal systems” (para.7). For example, redlining, which is now illegal, refers to the process of “denying financial, government and other services to people in certain neighborhoods or communities based on race or ethnicity” (para. 8). Homes in black neighborhoods do not appreciate at the same rate, leading to lower personal capital and lower property taxes, which result in woefully under-resourced schools and communities, including fewer grocery stores, banks, job opportunities, and reliable public transportation, to name a few. A

report authored by Collins et al. (2017) for The Institute for Policy Studies notes that wealth gap between black and white households is on track to have a profoundly significant toll on the economy long-term: “While households of color are projected to reach majority status by 2043, if the racial wealth divide is left unaddressed, median Black household wealth is on a path to hit zero by 2053 and median Latino household wealth is projected to hit zero twenty years later. In sharp contrast, median White household wealth would climb to \$137,000 by 2053” (para. 2). Black and Latinx households need an advanced degree to achieve middle-class standards of wealth, while White households need only a high school diploma to achieve that same level (para 2). The Institute points out current tax codes that subsidize the wealthy and the need to protect low-wealth families from “wealth-stripping practices” (para. 3).

So many examples of systemic racism have emerged from the legacy of “the most brutal institution of enslavement that human beings have ever concocted” (Worland, 2020, para. 12). Social Security, formed in the 1930's, initially excluded all domestic and agricultural workers, which meant that two-thirds of black Americans were excluded from this safety net. After WWII, federal mortgage lending programs prohibited African American residents from borrowing money to purchase homes since “the very presence of a black resident in a neighborhood reduced the

value of the homes there” (para. 13). Sentencing laws for drug use were and are much harsher for poor black Americans, tearing apart families and filling the jails with black men, causing a flood of single-parent homes led by women (para. 13). All of this has a ripple effect throughout generations in terms of economics, criminal justice, health care, and the list goes on.

Worland goes on to note that black American neighborhoods are often “rife with pollution” (para. 15) and lack options for nutritious food and health care, leading to much higher instances of asthma and diabetes, which have poorer outcomes with COVID-19: at one point in the pandemic, African Americans accounted for 42% of COVID deaths (Gupta, 2020, para. 1). Death in childbirth is three to four times higher in black women. Schools have poor resources due to lack of property taxes. Black people have more problems accessing voting for a multitude of reasons and have higher felony convictions, causing disenfranchisement (Worland, para. 16).

The “woke” factor of systemic racism is not brand new. As far back as 1968, President Johnson’s Kerner Commission insisted that “white society is deeply indicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it” (Worland, para. 19). The results were largely ignored. Present-day systemic racism is ignored and denied as well. “Trump’s Administration has repeatedly denied that discrimination against black Americans is embedded in the political, economic and social

structure of the country” (para. 6). Centuries of racist policy have manifested in “an education system that fails black Americans, substandard health care that makes them more vulnerable to death and disease, and an economy that leaves millions without access to a living wage” (para. 4). With the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020, a portion of the U.S. population seems to have woken up to this truth. However, the deep divisions in this country have been brought into even sharper focus as a result. While a growing majority of people in this country are ready to “repudiate its history of structural racism,” many of those in power, including the White House, are “eager to deny it” (para. 8).

Structural Racism. *Structural racism* is recognized as “a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequality” (Abdullah, para. 15). For example, a black child is disproportionately selected into a special education classroom, and upon becoming disruptive out of boredom, is expelled from school and enters the criminal justice system, which affects every aspect of that child’s future life, including the ability to get a job, vote, find housing, etc. Each institution is interdependent on the other, and as we have “allowed privileges associated with ‘whiteness’ and disadvantages associated with ‘color’ to endure

and adapt over time” (para. 15), nascent racism becomes multifaceted and ubiquitous.

Institutional Racism. *Institutional racism* “occurs within social and governmental institutions and refers to the blocking of people of color from the distribution of resources in a systematic way that benefits whites” (Abdullah, para. 20). For example, a black college student seeks to purchase a car so she can work while taking classes, and the lender charges her a much higher interest rate than they would a white person. The student sees less profit from her paycheck as her car payment (and perhaps insurance rate) is higher. As a result, she has to work more hours, which takes away time from studying and causes her to perform more poorly than her white classmates. On a macro level, the predatory lending practice of charging higher fees, interest levels, and payment structures to people of color contributed to the housing crisis of 2008 (para. 23). And let us not neglect to mention police brutality and racial disparities in police–citizen interactions.

White Privilege and White Fragility. Abdullah unpacks the politically charged term *white privilege* (see the Executive Order section in this paper) and connects it to systemic, structural, and institutional racism, pointing out white people’s “historical and contemporary advantages in access to quality education, decent jobs and livable wages, homeownership, retirement benefits, wealth, and so on” (para.28). White privilege exists regardless of economic

status: a poor white person may have worked hard, but they still have greater structural advantage in our society than a black person of any economic background. White privilege means not worrying about getting shot by the police when you are pulled over, or not being followed around a store by an employee (para. 36).

In the social context of interactions between white people and black people, Abdullah examines three terms designed to bring awareness to others’ lived experiences. *White fragility* is defined as the “negative emotional reactions some whites have when racism on various levels is called to their attention by people of color” (para. 37). The feelings of white people when discussing issues of racism and discrimination with people of color become more important than the experiences of the people of color. This shifts the attention to the white person’s reaction and “undercuts the validity of the person of color’s experience” (para. 39).

Microaggression, a term that many are familiar with in the context of higher education diversity training, is defined as “quotidian racial slights that accumulate and make a person feel marginalized” (para. 43). These can include actions, unthinking comments, snide remarks, or even silence--actions that layer upon each other over time and cause an unwelcoming and even threatening environment. For example, black people who are walking in neighborhoods often hear white people locking car

doors, or perhaps the white person will cross to the other side of the street. A student of color may be offered back-handed compliments that imply they are performing well in spite of their race. A black colleague may be ignored in meetings or left off emails. A white woman grabs her purse closer when a black teenager walks by her in a store.

And finally, Abdullah cautions against *white-splaining* as the impolitic occasion of a white person who “claims expertise on racial issues to a person of color” (para. 52). Every organization needs a diversity statement, but “some people are making statements when they haven’t listened” (para. 56). To this end, Abdullah offers some powerful words of wisdom that should guide any training endeavor: engage in self-reflection, listen to those with lived experiences, and “challenge yourself with difficult writings. If you are in a space where you are in a position of power, endeavor to listen more than you speak” (para. 62). We recognize the relevance of this statement, as this philosophy is the hallmark of a tutor’s work.

Colorblind Ideology. “Color-blindness” is another critical concept to unpack before we begin a discussion of training, as some tutors may declare that “race doesn’t matter” when it comes to tutoring. “To declare being color-blind is a lie; at best it’s a wish” (Villanueva, 2006, p. 8). Villanueva references Clare Xanthos when reflecting on the consequences: “the trope of being color blind is so

deeply ingrained in the British ethos . . . that it allows for the denial of racial profiling in schools, the denial of racial profiling in the judicial system, racial profiling in law enforcement” (p. 8). Color-blindness causes denial, which causes inaction in education: “Those of us dedicated to anti-racist pedagogy, to addressing the current state of racism find ourselves every day trying to convince folks that there really still is racism, and it’s denied” (p. 11). Those with a colorblind ideology are defined as those who “deemphasize racial differences,” and those with this mindset and have been linked to “reduced concern with racial minorities and greater acceptance of racist behaviors in others” (Ellwood, 2020, para. 2). Ellwood surveyed 1,125 university students, and those who scored higher in color-blindness were less confident in actions against prejudices and more negative toward out-groups. The more color-blindness, the lower intergroup empathy. In Dan Melzer’s study (2019) of white writing tutors’ attitudes about the concept of white privilege, he references Alice McIntyre’s idea of “white talk,” a predominant aspect of which is the “belief in the importance of being color-blind,” which “disregards systemic racism and unconscious biases” (p. 35). A main theme that emerged in this study was that tutors felt “in tutoring sessions race isn’t taken into account or shouldn’t be taken into account” (p. 38). Many see color-blindness as positive. However, he notes that only whites can

opt out of their racial identity. A white person may choose to opt out of their racial identity in order to avoid seeing disparities that make them uncomfortable. Understanding the harmful outcomes of adopting a colorblind approach to diversity is a critical first step to dismantling racism in all of its forms.

Equality and Equity. Two final terms that must be defined are “equality” and “equity.” Many learning centers may insist that they treat all students equally: all programming is available to all students, marketed to all students, and provided to all students. Dana Stachowiak (2015) notes that equality means providing the same thing for everyone (for example, giving a sighted student and blind student the same textbook). Equity means providing each person with what they need, and that often does not match what other students need: “because of different learning styles, cultures, or family structures . . . the resources our students need to be successful won’t be the same” (p. 123). In other words, we can have equal resources but inequitable opportunities.

Trainings in Higher Education

Information about training in “diversity” and “implicit bias” and “social justice” in higher education is readily available for consumption, starting with your own university’s version of an office of inclusive excellence, diversity, equity, multicultural affairs, etc., and moving on to a broad array of peer-reviewed research. For our purposes here, it is useful to explore the differences among

diversity, implicit bias, and social justice training in higher education so that we may begin to understand how to theorize and structure training for learning center student staff.

“Diversity training” in higher education is an umbrella term that encompasses a myriad of configurations. As mentioned above, Dana M. Stachowiak makes reference to Christine Clark’s definition of diversity in higher education as “the body of services and programs offered to students, faculty, and staff that seek to ensure compliance with non-discrimination and related policy and law, and to affirm social membership group differences (broadly considered) in curricular, co-curricular, and workplace contexts” (p. 117). While support for campus diversity is extremely strong and apparent in many presidents’ strategic plans (especially in student affairs), Stachowiak makes a call to action for the raising of critical consciousness, especially among faculty, “not only to issues of diversity, but to issues of equity, power, and privilege and oppression, and move faculty from passive observers of diversity initiatives to active participants in social justice education” (p. 118). The first step is to use a framework of “social justice” rather than “diversity.” Diversity equals awareness, which by itself (without action) can lead to potential passivity. This can lead to “faculty irresponsibility and indifference with regard to personal, social, and institutional dimensions of injustice” thus reinforcing

systemic oppression (p. 120). Social justice is the call to understand and take action. This framework puts the responsibility onto individuals, not just the institution, to promote equity, to “engage in explicit discussions regarding issues of privilege, power, and difference . . . and work to encourage university policies that foster equity and social justice” (p. 120).

The Need for Critical Consciousness. Stachowiak makes the argument that diversity training delivered as a body of information without the raising of critical consciousness is not effective, and perhaps even harmful. Katerina Bezrukova et al. (2104) conducted a meta-analysis of over forty years of diversity training evaluations to address the question of diversity training effectiveness, pointing out that the American Psychological Association declares diversity education as “one of the five major learning goals for undergraduate education” (p. 5). The authors note that evidence that diversity training and education is effective is mixed at best. This lack of information about the effectiveness of training is a result of researchers approaching diversity training with a myriad of different “theoretical interests, conceptualizations, and evaluations, both across and within disciplines” (p. 5), causing knowledge to become fragmented. This meta-analysis did yield important findings, however: diversity training is most useful when it is integrated or embedded into training, rather than as a standalone feature. Mandatory training seems to be more effective

for behavioral learning, although less popular. The most effective types of diversity training programs were designed to achieve both *awareness and skills* (perhaps crossing over from Stachowiak’s definition of “diversity training” into training that raises critical consciousness). This “on the ground” approach provides knowledge and information, but also tools, to “help employees and students not only understand these societal issues but also apply them in day-to-day interactions with those of another race, religions, or ethnic group” (p. 46-47). We note that this approach lends itself particularly well to student staff providing academic support services, as they are trained to use tools--strategies and skills--in their everyday approach to academics.

Distinguishing Between Diversity Training and Diversity Education

It is worthwhile to note that some practitioner-researchers recognize a difference between diversity training--as delivered outside of the classroom--and diversity education, which is a course or series of courses. Unfortunately, there is a disconnect between these two fields in terms of theory and practice. King et al. (2010) suggest that an identification of best practices can provide the bridge. “Focusing solely on behaviors [typical of diversity training] without addressing the attitudes underlying them [typical of diversity education] may prove ineffective in

reducing bias in organizational decision making” (p. 902). The resulting suggestions for designing diversity training could be extremely useful to learning center/academic success administrators embarking on diversity training for their student staff.

King et al. point out that a critical first step to shaping diversity training is to conduct a needs assessment, which enables an organization to identify the specific needs of its employees (p. 893). The next steps are to secure upper-management and institutional support, require managers to participate, integrate assessment of the training outcomes into the program, and connect the training to a larger strategic initiative (p. 893). Focus on “competency development” may allow learners to “achieve behavioral goals to a greater extent than focus on awareness or knowledge alone. Generally, experts agree that the objectives of successful training programs should advance trainee effectiveness at both the organizational and individual levels” (p. 894). For example, behavioral activities (such as role-playing) will allow participants to practice relevant skills. Finally, employing feedback is critical: trainees may not understand “how to effectively implement the skills and knowledge gained in training. Employees attending diversity training may have misinterpreted information they received during the session leading them to engage in more disparate treatment inadvertently” (p. 903). Detailed feedback that is often found in diversity education (diversity courses) can “help

lessen the likelihood of diversity training producing negative effects” such as employees engaging in even more discriminatory behavior after training. This feedback can consist of “assessment tools such as 360-degree feedback, where an individual is rated by supervisors, peers, and subordinates on their exhibition of appropriate and desired diversity-related behaviors. This information provides individuals with feedback on their current behavior and can provide the opportunity to monitor progress over time, if assessed at multiple time periods” (p. 903).

Implicit Bias Training

Implicit bias training has recently gained tremendous momentum. Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald posit that memory--both implicit and explicit--can apply to social constructs and can influence our attitudes, behaviors, and actions (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). These memories consist of “introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past experience that mediate favorable or unfavorable feeling, thought, or action toward social objects” (p. 5). In order to measure that bias, the Implicit Associations Test was developed and has become one of the most influential psychological instruments in decades (Ortner, 2015). In the IAT, the user is presented with a series of tasks involving word associations and categorizations. Through Harvard’s Project Implicit website,

interested parties can register to take the test to discover implicit associations about race, gender, sexual orientation, and other topics (Project Implicit, 2011). In the influential book *Blindspots* (2016), Banaji and Greenwald explain that stereotypes may help us navigate the world, but they can lead to behaviors that cause individuals to live up to the stereotype, which can have advantages and disadvantages. Discrimination may not involve blatant acts of racism or hatred, but can be as simple as maintaining the status quo; thus, automatic preferences steer us away from uncomfortable situations. The authors emphasize that it is necessary to go beyond these surveys or interviews to understand individuals' social attitudes. These unconscious attitudes (or "blindspots") shape our beliefs and our judgments about others' potential, abilities, and even their character. "Good people" try to match their behavior to their intentions, so if we become aware of our hidden biases, we will be in a better position to change our behaviors.

Many college administrators choose implicit bias training as the focus of their diversity training. One relevant example is the College of Engineering at UW-Madison in collaboration with Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute (Sheridan et al., 2020). These groups created a three-hour implicit bias workshop in response to underrepresented students' reports of harassment and an overall unwelcoming environment in student spaces. Those who participated in the workshop "were more aware

of their own implicit biases, were more motivated to engage in bias-reduction activities, felt they had the self-efficacy to change their behavior with regard to bias, and reported taking more actions to reduce gender bias—but only if 25% or more of the faculty in that department attended the workshop" (p. 6). The training also improved the departmental climate.

This training was framed as a "habit of mind" with the acknowledgement that most people have implicit bias. This approach avoids "shaming and blaming" individuals (p. 6). Participants were taught specific names for bias constructs, which helps students to identify those biases when they occur in their environments (p. 7). Training also provided "evidence-based strategies that participants can use to reduce the impact of implicit bias on their actions" (p. 7). The workshop was interactive with exercises and discussion to promote engagement.

Sheridan et al. provide a detailed description of the three-hour workshop, including an appendix with materials. In brief, the main components included setting the stage (to promote buy-in for the goals of the workshop), understanding implicit bias (defining the term and framing the concepts that were to be covered), recruitment and messaging (an analysis of the department's recruitment and messaging to students and how the organization could make this better), organizational roles

(within the organization—how can more diversity and less stereotypical thinking be achieved), interactions (personal interactions such as microaggressions), and concluding activities (discussion of strategies students had brainstormed).

However, many practitioners have concluded that implicit bias training on its own is not enough. Applebaum et al. (2018) argues that implicit bias training (IBT) in “response to a culture of racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression on college campuses” is remedial and a “panacea for institutional cultural change” (p. 129). IBT is designed to “increase the awareness of implicit or unconscious prejudices and its impact on behavior” (p. 131). Exposing implicit bias is an important first step for addressing racism on college campuses, but implicit bias may allow an individual to explain away their behavior as part of their implicit bias, putting too much attention on the individual and not on institutional and systemic racism, which perpetuates rather than disrupts social injustice (p. 133). Also, IBT assumes an individual can rid themselves of attitudes that affect their behavior by becoming aware of these attitudes (p. 132). Thus, confessing bias “becomes a performative act that allows one to believe that one has moved beyond racism” (p. 133).

Likewise, microaggression training is not enough, as microaggressions “often do not involve explicit intention to harm” (p. 134). In comparison to IBT, while microaggression education

does put the emphasis on the “derogatory message conveyed rather than the bias that is unintended” (p. 135) and intends to reveal how collective microaggressions contribute to “structures of oppression and marginalization (p. 135), Applebaum et al. argue that the ambiguity that surrounds the definition of a microaggression and the ensuing argument that students are being coddled and too sensitive “is a function of systemic ignorance that is willfully and actively maintained” (p. 136).

Unconscious Bias Training

Thus, rather than stopping at identifying implicit bias and educating about microaggressions, there are calls to challenge the “systems and dominant frameworks that maintain injustice” (p. 138). In other words, the institution itself must make a commitment to prioritize social justice for change in campus climate to really happen (p. 139). Campuses “must be committed to staying with the discomfort that is generated from exposing dominant frameworks, the discursive strategies that protect them, and how the institution and its individual members are complicit in their perpetuation” (p. 140).

Atewologun et al. (2018) provide some international perspective and arrive at essentially the same conclusions. A report on the effectiveness of Unconscious Bias Training (UBT) in the UK defines UBT as an effort to increase awareness, reduce bias, and “change behavior, in the intended direction, towards

equity-related outcomes” (p. 6). Training includes a test, a test debrief, education, and suggested techniques for “reducing the level of unconscious bias or mitigating the impact of unconscious bias” (p. 6). The researchers found that UBT is effective for raising awareness, and may be effective for reducing bias, but is unlikely to eliminate it. “...there is potential for back-firing effects when UBT participants are exposed to information that suggests stereotypes and biases are unchangeable” (p. 7). UBT is more effective with more education and information about bias reduction strategies (p. 8). Perhaps more importantly, UBT should be seen as part of a wider program. “For organisational level change to happen, organisational structures, policies and procedures must be targeted directly, perhaps overhauled” and UBT “...should be treated as just one part of a comprehensive strategy for achieving organisation-wide change” (p. 9).

Steps Toward Large-scale Change

Large-scale national change in the inequities that face underrepresented/underserved students in higher education has not been realized, according to Richard Prystowsky (2018). Prystowsky examines “the structures of isolation” and “the inadequate addressing of our own implicit biases” to “offer a model of systemic collaboration aimed at ameliorating these problems” so colleges can achieve equity goals. He emphasizes the importance in shaping efforts that are “coordinated under a college-wide, unifying,

centralized, integrated, comprehensive approach to addressing student success barriers at the college.” He created Operation 100% at Lansing Community College in an attempt to do this, coming to the conclusion that “higher education is systematically structured to facilitate employees’ separation (or even isolation) from rather than their collaboration with other employees” (p. 94).

Stachowiak (2015) also acknowledges the need to move beyond “diversity” or “implicit bias” training in order to involve the entire institution as well as the individuals within it. The first step is to use a framework of “social justice” rather than “diversity.” Diversity equals awareness, which by itself (without action) can lead to potential passivity. This can lead to “faculty irresponsibility and indifference with regard to personal, social, and institutional dimensions of injustice” thus reinforcing systemic oppression (p. 120). Social justice is the call to understand and take action. This framework puts the responsibility onto individuals, not just the institution, to promote equity, to “engage in explicit discussions regarding issues of privilege, power, and difference . . . and work to encourage university policies that foster equity and social justice” (p. 120). Then we must “look at ourselves, our own identity and experiences, our own privilege and power, and what makes us the person we are” (p. 124). We need to learn

how to name the social constructs of our identity and consider connections to others in our group and out of our group; the oppressor/oppressed relationship roles (p. 125). And let us not forget the critical issue of diverse recruitment, as well as retention of social justice-minded faculty and social justice leadership training (p. 125).

Similarly, Heather W. Hackman (2005) identifies social justice education as a perspective that empowers and encourages students to think critically, and one that models social change (p. 103). The five essential components are content mastery, critical thinking, skills for action and social change, self-reflection, and awareness of multicultural group dynamics. Content mastery refers to factual information, historical contextualization, and macro-to-micro content analysis (p. 104). Critical thinking refers to questioning and challenging: “presentation of information as truth devoid of critique runs the risk of creating a dogmatic and prescriptive classroom environment” (p. 105). Skills for action and social change provide hope and creative energy; this is important because “students in our public and private educational environments are taught to feel disempowered . . . complacent . . . or hopeless . . . One of the most effortless forms of cultural imperialism is to convince those living within systems of inequality that there is nothing they could or should do about it. Those who dare to critique and challenge the

status quo are labeled a threat to the fabric of democracy and freedom in the United States” (p. 106).

Hackman touts personal reflection as a powerful tool for educators: we must engage in self-reflection about our backgrounds and personal qualities and how those beliefs inform our practices (p. 106). She refers to Peggy McIntosh’s observations that those in the dominant group are “actively taught not to see their privilege” and to “see their life and its privileges as the ‘norm’ for society and humanity” and that they “have done nothing to earn this privilege” (p. 107). It is not enough to be a nice person or consider oneself not racist—white people have a critical role in “challenging and changing racism in the U.S.” (p. 107). Lack of self-reflection locks us into passivity and powerlessness (p. 107). She is referring to self-reflection for both “subordinate and dominant identities” (p. 108). When engaging in social justice training, it is important to understand the multicultural group dynamics of the classroom “and the socially constructed identities of the teacher and students” (p. 108). Don’t avoid discussion, but understand the dynamics. Thus, classroom activities must “create a safe space for students to dialogue about issues of diversity, classroom expectations that underscore the value of diverse life experiences, and the infusion of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy” (p. 108).

Writing center scholarship regarding diversity and social justice training has been promising; writing centers lend themselves well to such training, as students are often writing about sociocultural topics and exploring their belief systems. Nancy Barron and Nancy Grimm (2002) describe the efforts of writing center administrators to deliver racial diversity training. The biggest hurdle they encountered was digging under the “colorblind” form of implicit bias (I’m not racist—color doesn’t matter). However, what is often not understood by white students is that students of color must develop “strategies for managing academically on a campus that pretends to be colorblind” (p. 58), including the unspoken rule that minority students (color, class, culture) “are expected to make themselves over to match the institutionalized image of the typical student, while white middle-class students’ sense of complacency is reinforced by the familiar values and routines of university life” (p. 59). As a result, writing tutors who work with students of color don’t recognize these stumbling blocks but are often at a loss “to convince diverse students that their differences are indeed valued” (p. 59). The authors used “productive diversity” theory in training their tutors to enact actual social change: they presented readings on systemic domination and injustice, and when they experienced emotional push-back from mainstream tutors, they slowed down and facilitated individual conversations.

Barron and Grimm emphasize that trainers must “be clear for yourself about what is motivating the focus on race” in training, or the students will be confused and possibly resistant. A statement may be useful in this articulation to student staff. For example: “Together, we imagine a writing center as a place where people can come together across their differences to share interpretations inevitably informed by racial, class, social, and cultural identities, where in learning about difference, our own perspectives become transformed, and thus we begin to communicate, solve problems, to teach, and to coexist more fully” (p. 68). Upon assessment of the training, they found that they needed to spend more time defining terms and laying the groundwork, as tutors who are “members of the dominant group have difficulty conceptualizing systematic oppression because it lies outside of their lived experience. If we were starting over again, we would distinguish between systematic oppression and individual acts of racism” (p. 69). Student ownership of the training is critical, including an invitation to students to help design the training projects that deal with race by reflecting on the way their identities have been formed. “Provoking the kind of transformation called for by productive diversity in a tutor training program involves tinkering with something as fundamental as peoples’ identities and the ways these identities have been formed in relationships with others” (p. 72). Beliefs

about race, both unconscious and voiced, are formed by personal and community relationships.

The goal for Barron and Grimm was to offer tools to “restructure belief systems and renegotiate relationships” (p. 72-73). Thus, the training that happened in their center was a starting point, but true and lasting change occurred because students were given the tools to grow and take action over time and in many spaces.

“Transformation, if it is going to happen at all, will happen in multidirectional ways, in no predictable timeframe, and often in spaces beyond the institutional gaze” (p. 76).

Frankie Condon (2007) references Victor Villanueva’s challenge to writing center directors, scholars, and tutors to “examine and to address the ways in which race and racism shape our writing center identity and practices; enable and constrain knowledge and knowledge production, teaching and learning; and are reproduced not only through the thought and action of individuals, but also and especially through systems and institutions” (p. 19). Condon notes the lack of dialogue “about the ways writing centers might unwittingly manifest or reproduce racism and might also be powerful sites for resistance against institutional racism” (p. 20) and poses three questions that begin the work of anti-racism in and through writing centers:

In what ways are we resisting being used by institutions to provide "evidence" of care for historically marginalized groups

and concomitantly to provide justification for the flushing of individual students from marginalized groups out of the academy ("look we gave them a writing center and they still can't cut it")? In what ways are we resisting the collapse of race and ethnicity such that we do not implicitly or explicitly endorse assimilationist models of literacy and literacy instruction? Are we creating opportunities within our writing centers and our institutions for sustained thoughtful, rigorous, and responsible consideration of institutional racism and productive, anti-racist transformation? (p. 21)

Condon offers practical solutions for changing the structure of writing centers to “more fully enact principles of anti-racism” (p. 27). Staff diversity should be at least proportionately represented as the diversity of our campuses, but we need to exceed that (especially on white campuses) by recruiting students of color. Satellites in multicultural centers can encourage students of color to serve as tutors and to seek tutoring. An examination of training pedagogy is important; for example, using primary texts dealing with racism provides a critical foundation (p. 27). In fact, Condon argues that in anti-racism training, we must start with structural transformation before personal transformation. This approach “enables white anti-racists to move dialectically between analysis and engagement with (against) the matrix of relations in and through

which our ideas of selfhood emerge” (p. 32). Condon offers many useful queries for directors and student staff to consider before embarking on designing anti-racist training in the categories of mission, culture, power, resources, and structure of the center. Most importantly, he does not shrink away from the question of why we should begin this journey of anti-racism training.

To embark on this journey from our writing centers can be the start of an extraordinary personal and professional journey not only for those of us who are directors, but also for the tutors and student writers who inspire, follow, and lead us to extend ourselves beyond what has been said and done— beyond the unknown. (pp. 32-33)

Recent writing center research focusing on specific topics within diversity training have yielded important findings. Dan Melzer (2019), a writing center director, conducted a research study over four semesters to “closely examine white [writing] tutors’ attitudes about the concept of white privilege” (34). He references Alice McIntyre’s idea of “white talk,” a predominant aspect of which is the “belief in the importance of being color-blind,” which “disregards systemic racism and unconscious biases” (35). A main theme that emerged in this study was that tutors felt “in tutoring sessions race isn’t taken into account or shouldn’t be taken into account” (38). Many see color-blindness as positive. However,

Mezler notes that only whites can opt out of their racial identity, a key characteristic of white privilege. Instead of devoting one day in his tutor education course to diversity training, he “made a conscious effort to foreground race and white privilege in all topics of the course” (39). He also committed to using diverse perspectives in class readings and having the students take implicit racial bias tests. Mezler advises not to avoid difficult conversations, even though they can quickly become emotional. Beyond establishing ground rules for framing experiences, he strove to create productive space for students to express feelings and lived experiences.

As mentioned above, very little scholarship can be found that focuses on learning center diversity training for student staff--or diversity in learning center staffing, for that matter. Saundra McGuire (2020) notes that while there are over 1,500 learning support centers in the U.S. in 2020, “the chance that Black or Brown students at most institutions will encounter a tutor, SI leader, or center administrator who looks like them, knows their experience, and can be an example of academic excellence is slim.” This lack of diversity is “a manifestation of systemic racism.” McGuire suggests five actions to dismantle it: 1. “Change the way we recruit and hire tutors and SI leaders so that our academic support team more closely reflects the diversity of our student body.” Relying on referrals from faculty and staff is

not enough; we must reach out to student groups and diversity/inclusion departments. 2. "Provide an opportunity within our centers for students of color to gather and talk about issues that affect them." 3. "Meet regularly with Black, Latinx, Native American and Asian student staff to hear about their issues and concerns." This may lead to a review of policies and procedures within your center. 4. "Educate ourselves and our student staff about privilege and its impacts." 5. "Continue to hold our student workers and visitors accountable." Public acknowledgement of "welcoming and inclusive learning environment that does not tolerate speech or actions that disrupt that" such as mission statements and training is critical.

Tammi Kohl Kennedy (2020) reflects on the need for learning center administrators to include social justice training for their student staff. In our efforts to understand systemic racism as we respond to the nation's social justice movement, we must consider our commitment to developing active, engaged learners and tutors, and what the role of social justice has in that process. She connects this impetus to her university's strategic plan, which sets the expectation for supporting the whole student and preparing them for meaningful work, responsible citizenship, and fulfilling lives.

Core-shaking events in the spring and summer of 2020 demanded a voice in this year's training. As I reviewed materials to prepare my student staff of 40

for our work ahead, it became clear we would need to expand our scope to include social justice if we hoped to secure our place in students' lives as relevant resources on their academic journeys. With so much misinformation surrounding the nation's social justice movement, and so many of us simply not knowing the origins or realizing the existence of systemic racism, our valuable work with students – and the improved success and retention that typically result – seemed in jeopardy unless we educated ourselves. So much of what my learning center student staff does relates to helping students understand how to revise their approach to academics. This means we work with students where they are and develop them to where they want to be. Our work requires listening to students' perspectives, seeing value in their unique experiences, and including all that in minor changes that fit into students' lives right now as we move them beyond their comfort zones of passive students toward active, engaged learners. We support the whole student, and to do that, we need to appreciate and understand the whole person. Adding to our professional mandate is directly

connecting our knowledge of systemic racism and social justice to our ability to strategically meet our university's mission. We "prepare students for fulfilling lives, meaningful work, and responsible citizenship." My student staff and I would be doing a severe disservice to our students without such training as we sidestepped a core value of our institution.

Without reliable information on the history of systemic racism, not only are we unable to fulfill our mission, but we are ill-equipped to begin the necessary steps to actively dismantle racism. (para. 4-5)

We circle back to the premise that there is surely a way to protect freedom of belief, speech, agency, differing political viewpoints, and open discourse among all students while examining the history, policies, and practices of our society and particular institutions for signs of unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources--and examining our own selves for implicit biases that contribute to an unjust environment. In our search for a framework that can achieve these goals, we visit one final resource in order to conduct our own needs assessment of the field at large: a survey administered to learning assistance colleagues in higher education.

Survey Analysis

We would be remiss not to include the voices of learning center administrators about diversity training, and to that end, we created a survey to get feedback on issues of diversity training offerings and resources. The survey link was shared with 683 National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA) members and 2,639 subscribers to the LRNASST listserv, operated by the University of Florida (<https://lists.ufl.edu/archives/lrnasst-l.html>). We were pleased to garner 68 responses, particularly because the survey was distributed shortly before the Thanksgiving Break during a COVID-19 nationwide surge. The comments below represent the diverse views of the respondents. Comments representing identical or very similar views were combined for the sake of brevity.

What Programming Does Your Learning Center Offer that Involves Student Staff?

This question prompted a dizzying array of student positions, including peer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, peer academic coaching, peer mentoring, study groups, Federal Work Study employees, conversation partners, accountability tutoring, computer lab assistant, intervention courses, academic workshops, test prep workshops, financial success modules,

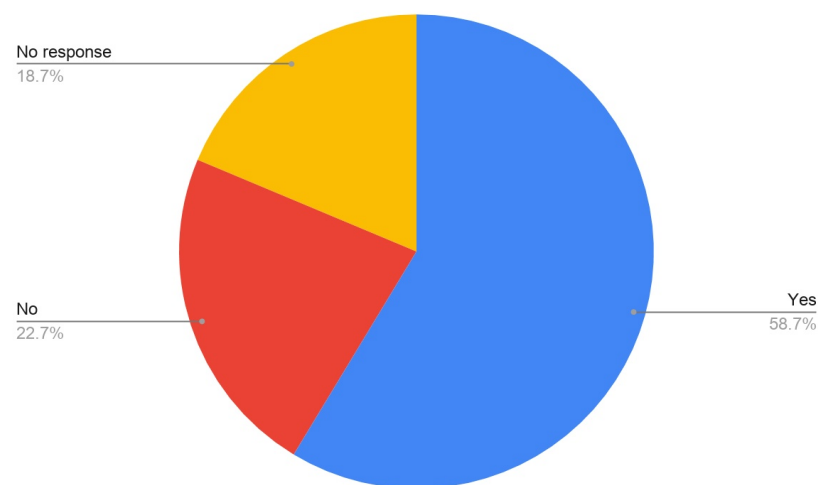
learning assistants, classroom assistants, embedded tutoring, and call center.

One of our primary questions in this project was “Is diversity and/or social justice training necessary and important for learning center student staff? Why?” The fact that learning centers employ student staff in many different positions that intersect with many different students for many different purposes is a salient point as we answer this question.

Do You Currently Offer Diversity Training for Your Student Staff?

Figure 1 demonstrates that over half of our respondents do offer some type of diversity training for student staff.

Figure 1.
Do You Currently Offer Diversity Training for your Student Staff?



Comments indicate a variety of approaches, including an administrator who has piloted a diversity-themed tutor certification workshop for advanced tutors with the hope of developing DEI

training in the future. Others indicate that diversity training is facilitated by other units: Disability Services for training working with students with disability, for example. Some respondents mentioned that the university offers training, although tutors are not required to take it. Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their current offerings:

“May be minimally addressed in training.”

“It is not nearly as thorough as it should be and usually is considered bare minimum.”

“Very minimal work on working with cognitive difference and a bit about implicit bias.”

“We only emphasize respecting individual differences and this means tutee ideas, learning pace, and background knowledge.”

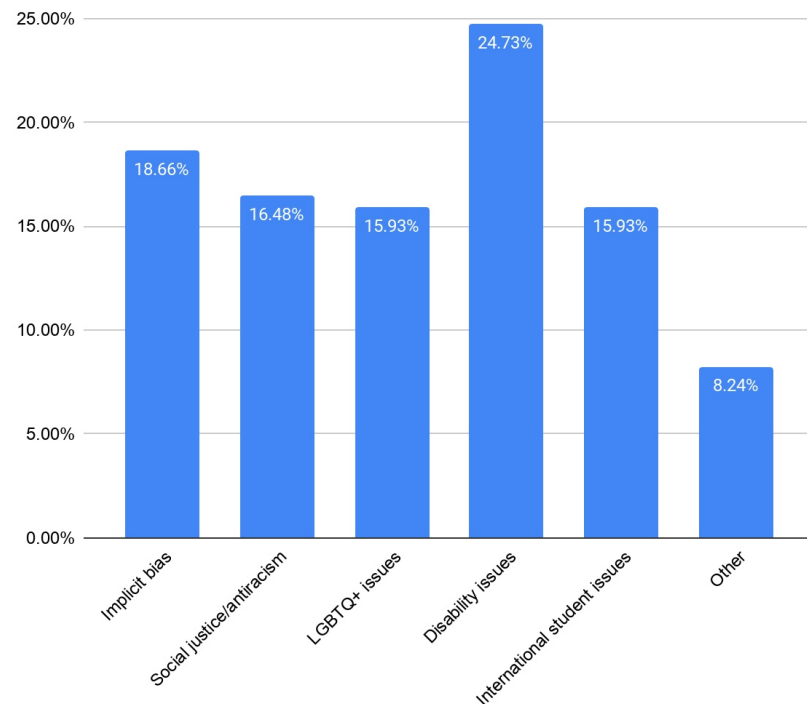
“It needs MUCH improvement.”

“I am new to this position and really want to address this with my staff.”

If You Offer Diversity Training for Your Student Staff, Please Check All of the Elements You Include.

Figure 2 demonstrates that “diversity training” is understood to encompass a wide variety of topics.

Figure 2.
If You Offer Diversity Training for Your Student Staff, Please Check All of the Elements You Include



Other responses included the following: stereotyping, linguistic diversity, personal identity, active bystander, low-income/first-gen student needs, veterans/PTSD, socioeconomic, cultural and identity awareness, microaggressions, preferred terminology, English Language Learners.

One respondent assumed the five choices were an exhaustive list (it was not intended to be, that is why “other” was offered with room to comment) and challenged this notion: “It’s interesting that you are defining “diversity training” with these five elements. Is

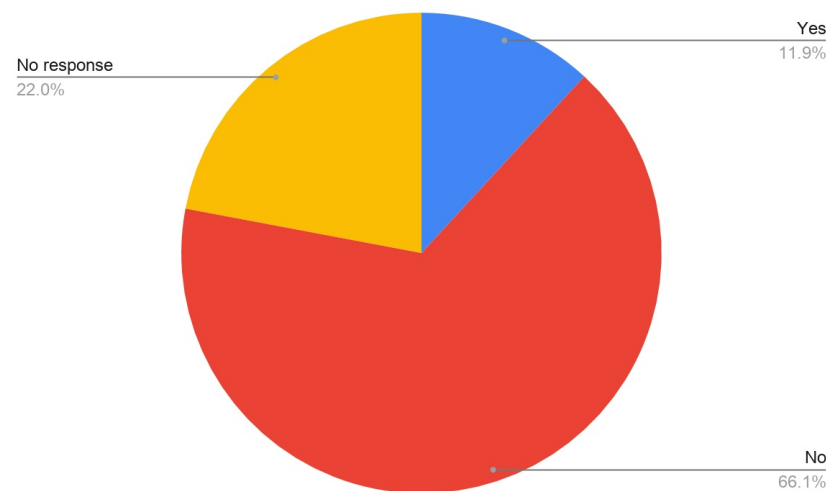
that what diversity is? What about ‘diversity of thought’ as an element?”

“Diversity of thought” is commonly understood as the idea that people in a group do not need to look different or identify with an underrepresented group in order to bring varying, diverse viewpoints to the table. Rebekah Bastian notes that while diversity of thought is one successful outcome of DEI, it should not be the target of that training: “By focusing on diversity of thought, we may distract ourselves from the real reasons we need to be focusing on DEI initiatives, and the internal culture shifts required to move the needle in a sustainable way” (2019). For example, does diverse representation exist in your center? Are there equitable systems and opportunities? Is there a sense of belonging for everyone? “Diversity of thought” is also often referenced by those who believe that faculty and administrators in higher education are overwhelmingly committed to leftist indoctrination to the extent that students with conservative leanings experience prohibition of expression and perhaps even non-admittance to the institution, and that those voices are being excluded from the university.

If You Offer Diversity Training, Do You Represent One Race/Gender as Biased or Inherently Racist?

Figure 3 demonstrates that most respondents believe that they do not represent one race or gender as biased or inherently racist in their diversity training.

Figure 3.
If You Offer Diversity Training, Do You Represent One Race/Gender as Biased or Inherently Racist?



Several respondents mentioned that they did not understand the question or were unsure how to answer the question. One respondent was sure that this happens due to CRT: "This is the whole point of critical race theory." Other responders found a way to acknowledge systemic racism in their training without representing an entire race as biased or inherently racist:

"I mention that we are all capable of holding and acting upon our implicit biases and collectively have

a responsibility to work towards a more equitable society."

"The foundation that we are creating so far is better understanding one's own and others' cultures and identities. This has come up as part of the organic conversation, but the answer to this question is no."

"We do address history of racism, certain system principles, but do not subscribe to one group or another as inherently/automatically more biased than another."

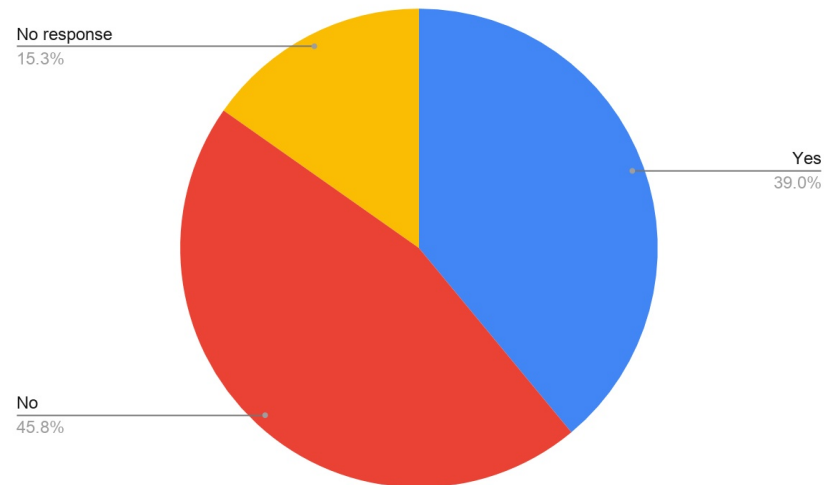
"We explore the different ways of viewing the classroom and different ways of interpreting statements; this is then applied to understanding--being open to--differences in race and gender. It is a gentle training so that it is first of all, HEARD. Then, reflection makes it possible to break into other sorts of implicit bias."

If You Offer Diversity Training, Do You Discuss Critical Race Theory or White Privilege?

Figure 4 demonstrates that the responses to this question were more evenly distributed than the question about representing one race or gender as biased or inherently biased, suggesting that respondents generally do not define "critical race

theory” or “white privilege” as assigning racist attitudes to an entire race or gender.

Figure 4.
If You Offer Diversity Training, Do You Discuss Critical Race Theory or White Privilege?



For two who responded “yes,” the comments were qualified:

“I do briefly mention and define dominant culture and refer to that a few times.”

“Yes, but it isn’t necessarily covered in one general training but depends on where each program is at: each moves through content differently using different delivery methods.”

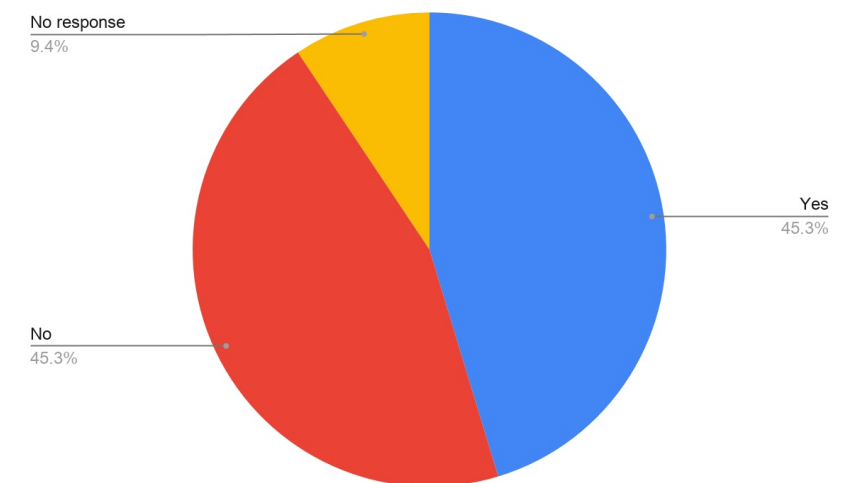
For one who answered no, the comment was less qualified:

“This would be highly detrimental to the college and the center.”

Are You Familiar with President Trump’s Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping, and How that Might Affect your Current or Planned Diversity Training?

Figure 5 demonstrates that respondents were evenly split on this question. Respondents were either not familiar with the EO or suspected it would not have impact on their training.

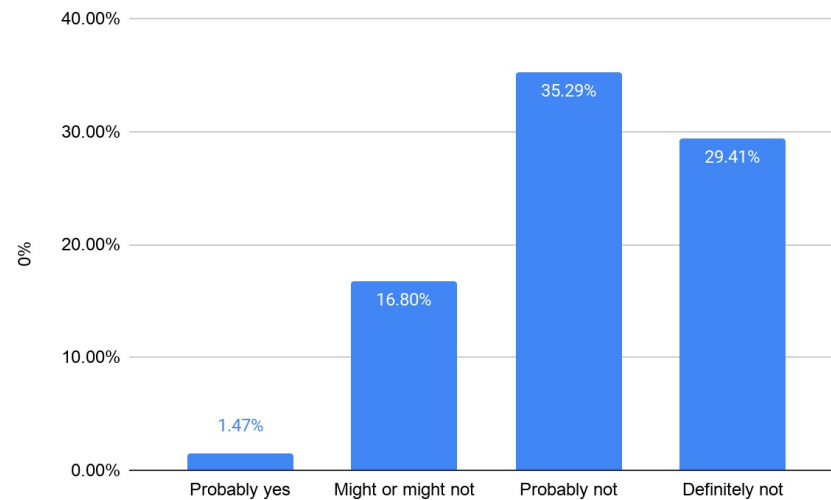
Figure 5.
Are You Familiar with President Trump’s Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping, and How that Might Affect your Current or Planned Diversity Training?



Has the Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping Affected your Learning Center Budget in Terms of Funds Provided for Diversity Training (for example, perhaps your school’s funding is drawn from federal resources, which could lead administrators to deter diversity training in order to keep receiving federal dollars).

Figure 6 demonstrates that the EO was not anticipated to have a significant impact on budget.

Figure 6.
EO Impact on Budget



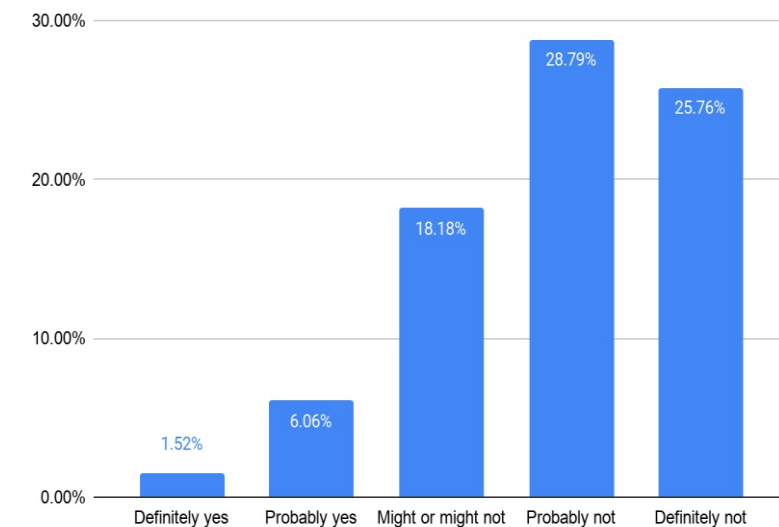
Most respondents were not sure, but leaning toward “no” due to the fact that there is no money budgeted for diversity training, or their center uses its own resources and that of campus partners, so it does not directly affect the budget.

“We have not heard a thing about it from anyone, so we’re doing what we always do. The election sure changes things a lot”

Has the Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping Affected Your Campus Culture (such as actions/events surrounding diversity, inclusion, and social justice?)

Figure 7 demonstrates that while some respondents were not sure, most felt that their campus’s response to the social justice impact was not impacted by the EO.

Figure 7.
Has the Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping Affected Your Campus Culture?



A few respondents were not sure of the impact or felt that diversity events would continue as usual:

“We were already a forward-thinking campus with lots of training and initiatives surrounding diversity, inclusion, and social justice.”

“Our campus, as a whole, has been beefing up programming around diversity and inclusion since the protesting began back in the spring [2020].”

Others did not have diversity-related events scheduled due to the pandemic or for unknown reasons.

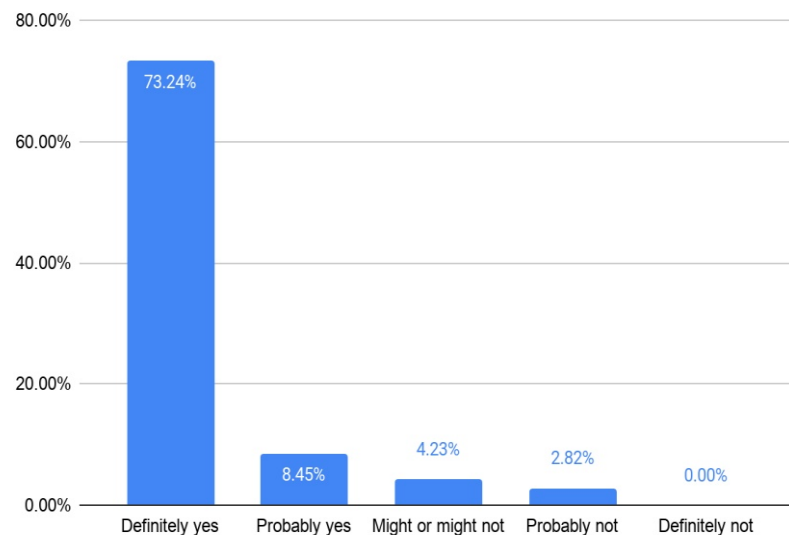
Overall, from the three questions about the Executive Order, we can surmise that respondents were not aware of it, were aware of it but not concerned due to no action from the

university, or assume that the order will be rescinded soon after President Biden assumes office.

Do You Feel that Diversity Training is Important for Your Student Staff?

Figure 8 demonstrates that respondents overwhelmingly feel that diversity training is important.

Figure 8.
Do You Feel that Diversity Training is Important for your Student Staff?



It is notable that almost 82% of respondents feel that diversity training is definitely or probably important for student staff.

Notable comments:

“It is on my to do list for the next training day we have.”

“We are planning to start including this in our tutor training.”

There were four comments that expressed belief in training that is not divisive and/or does not fall into the realms of social justice/antiracism or CRT:

“I believe inclusive pedagogy is necessary. This differs from a diversity training perspective.”

“We do not condone targeting of particular groups (on either side). Instead, we focus on working together, harmony, and the unique perspectives of our entire staff.”

“It depends on what ‘diversity training’ entails.”

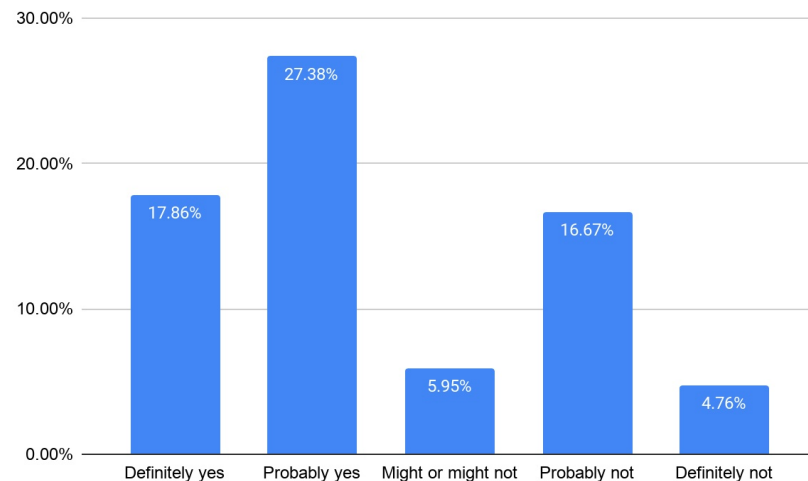
“Properly done, training tutors to respect individual differences— all individual differences--and demanding professionalism is appropriate. CRT and its assumptions create division and are only glorified presumptions.”

Do You Feel You Have Adequate Knowledge and/or Training to Provide Diversity Training for Your Student Staff?

Figure 9 demonstrates that while many respondents felt that they have adequate knowledge or training, almost 28% feel ambivalent or unqualified.

Figure 9.

Do You Feel You Have Adequate Knowledge and/or Training to Provide Diversity Training for Your Student Staff?



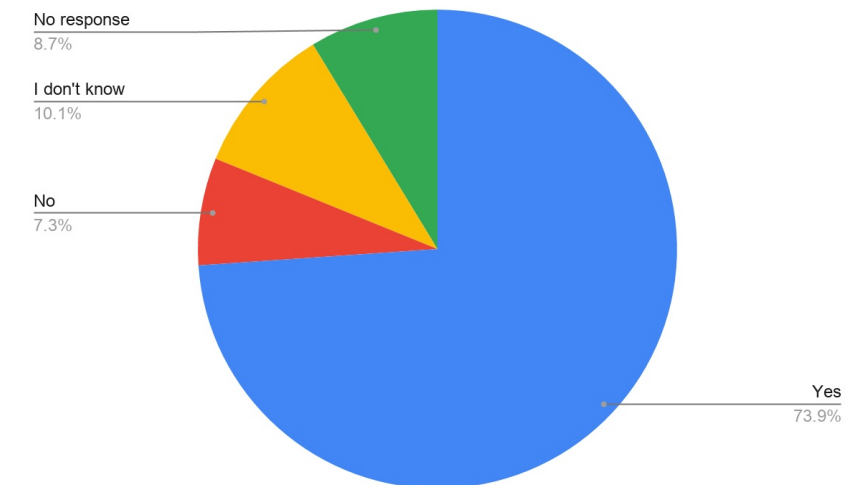
Some respondents expressed a desire to become more knowledgeable so they could deliver the training themselves, while others preferred to enlist others to assist who have more expertise.

Are there Resources/Staff Available on Your Campus to Help with Diversity Training?

The good news is that a great majority of respondents feel that their campus has resources/staff available to help with training, as demonstrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10.

Are there Resources/Staff Available on Your Campus to Help with Diversity Training?

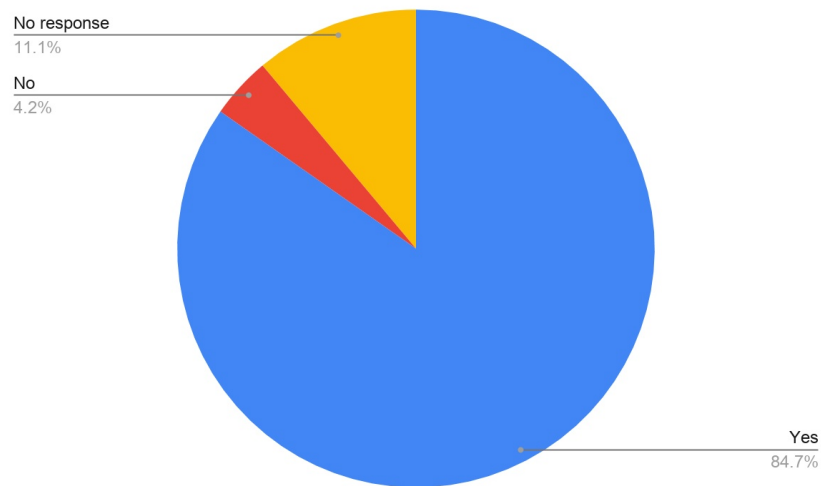


A few respondents mentioned that diversity trainers on campus are overworked and underpaid with limited time, or they don't have the resources to train learning center student staff.

Have You Participated in Diversity Training for Yourself or Your Staff?

While Figure 11 demonstrates that a vast majority of respondents have participated in diversity training, comments indicated that the quality of training was not considered adequate.

Figure 11.
Have You Participated in Diversity Training for Yourself or Your Staff?



Even though a large majority of respondents have participated in diversity training, the quality of training was not rated well by many:

“Very minimal. It was obvious that this was just to check a box, not improve understanding.”

“QUALITY diversity training for LC providers is the first start.”

“In graduate school and with a previous employer.”

“I’ve attended training on LGBTQ (safe space), International Students, Implicit Bias, Students with Disabilities, strengths (DiSC, MBTI, StrengthsFinder, etc.), racial discrimination, but the only one that was actually helpful was the international student experience training.”

“I have attended several webinars on this, but have not gone through any formal training.”

Clearly, many of our colleagues see the value in diversity training for their student staff. Many already offer diversity training to a certain extent, but are seeking more substantial training for themselves and their staff.

Two Executive Orders around Diversity and Inclusion

A Brief Timeline

In September 2020, the Trump-Pence Administration issued the Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping (EO 13950), banning trainings related to race or sex in federal workplaces (Cruz & Person, 2020).

In December 2020, the US District Court for Northern California issued a nationwide injunction banning the enforcement of several sections within the controversial EO 13950 (Abrahams, Linguist & Pierre, 2021).

Upon taking office in January 2021, the Biden-Harris Administration immediately revoked EO 13950. The new administration then issued the new Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government (EO 13985) (Exec. Order No. 13985, 2021).

Although now revoked, the content and effects of the Trump-Pence EO on colleges and universities over several months at the end of 2020 are worth highlighting.

EO 13950: Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping

On September 17, 2020, President Trump, in a speech given at the National Archives Museum, stated that:

Students in our universities are inundated with critical race theory. This is a Marxist doctrine holding that America is a wicked and racist nation, that even young children are complicit in oppression, and that our entire society must be radically transformed. Critical race theory is being forced into our children's schools, it's being imposed into workplace trainings, and it's being deployed to rip apart friends, neighbors and families. That is why I recently banned trainings in this prejudiced ideology from the federal government and banned it in the strongest manner possible. (C-SPAN, 2020)

On September 22, 2020, the Trump Administration issued Executive Order (EO) 13950 banning trainings related to race or sex in federal workplaces. The EO states that:

Many people are pushing a different vision of America that is grounded in hierarchies based on collective social and political identities rather than in

the inherent and equal dignity of every person as an individual. This ideology is rooted in the pernicious and false belief that America is an irredeemably racist and sexist country; that some people, simply on account of their race or sex, are oppressors; and that racial and sexual identities are more important than our common status as human beings and Americans. (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020)

The EO prohibited "any workplace training 'that inculcates in its employees any form of race or sex stereotyping or any form of race or sex scapegoating.' Such 'scapegoating' includes any claim that *consciously or unconsciously*, and by virtue of their race or sex, members of any race are inherently racist or are inherently inclined to oppress others, or that members of a sex are inherently sexist or inclined to oppress others" (Cruz & Person, 2020, para 2).

According to the EO, "training is not prohibited if it informs workers, or fosters discussion, about pre-conceptions, opinions, or stereotypes... Nonetheless, there is a concern that training on issues such as unconscious and systemic bias, privilege, or affirmative action could be considered to be in violation of EO 13950, especially if an employee attending the training feels uncomfortable as a result of such training" (Cruz & Person, 2020, para 4). Some of the directives in the Order were ambiguous.

Several civil rights groups filed lawsuits including the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (on behalf of the National Urban League and the National Fair Housing Alliance) and Lambda Legal (on behalf of several LGBT advocacy groups). These lawsuits argued that the EO violates First and Fifth Amendment rights to free speech and due process. Additionally, Lambda Legal's suit argued that EO 13950 is "unconstitutionally vague" ("LGBT Advocacy Group," 2020).

The survey responses from learning center professionals highlights the confusion and ambiguity surrounding the implementation and enforcement of EO 13950. In the Fall of 2020, it was difficult to discern how the Executive Order would impact institutions of higher education in light of lawsuits, "absent guidance" (Parker, 2020, para 15) from the U.S. Department of Education, and a possible transfer of executive power to the Biden administration. The outcome of the 2020 presidential election would not immediately affect the enforceability of this EO. "Until [the Biden] administration revokes or rescinds EO 13950, or until a court issues an injunction preventing the Trump administration from enforcing EO 13950," colleges and universities may remain liable for infractions against the order (Cruz & Person, 2020). The American Council on Education (ACE), on behalf of leading professional associations in higher education, asked the order to be withdrawn. The request was based on the grounds that diversity and inclusion trainings at colleges and universities are aligned with federal and

state anti-discrimination laws. Further, ACE's request claimed that EO 13950 conflicted with a March 2019 EO for "Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities" (American Council on Education, 2020). The March 2019 EO is meant to "encourage institutions to foster environments that promote open, intellectually engaging, and diverse debate, including through compliance with the First Amendment for public institutions and compliance with stated institutional policies regarding freedom of speech for private institutions" (Exec. Order No. 13864, 2019). The ACE, in its request to the President of the United States and the Secretary of Labor, argued that the Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping Executive Order "exercises executive power to limit speech on campuses in ways that undercut the administration's prior order seeking to increase it (American Council on Education, 2020, para 8)." In addition to the public request from ACE and lawsuits like Lambda Legal's and the NAACP's, individual colleges and universities claimed that EO 13950 is a violation of constitutional free speech protection ("Statement on Executive Order," 2020).

Despite widespread objections to EO 13950, the ambiguity of the Order's directives and the potential consequences of perceived noncompliance (fear of loss of federal funding) caused some colleges and universities to stop campus diversity

activities. The University of Iowa paused all “institution-based trainings connected to diversity, equity, and inclusion” for two weeks “given the seriousness of the penalties for non-compliance with the order, which include the loss of federal funding” (“Regarding Executive Order 13950, n.d., para 2). The University of Iowa formed a multidisciplinary review committee to vet diversity-related training programs across campus. Faculty and staff were asked to submit the contents of their training program to the Training Review Committee for evaluation no less than one week before planned implementation (“Regarding Executive Order 13950,” n.d.). The online survey asked the submitter to indicate whether topics such as systemic racism, critical race theory, positionality, unconscious bias, white privilege, or racial humility will be discussed in the training. The survey also asked whether the training is mandatory and if University of Iowa funds would be used in sponsorship (UIowa Qualtrics, n.d). In terms of evaluation, the review committee based its determinations on assessment of risk and “content and language compared to the Executive Order,” funding source, and mandatory/voluntary nature of the training (“Regarding Executive Order 13950,” n.d).

John A. Logan College (JALC), in Carterville, IL, suspended campus diversity programming within weeks of the Order’s announcement (Parker, 2020). JALC’s President Ron House stated that he made this decision based on a letter from the Illinois

Community College Diversity Commission, which suggested that community colleges would likely be impacted by the order because they receive federal grants. President House expressed concern that JALC would risk losing millions of dollars in federal funding if the institution does not suspend diversity programming until they can review and amend content as necessary (Parker, 2020).

The University of Arkansas’s General Counsel provided a memo ten days after the announcement of EO 13950, stating that, “as a federal contractor, the University of Arkansas seeks to comply with the Executive Order” (“Campus Guidelines,” n.d., para 1). The memo provided guidelines for compliance with EO 13950 for training programs and classroom instruction. For training, the memo stated that facilitators “should be familiar with...the Executive Order to help ensure that workplace training discussions, workshops, and programming are conducted in a manner consistent with the Executive Order.” In terms of classroom instruction, the memo stated that EO 13950 does not prohibit discussing “divisive concepts,” so long as the discussion is conducted in an “objective manner and without endorsement” (“Campus Guidelines,” n.d., para 9). Unlike the University of Iowa, it is not apparent that the University of Arkansas ever formed a formal review process in response to EO 13950 compliance.

Stanford University's Human Resources office provided a "Checklist to Evaluate Diversity Training to Comply with Executive Order 13950" to campus managers. The checklist identified examples of "prohibited content" in diversity trainings. Examples included: "systemic racism exists at Stanford," "any reference to structural or systemic racism," "reference to reparations," "any reference to implicit bias resulting into systemic discrimination," and "any reference to white privilege that can result into microaggression" (Flaherty, 2020, para 2). The checklist created significant "disruption and concern" (Drell, 2020, para 2). Stanford University Provost Persis Drell followed up with the campus community by stating that the checklist was not appropriately reviewed and approved before being sent. Provost Drell stated that the checklist was removed, and stated that the constructs of systemic racism and implicit bias are "based in historical fact ... (and) it would be deeply misguided to seek to prohibit these concepts from being a part of our own training programs" (Drell, 2020, para 5).

EO 13950 is a representation of the continued struggle in the arenas of social justice and free speech. A comprehensive discussion of the sociopolitical perspectives of power and privilege as well as the necessity of free speech and exchange of ideas on a college campus may be beyond the scope of this article; however, the overarching themes grounded in the words of EO 13950 highlight

the notion that diversity and social justice trainings are not immune to dissenting voices. Disagreements should be expected and welcomed in a collegial manner, as the main purpose of diversity and social justice trainings is not to tell someone they are right or wrong or to silence a dissenting opinion just because one might find it offensive or simply disagree; rather, the intent should be to offer an opportunity to entertain different perspectives from a place of empathy and understanding with the hope of helping to build a community with a firm foundation of compassion and respect.

In terms of free speech, power, privilege, and underrepresentation on college campuses, Chemerinsky & Gillman (2017) write:

It is the product of decades of systematic discrimination and implicit bias, racial segregation in housing, the underperformance of public schools in poor minority communities, state disinvestment in public higher education, legacy favoritism in private higher education, a lack of sufficient public support for affirmative action, and costs of attendance. On too many campuses, underrepresented minorities feel isolated and self-conscious in ways that should make us all understand the psychological harm they experience when they encounter hateful or even

careless speech. Other populations of students – including first-generation college students, those from low-income families, religious minorities, and women entering male-dominate disciplines - experience similar challenges. These students have already proven themselves strong and capable of overcoming disadvantages, which is why it is wrong for commentators to characterize them as weak or pampered.

Despite their accomplishments, every day they are on campus presents challenges, and exclusionary speech and microaggressions surely make things even harder. Campuses must take these issues seriously. But the effort to create inclusive learning environments cannot proceed at the expense of free speech and academic freedom. (p. 154)

Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, in 1927, wrote in defense of free speech: “if there be time to expose through discussion the falsehood and fallacies, to avert the evil by the processes of education, the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence” (“White v. People,” n.d., section 44). In 2014, the University of Chicago developed a committee to review nationwide events on college campuses that have challenged freedom of speech and develop a statement affirming the importance of “free, robust,

uninhibited debate and deliberation among all members of the University’s community.” The Committee wrote: “For members of the University community, as for the University itself, the proper response to ideas they find offensive, unwarranted and dangerous is not interference, obstruction, or suppression. It is, instead, to engage in robust counter-speech that challenges the merits of those ideas and exposes them for what they are. To this end, the University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it” (Stone et al, n.d., para 9).

One of the chief concerns of EO 13950 was its threat to these above-mentioned principles of free speech - that free inquiry and challenge of ideas would be obstructed by the Order. For a time, on some campuses, indeed they were. Chemerinsky & Gillman (2017) stated that “one of the most powerful tools that campuses and their officials possess is the ability to speak” (p. 146).

Legitimate concern existed among campus faculty and staff across the country, including this article’s authors, that this ability to speak was being seriously challenged.

On December 22, 2020, one of the first lawsuits (filed by several LGBT advocacy groups and joined by several major universities) against EO 13950 yielded a nationwide preliminary injunction against key provisions in the order. This injunction

prevented enforcement of the order by the Executive Branch of the federal government. The justification for the injunction, in part, was the likelihood that the plaintiffs were likely to prevail on their First (and Fifth) Amendment claims. Furthermore, the judge concluded that the “public interest served by Plaintiffs and the potential adverse impact on them outweighed the government’s interest to enforce Executive Order 13950” (*Santa Cruz Lesbian and Gay Cmty. Ctr., et al. v. Trump*, 2020).

This should be welcome news for advocates of free speech and those who wish for colleges and universities to increase awareness and dialogue around diversity, inclusion, social justice, and systemic inequality. The threat to free speech from EO 13950, specifically, lasted only months; however, it highlights the need to counter complacency with awareness and action. Social justice, like freedom of speech, is not an inevitable construct that we are all simply afforded and requires no care and attention. Our hope is that appropriate diversity training programs provided by learning center professionals allow us to demonstrate stewardship of the key principles of social justice and free speech.

Existing Diversity Training Programs

The Call for Social Justice Training of Student Academic Support Staff at a Small, Private University

The Office of Academic Support at a small, private university in Northeast Ohio is directly responsible for helping the university’s

2,000 undergraduate students and 200 graduate students achieve academic success. The university’s student population is 50% female and approximately 75% white. As the administrator of the one-person office, it was imperative for Kennedy to develop and deliver evidence-based programming that targeted the demands of the institution’s highest need students, i.e., the students for whom she was directly responsible.

To make this support relevant, scalable, and effective, Kennedy created programs implementing teams of student leaders to help facilitate these new formalized interventions. She selected, hired, and trained students as tutors and peer coaches for new support programs that delivered curriculum, helped students set and meet goals, and met students where they were so she and her staff could help students develop to where they themselves wanted to be.

Success of these academic support programs was contingent on her student leaders’ ability to work effectively with their students. This meant her peer coaches and tutors not only needed to understand and work within Kennedy’s strategic evidence-based approaches, but also needed to approach and work with high-need students with equity, respect, and fairness, and a broader understanding of these students’ experiences and perspectives.

Kennedy developed a month-long training program delivered asynchronously each summer in a learning management system (LMS) to prepare her teams for the new academic year ahead. They spent several weeks building their foundational knowledge around enhancing cognitive function as it relates to academic success, leading their students and the institution to benefit from higher success and persistence achieved, in part, through their focused support programs. As she prepared materials for the summer 2020 modules, nation-changing events of the Black Lives Matter movement were happening across the nation. Including a component linking the university's mission and their teams' work with students to the burgeoning demand for social justice felt unavoidable. Kennedy felt strongly that for her programs to work and for students to see her staff as qualified resources, her tutors, peer coaches – and she herself! – needed at least a basic understanding of systemic racism and its ever-present repercussions impacting our students and society still today.

Connecting Our Work to Social Justice

Throughout the academic year, Kennedy's student staff strove to connect with their peers using evidence-based approaches to effective learning. This research-backed approach helped her staff define their place as credible resources to help students navigate their academic journeys. Given that the students they served and support were diverse in so many ways, she felt it was vital to

educate her student staff on systemic racism, key terms of the movement, and actions that would help them not only keep their status as credible resources in students' lives, but to live the university's mission to create responsible citizens.

With so much misinformation surrounding the nation's social justice movement, and so many of the Academic Support staff simply not knowing the origins of or realizing the existence and persistence of systemic racism, their valuable work with students – and the improved success and retention that typically result – seemed in jeopardy unless they educated themselves. Without reliable information on the history of such issues, not only were they unable to fulfill the mission, but they remained ill-equipped to begin the necessary steps to actively dismantle racism.

Stepping Up and Fitting It In

Curating content for a training module on social justice seemed daunting and overwhelming. Kennedy is not a critical race theorist or historian, and it had been years since her undergraduate courses in political science, gender studies, or anything related to the movement. Rather, she is a cisgender white woman, a mom, a wife, and an avid consumer of news whose views have been shaped by decades of experiences, education, and a passionate belief in equal access to life-enhancing opportunities.

Kennedy had also already developed her training and thought there was no room to include a new topic. But this felt pivotal, particularly with her student staff not receiving social justice training from any other source, and certainly not before they began supporting students during the academic year after that summer's widespread call to action.

To meet this demand, she reformatted and revised existing training and made room for this new module. Kennedy scoured all types of media for graphics, photos, and stories that would keep her student staff engaged as they broached this difficult and sometimes uncomfortable information. This module had to be relevant and credible to meet her tutors and peer coaches where they were, help them explore potentially new perspectives, and consider action steps in their own lives. No vilification, no personal politics: Kennedy needed this information to be open and approachable.

Training Overview

After articulating learning objectives to prepare her student staff for the shift in focus, Kennedy connected the nation's current social justice movement with their strategic work to fulfill the university's mission. She explained that the goal for the module was to educate the entire staff on the history and existence of systemic racism, to see examples of anti-racism, and to re-examine individual perspectives as everyone learned from each other and considered their own action steps toward becoming anti-racists.

Through videos, scholarly research, and popular media articles, they traveled the gamut of social justice. They learned histories and their repercussions; they defined terms and the founding and success of the Black Lives Matter group; and they observed corporations' responses to the demand of their stakeholders in the wake of such reckoning.

Then their focus turned inward. After they identified key events, terms, and definitions, and began to see the start of sweeping societal change, the group reflected on if or how this movement might affect their own actions. They defined anti-racism and learned that simply not being racist is not enough, that they must educate themselves, be willing to speak out and stand up for the greater good.

Student Reactions

Immediately following this training in July 2020, Kennedy asked her tutors and peer coaches to define new terms they learned in the first half of the year, within and outside of this training. Terms and concepts most often defined in their responses were redlining, systemic racism, Juneteenth, and colorblind ideology.

The second part of the summer training module asked student staff to consider their own next action steps, what they could do to sustain the movement. Their feedback was honest and candid and made Kennedy proud to be engaged with such a dynamic

group of student leaders. They spoke about the personal obligation they now felt to advocate for patients and students across racial divides as future educators, surgeons, and physicians. Some planned to vote for the first time in the 2020 presidential election, while others felt empowered to engage friends and family in conversations around social justice and diversity using their newfound knowledge.

Some also shared deeply personal stories. One referenced growing up as a young Black man confused at the concept of Black History Month and why his ancestors' contributions were not credited with the advancement of our nation or society. Another shared that as a multiracial woman, she wondered if others attributed her successes to the Caucasian part of her. Yet another student who has always prided himself on speaking proper English was usually referred to as the "whitest Black person" his classmates knew.

Three months after the summer training, Kennedy followed up with her student staff in October 2020. She asked them to reflect on if and how their increased knowledge had changed them and if they had taken any steps toward anti-racism. Again, their responses were powerful.

They spoke about becoming increasingly more aware of other human and civil rights issues, about incorporating the news into their daily lives as responsible citizens, to become more educated

voters, to work toward rebuilding society to equalize access to opportunities so everyone would be more willing to contribute to our nation's success.

One peer coach became Student Senate Vice President to address and work to resolve student concerns with the university's administration, while a tutor had partnered as a resident assistant with the university's Black Student Union to develop and deliver an educational program on environmental injustices to the undergraduates living in his hall.

Arguably the most powerful reaction was from one student staff who intimated a transformative experience. They did not contribute to the discussion or reflection in the summer, yet they wrote in the fall, "At first, I took a stance that I feel many in our world take, and that is one of not placing myself within the problem because it did not directly affect me. Having watched our nation throughout the past months, I have found that it is my place to take a stand and my duty to speak out."

One of Kennedy's student staff members concisely states the need for social justice training for this group and the value it brings to their ability to support their peers to academic success. "My job as a peer coach is to guide new students into the world of college. I believe being able to connect with students of color by being informed about struggles they have that I do not will allow me to do the best job I possibly can... I also believe this

new education will allow me the resources to inform white students on how to approach the issue of racism in a healthy and productive manner.”

Next Steps

Responses from Kennedy’s student staff following this module show she made the right choice to include social justice training. Their positive feedback, the depth of their reflections, the value of their actions, and the relevant connection to the university’s mission mean this training for student leaders doing this work is a necessity. Kennedy is confident their work supporting students academically has improved as their knowledge, understanding, and ability to embrace or at least acknowledge new perspectives has grown. Moving forward, social justice training will be an integral component to all future staff training curriculum and may expand to include different groups within our society who have been marginalized. Kennedy embraces this responsibility as she contributes to the education of society’s emerging leaders, helps students learn sustainable pathways to success, and does her part to dismantle barriers to equal access. Training materials from this social justice education can be found in Appendix A.

Bias Education and Training for Student Employees at the Center for Student Learning at the College of Charleston

The Center for Student Learning (CSL) is the centralized academic support unit at the College of Charleston, a mid-sized,

public, liberal arts and sciences institution with approximately 10,000 students enrolled. The college student population is 65% female and approximately 80% white. The CSL is the largest student employer on campus with approximately 150-170 student employees (peer tutors, Supplemental Instruction leaders, peer academic coaches, and front desk aides). Bias education and training began in the CSL in the Spring of 2019.

In 2008, more than 400 students at The Ohio State University received anonymous letters delivered to their residence hall addresses with racist, hateful messages about black people (Jackson, 2008). In April of 2012, the words “long live Zimmerman” were spray painted on the outside of the Frank Hale Black Cultural Center on The Ohio State University’s campus, an apparent reference to George Zimmerman, who fatally shot Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black teenager six weeks earlier (Antonetz & Bradley, 2012). These events, and others like it, were a catalyst for bias response efforts at the university. One of these efforts was the implementation of a 4-hour “awareness and educational” program, called Open Doors, that offered students, faculty, and staff an opportunity to explore bias and its impact on their campus community. One author was among the first Open Doors facilitators in the Fall of 2012. This training was one experience that provided a foundation for the

College of Charleston's Center for Student Learning bias education and training program.

The College of Charleston is far from immune to incidents of bias and their effects on our campus community. From protests and threats of lost state funds for the *College Reads!* assignment of Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir, *Fun Home* (Knich, 2014), to offensive Halloween costumes (student athletes dressed as undocumented immigrants and ICE agents; a student dressed in an orange jumpsuit with "Freddie Grey" written on the back) (Schiferl, 2019), to white supremacist stickers posted on campus (Spence, 2019), to a Snapchat video posted of students' racist remarks that made light of the history of human enslavement in our country (Dennis, 2019), members of our campus community have felt (and continue to feel) harm as a result of bias, racism, and bigotry.

The College of Charleston is situated in downtown Charleston, two blocks from Mother Emanuel AME Church. On June 17, 2015, a self-proclaimed white supremacist entered Mother Emanuel and murdered nine black parishioners during their Wednesday Bible Study (Cava, 2020). The College of Charleston implemented numerous programs and services to support the campus and local community in the aftermath of this horrific event ("Emanuel AME Church," 2016). Also, in the aftermath of this terrible tragedy, protests and counter protests erupted state-wide over the decision to remove the Confederate flag from the statehouse grounds in

Columbia. When Bree Newsome (an activist arrested in 2015 for scaling and removing the Confederate flag from the SC statehouse) was invited to speak at the College of Charleston in 2017, Confederate flag supporters and counter protesters formed tense, competing demonstrations outside the College of Charleston's Sottile Theatre (Pan, 2017). At one point, a Black Lives Matter activist hurled himself over police tape to take down a Confederate flag being waved by a protester (Larimer, 2017).

These events provide a small glimpse of the pain and outrage that many students, faculty, and staff have felt for a long time. Five years after the Mother Emanuel shooting, Chad Starks, Ph.D., director of an award-winning social justice consulting firm and Clemson University adjunct professor, stated, "black fatigue with all this is very real, because, in truth, that forgiveness they showed was a deep spirituality borne out of the ancestral legacy of slavery that was necessary to navigate white America" (Cava, 2020, para 15).

In some ways, the extent and manner in which members of our College of Charleston community, particularly those from marginalized identities, have experienced (whether directly or indirectly) these targeted, biased events (along with the everyday effects of implicit bias) are a microcosm of the "fatigue" of which Dr. Starks speaks. Alongside feelings of fatigue, frustration, and

grief, the College of Charleston community also displays a steadfast, hope-filled spirit. In response to the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd, College of Charleston President, Andrew Hsu, Ph.D., and senior campus officials wrote a reminder of that spirit:

The ripple effect of these incidents is not just felt by those immediate communities and families, but it actually affects all of us – some in subtle ways, some more overtly. We trust less, we feel less, we care less. That is not what the College of Charleston is about. We are about more, not less: more understanding, more empathy, more compassion. That is what our campus core values stand for, especially as they relate to diversity, equity and inclusion. As a university, we believe in social responsibility and creating and nurturing a diverse and inclusive community so that all of our members can go out into the world and foster greater understanding and acceptance. (Kerr, 2020, para 6)

President Hsu's words capture the motivation and mission of the CSL's bias education and training program. As previously mentioned, the CSL is the College of Charleston's centralized academic support unit, and it is also our institution's largest student employer. We take pride in this designation. We also feel a sense of

responsibility (to our student employees and to the thousands of students who use our services each semester) to create a learning environment grounded in the principles and practices of empathy, equity, and justice.

The College of Charleston's core value of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, states: "We create and nurture a diverse and inclusive community demonstrated through our thoughts, words, and actions. We value and respect the unique perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences every individual has to offer." (College of Charleston, n.d.) Furthermore, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2019, p. 15) asserts that "within the context of each institution's mission... Learning Assistance Programs (LAP) must create and maintain educational and work environments that are welcoming, accessible, inclusive, equitable, and free from harassment." In addition to our own sense of responsibility, the CSL's bias education and training program is an effort to reflect the values of our institution and the standards of professional associations in higher education.

Education and Training Overview

Our two-hour bias education and training program is segmented into two parts with four distinct sections:

Part 1 - Education

- Defining, identifying, and discussing the social construct of implicit bias.
- Exploring social identity and its role in influencing our decisions to intervene.

Part 2 - Training

- Interrupting bias incidents.
- Increasing our own understanding and making personal commitments.

#1: *Defining, identifying, and discussing implicit bias*

After establishing group rules/expectations, our training begins with an exercise in empathy, as we invite all participants to reflect on a time they have been on the receiving end of a bias incident. This activity provides a foundation for the message we hope to achieve in our training: that empathy is at the heart of equity and mutual respect.

We define the constructs of “bias incident,” “implicit/unconscious bias,” and “microaggression.” Through group discussion and the use of media (movie scenes, news headlines, social media posts, and everyday societal images), we identify examples of bias, underscoring the extent to which biases are common, daily occurrences. The use of media platforms is particularly important for two reasons: 1) it helps students identify the circumstances where bias exists in their daily lives, and 2) it

provides a medium that illustrates a key framework for understanding bias and microaggressions: intent versus impact.

A Note about Intent vs. Impact. This framework helps us differentiate between deliberate, targeted forms of bias and those that are largely unconscious on behalf of the offender. However, the intent of the offender does not excuse the bias act or its impact. Rather, it provides an invitation for growth. One of our most important ground rules for our training is that we hold ourselves and others to a standard of grace, not a standard of perfection. We all have biases; however, that does not mean we cannot work to uproot them in ourselves. We all have (and will continue to) make mistakes; however, that does not mean that we can hide behind the notion of intent (*“I didn’t mean anything by it, so please excuse my behavior.”*). One could argue that leaning on the excuse of intent is, itself, a privileged act. Regardless of intent, bias incidents advance the marginalization of others.

The belief in our ground rules is that empathy is a catalyst for behavioral change. As a trainer, presenting oneself as the bias police, or otherwise facilitating a training environment conducive for finger pointing and blame assignment, is not productive. For many of us, to explore our own biases and how we have contributed to mass marginalization of others requires a space where vulnerability is embraced.

In order to establish trust and a safe environment conducive for students to be vulnerable, facilitators must role model that vulnerability. We attempt to accomplish this through active participation. For example, in one of our discussion-based activities, we ask students to reflect on one bias they have based on an aspect(s) of a peer's perceived identity and then consider how it may impact their thoughts and behaviors as a tutor. Before students are invited to share, facilitators share a bias we have had, how we realized this bias, and how we actively challenged ourselves to improve. Throughout our activities (and reflected in training ground rules) facilitators emphasize that sharing is not required.

Through role modeling vulnerability, our intent is that an environment will be created where students can be open and honest without judgment. This provides an opportunity for all of us to display empathy. It is also worth noting that we deliberately encourage dialogue about recent bias incidents on our own campus and how those events have affected our tutors and members of our campus community more generally.

#2: *Exploring social identity*

Halfway through the workshop, we ask students to take ten minutes to complete and reflect upon a social identity wheel worksheet. The worksheet and subsequent discussion help students self-identify, but it also allows them to think of identities their community or society places on them. After students finish the

worksheet, we spend a few minutes discussing identity. For example, we reflect on the following: What identities do you think about the most? The least? Which do you value the most? Which would you like to learn more about? How, when, and why may aspects of your identity become salient to you?

A Note about Salient Social Identity. Salience of social identity refers to the likelihood and extent to which aspects of our identity are noticeable to us and others in our environment (Hogg et al, 1995). We provide the following as an example during training: an American citizen may not think about citizenship status (as an identity construct) daily; rather, citizenship may only be salient for a citizen during distinct occasions (Independence Day, Election Day, while watching the Olympics, etc.). Now, consider citizenship status (as an identity construct) for an undocumented immigrant. How often might they be reminded of this aspect of their identity? It could be each time they see voter registration drives, when they see a police officer or ICE agent, when a Dreamer sees ads on campus encouraging students to apply for study abroad experiences or financial aid, and/or when a sibling who is undocumented sees a younger sibling who was born in the United States have an easier path to apply for college. The point is, societal structures often play a significant role in how we perceive ourselves, and

how often we can view ourselves as a unique individual rather than as a representation of an identity.

To ground this in the context of their work in the CSL, we ask students to consider what aspects of their identity are salient in their role as a tutor, SI Leader, academic coach, or front desk student employee. An example often articulated by training participants who are women tutors for STEM subjects is that they become more aware of their gender identity when they are tutoring because of the systemic gender bias and stereotypes associated with women pursuing education and careers in STEM fields.

The efficacy of the Social Identity activity is placing overarching, abstract concepts of identity and bias into a scenario where students *see* and *hear* how these biases unjustly affect their peers. It is one thing to believe, conceptually, that gender should not play a role in how intelligent, skillful, and qualified a person is to pursue an education in a STEM field. In our experience, it is a far more powerful thing when friends and peers, who know how intelligent, skillful, and qualified Jordan is as a Computer Science major and CSL tutor, are offered a glimpse into *how* gender bias manifests in her academic life, how it informs her lived experience, and how it shapes her perception of her role as a tutor. When we can create an environment in training that is conducive for students to see, hear, and feel how bias affects their peers, this can lead to an opportunity

for a culture of compassion and conviction to inspire action, in the form of interrupting bias.

#3: Interrupting bias incidents

As mentioned earlier, it is our belief that empathy is at the heart of equity and mutual respect. Emotions often fuel bias; however, empathy – as an act – can also be motivated by emotion. The first two components of our training are intentionally designed to encourage bias intervention, where possible, in the form of empathic responses. In terms of interrupting implicit bias, we train students to focus on the act itself rather than on the character of the offender. If a person perceives that their character is under attack, it may lead to defensiveness and resistance to change from the offender. This does little to affect positive change, and it does not come from a place of compassion or respect.

To normalize the challenges of interrupting bias, we discuss why it can be difficult to intervene (desire to avoid conflict, peer pressure, fear of personal safety, and bystander effect are some of the reasons we identify). Then, we outline the steps for deciding whether to interrupt a bias incident. We discuss strategies for assessing safety and likelihood of escalation if an intervention were to occur (note - most incidents we discuss are examples of implicit bias and/or microaggressions; however, we want students to consider emotions and risk levels in situations where

they may witness an incident that is targeted, deliberate, and hate-based).

After discussing how appropriate it may be to interrupt a bias incident, we identify, discuss, and differentiate between several bystander intervention methods and strategies that may be effective. We use videos, scenarios that have happened on our campus, and a fictitious role-play between a tutor and student to offer examples of different intervention strategies.

#4: Increasing Understanding and Making Personal Commitments

Our training concludes with discussing a variety of ways that students can expand their understanding of bias and social justice. From attending workshops/presentations on campus, to taking a course that expands awareness, knowledge, and skills, to asking permission from a student organization to attend an event that celebrates their culture, to taking Implicit Association Tests (Project Implicit, 2011), our message is that our training program is not the end-all-be-all; rather, this type of anti-bias work takes time and demands commitment. It takes a lifetime to unlearn all unconscious biases we have. As a result, we conclude with an invitation for each student to consider what commitment they would consider making to learn more about their own biases and/or contribute to an equitable and inclusive environment. We share aloud a personal commitment we are currently taking on, and then provide an opportunity for students to share as well.

Lessons Learned

By way of concluding this section, it may be useful to share lessons learned from two years of facilitating bias education and training for learning center student employees.

- Establish ground rules *with* participants. There is more buy-in from participants when they actively articulate community expectations. It may be important to emphasize that talking about bias does not need to be about blaming or shaming others. We are all works in progress, and by being here, we are taking a positive step.
- Be intentional about placing your training content in the context of learning center work. It can be easy to think and talk about bias and social identity in theoretical or abstract ways. Make sure to create opportunities in your training where you show *how* they manifest in learning center work and give students opportunities to consider their own examples.
- Employ a mixed media approach to provide examples of bias incidents. Popular culture videos/images, news headlines, and scenarios that have happened on a college or high school campus may make training content more meaningful and relevant.

- Consider a discussion of examples of bias incidents that have happened on your own campus. Again, this may make training content more impactful for students (besides, if you do not mention it, students probably will anyway).

- Connect your training to the mission of your institution, if applicable. This training is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate to students what your college or university encourages in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion. Your bias education and training adds action to the institution's words. It may be important for students to see how they are living their institution's mission in real time.

- As your institution's learning center professional, be actively involved in this training. Do you have experience that warrants facilitating this kind of training? If not, complete a train-the-trainer program and/or ask an expert on campus willing to train or co-facilitate with you. This is a training topic that will likely evoke emotion (nervousness and enthusiasm). We believe that is a good thing, because it means you care.

If you choose not to conduct the training yourself, be willing to role model active participation to your tutors by being involved, present, and vulnerable. It does not send as

strong or as lasting a message if you are not in the trenches with student employees on this subject. If you are not willing to lean into discomfort and role model the progression of identifying and working on your own biases, why should we expect it from them? Be willing to be vulnerable.

Training materials for the College of Charleston are located in Appendix B.

Conclusions

As we seek to answer our three questions, we desire a diversity training framework that will (1) serve to protect freedom of belief, speech, agency, differing political viewpoints, and open discourse among all students while (2) examining the history, policies, and practices of our society and particular institutions for signs of unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources--and examining our own selves for implicit biases that contribute to an unjust environment.

We believe that these two purposes are not mutually exclusive, and with the open and rigorous discourse we wish to cultivate, we will provide an opportunity for our students to learn more deeply about engagement in a democracy.

Why should we care about providing our students with opportunities to practice civil discourse? Elections, jury deliberations, community engagement, policy making--every

part of our democracy depends on our citizens' ability to engage in civil discourse. Kansas State University's Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy (2020) notes the importance of educational experiences that "intentionally prepare us for informed and engaged participation in democratic life, by providing opportunities for learning and practice" (para. 2). Principles of civic discourse include the following:

- Seek understanding and common ground.

- Expect and explore conflicting viewpoints.

- Give everyone opportunity to speak.

- Listen respectfully and thoughtfully.

- Offer and examine support for claims.

- Appreciate communication differences.

- Stay focused on issues.

- Respect time limits. (para. 5)

The National Institute for Civil Discourse offers key principles and best practices that provide guidance in fostering civil discourse, including empathy over vitriol, listening for understanding instead of hearing to overpower, and humility instead of all-knowing.

Principled Advocacy is key:

- Empathy and Humility are different than going

- along to get along or abandoning one's own

- convictions. Simply accommodating others' views

- with which we genuinely disagree violates our own

conscience and robs them of the opportunity to benefit from our honest views. We engage differences more constructively when we make our case on the merits without resorting to attacks on the character of those with different views or seizing on trivial missteps or misstatements they make.

("Engaging Difference," para. 7)

And perhaps most importantly, the goal to seek common ground is critical:

As we engage our differences, it's important to remember and articulate our common ground. Because it's easy to fixate on our differences, it helps to acknowledge shared values, aspirations, and experience and to call out points of agreement. We've always had our disagreements. We've never fully realized our ideals. Still, we share a commitment to perfecting the promise of American self-government. ("Engaging Difference," para. 8)

To teach the principles of civil discourse at the start of training does not imply censorship of ideas or an attempt to control the speech of others. Rather, it enables us to set the stage for rigorous learning and debate.

To avoid turning civility into a call for censorship under a different guise, promoting civil discourse

shouldn't be about trying to control the speech of others but must instead be about ourselves modeling the discourse we desire, and to persuade others to follow suit. This requires a capacity for patience and self-restraint – an ability to not respond in anger to a flame war on social media and patience in listening to the views of others. It also requires us to have social intelligence and empathy, an ability to understand what others think and feel, even if we may not feel this way. It also requires, as Professor John Inazu notes, confidence in our convictions. We need to have confidence in our beliefs so as to not feel threatened by the encountering of beliefs we disagree with. Furthermore, it also means we cannot be silent, merely refraining from hurling insults, but must be active in conversation so the civil discourse can be seen and serve as a model and alternative. This in turn requires that we know why we want to engage in civil discourse. We certainly want to avoid the bad that the downward spiral of escalating social conflict leads to, but merely avoiding disaster sells short the ideal that we strive for. As individuals, civil discourse enables us to preserve our relationships

with our friends, families, and neighbors, ensuring that we have robust ties across points of difference. It allows us to work productively with those with whom we disagree on issues where we do agree, not letting bad feelings prevent moving forward on important shared concerns. It also allows us to bring clarity to those areas where we do disagree, better delineating the points of difference and better enabling ourselves and others to weigh the various points of argument.

It is this civil space, emerging out of the interactions between countless individuals, that enables the society of mutual benefit. Trading goods and ideas is important for a vibrant society, and strong tribal boundaries serve as so many tariffs and walls aimed at shutting out feared outsiders. Putting these obstacles in the way of our ability to work together with each other limits what we can accomplish as a free people. (“Why is Civil Discourse Important?” para. 12)

With the goal of our desired diversity training framework in mind--to protect freedom of belief, speech, agency, differing political viewpoints, and open discourse among all students while examining the history, policies, and practices of our society

and particular institutions for signs of unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources--and examining our own selves for implicit biases that contribute to an unjust environment, we will now address our three questions.

1. Is Diversity and/or Social Justice Training Necessary and Important for Learning Center Student Staff? Why?

Learning center student staff work with a diverse group of students not only within the parameters of course content but on establishing college success skills, such as study habits, communicating with faculty, being proactive about seeking out resources, and perhaps most importantly, building critical thinking and reading skills. Student staff spend a great deal of time in one-on-one and small group sessions, sometimes stretching throughout the entire semester. Tutors, Supplemental Instruction leaders, academic coaches, mentors, and a diverse array of other learning center student staff will strive to establish a strong rapport based on trust and respect. To be able to understand and appreciate the lived experiences of students who are different from you, to discover and reflect upon your own unconscious biases, and to gain tools for dismantling systems and structures that perpetuate racist policies--tools for now and in the future--is a critical aspect of establishing trust and respect.

The skills required for civil discourse mirror those needed to successfully support students academically and are the very skills

we need our student staff to embrace and apply. Practices such as listening more than speaking, seeing situations from others' perspectives, and understanding where others are developmentally in order to help them to meet or understand different goals are all critical skills for academic support staff. Such traits and characteristics develop learning center student staff as academic support paraprofessionals and as responsible citizens who actively embody the concept of a global citizenry seeking equity. Barron and Grimm (2002) noted:

We believe that the personal transformations that occur in the Writing Center will eventually lead to larger social changes. Few Writing Center employees chose tutoring as their life work. Most of them graduate and go on to become corporate employees, business owners, members of the armed forces, and faculty members. They take the Writing Center experience with them into these contexts. (p. 60)

Frankie Condon (2007) challenges us to reflect on ways in which race and racism may have shaped the practices and even the identity of our centers. As learning center coordinators, we might ask ourselves: since tutors and students produce knowledge together, are the ways in which teaching and learning take place equitable? Do our hiring, training, and

marketing methods unwittingly reproduce racist systems? Even peer support inherently involves a power dynamic: how might that dynamic shift and change according to the tutor's inherent biases, practices and strategies that have been accepted or overlooked by supervisors?

We do not suggest that a learning center should be your institution's clearinghouse for the attainment of awareness, knowledge, and skills for all diversity training/programming on your campus. There may be a chorus of voices across functional areas, such as campus activities, residence life, career services, recreation, student clubs, etc., who are also developing diversity training for their students and/or student employees. An important step is to gather information about existing programming in order to create opportunities for collaboration. In addition, there has been a significant increase in the number of chief diversity officer positions created and filled on college campuses this century (Parker, 2020), so it is critical for learning center administrators to reach out to diversity offices on campus to learn about existing resources, although a diversity office or "chief" should not bear sole responsibility for diversity training. Finally, the training our student staff receives in the learning center may well be the only diversity training they will ever receive. For example, among student employees who participate in bias training at the College of Charleston's Center for Student Learning, a significant majority

report that this training is their first formal experience with diversity training of any kind.

2. Do Learning Center Administrators Possess or Have Access to the Necessary Resources to Deliver Diversity Training?

Less than half of respondents of our survey stated that they possessed adequate knowledge or training to provide diversity training to student staff. This does not mean that resources are not available, however. Almost 75% of respondents reported that resources/staff are available on campus to support diversity training initiatives. It is worth noting that several respondents mentioned that diversity trainers on campus are overworked and underpaid with limited time, or they do not have adequate resources to train learning center student staff, specifically.

Furthermore, learning center administrators may have access to training materials and experts, but how impactful can we make diversity training in a virtual format due to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic? While we may hope for diversity training that is founded on an interpersonal process, that may be much more difficult to achieve in a virtual platform.

If learning center administrators have explored all that their campus has to offer in terms of diversity training and are not satisfied, our hope is that they will begin to explore resources mentioned above, such as the National Coalition Building Institute, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African

American History and Culture “Talking About Race” website, and the Association of American Colleges and Universities Diversity, Equity, & Inclusive Excellence resources.

3. Is a Framework Needed for Learning Center Administrators to Determine What Elements to Include in Diversity Training; for Example, a Diversity Framework Versus a Social Justice Framework? Which is Appropriate for Learning Center Student Staff?

We firmly believe that a theoretical framework is a necessary precursor to the development of diversity training for learning center student staff. Whether the administrators choose to exclusively provide information and build awareness of diversity issues or to include opportunities for identifying implicit bias, learning anti-racist skills, and reflecting on ways to actively work to dismantle racist systems and structures is a choice they must make based on their center’s mission, the mission and strategic plan of the university, and the learning outcomes they hope to achieve. Of course, time, budget, and resources play a significant role in this decision.

Best practices in diversity training do emerge from our research, and these are summarized below.

Best Practices in Diversity Training for Student Staff

Needs Assessment. Before commencing with the design of training, take the time to assess the needs of your center and your

staff. Condon (2007) provides lists of queries for center directors on the topics of mission, culture, power, resources, and structure both for the center as a whole (Appendix A) and for “dialectical movement between structural and personal transformation” (p. 37, Appendix B). We believe these appendices are an excellent resource for conducting a needs assessment.

Connect Training to a Larger Strategic Initiative and/or University Mission. Explore your university’s mission statement, strategic plan, and inclusive excellence plan or statement. How do the goals set forth in these documents relate to diversity training for your student staff? For example, Ball State University, a mid-size public institution in Muncie, Indiana, created an Inclusive Excellence Plan (2020) that includes goals that are highly relevant to our student staff, including recruitment of a more diverse and culturally representative staff (p. 5), retention in terms of identifying specific barriers to the academic progress and achievement of diverse students (p. 7), and offering inclusive excellence training, development and strategies to students with the goal to “equip and prepare our campus community to be visionary in an increasingly diverse and complex world” (p. 11). The plan is specifically focused on “handling diversity, equity, inclusion, implicit bias, bullying, Living Beneficence, and cross-cultural/intergroup communications” (p. 11). Furthermore, the Inclusive Excellence

Plan pledges to support academic units as they create and maintain diversity and inclusive excellence plans of their own, and to “utilize assessments and evaluations to gauge the success of training and development initiatives for faculty managers and administrators and make adjustments to format and content based upon feedback” (p. 11). They also pledge to help staff assess the achievement of diversity-related learning outcomes, and develop a “master list of learning opportunities, trainings, and workshops available across campus with regard to inclusive excellence” (p. 11). Other goals include examination of policies, systems, and infrastructure to “facilitate diversity, inclusion, transparency, and accountability” (p. 15).

King et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of obtaining upper-level management support and designing training to be a “part of a larger strategic diversity management initiative” (893). This level of support and congruence with the university’s mission and/or strategic plan will go a long way in securing funding, resources, and collaboration across campus.

Educate Yourself about Campus and Outside Resources. Does your university already offer diversity training that may be adapted for your students? Have you and your non-student staff been trained in diversity issues? Is there a “train the trainer” option through your inclusive excellence/diversity unit? Are there other units on campus offering diversity training for student staff, and if

so, is collaboration possible? Have you explored outside resources such as the National Coalition Building Institute International, the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusive Excellence website of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and the “Talking About Race: Being Antiracist” website of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture, to name a few?

Decide on the Scope of Your Training by Crafting Learning Outcomes and Training Goals. This may be the ideal time to invite interested student staff to the planning table. Including student staff in these decisions is an effective way to gain perspective and to promote buy-in for this training. Start with learning outcomes: what do you want your staff to *learn and do* based on this training? Perhaps you decide as a team, based on the steps you have already accomplished (see above), that you would like your student staff to gain awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion issues through a presentation of information. Or perhaps you would also like your staff to reflect on personal issues by exploring implicit bias. Another learning outcome may be that student staff will learn to identify systemic, structural, and institutional racist practices and policies. Perhaps you would like them to gain anti-racist skills and strategies so they may provide equitable and inclusive services and communication in the learning center and in future careers and

civic life. When you have finished writing learning outcomes, you are ready to write the goals of the workshop, which indicate the outcomes you hope to achieve in the learning center as a whole.

A fine example of learning outcomes and training goals is provided by Sheridan et al (2020), who conducted implicit bias training for students in an engineering student organization:

The student learning outcomes for the workshop are to (1) recognize implicit bias as a habit, (2) identify how you and your peers can work to reduce bias in your student organization, and (3) practice strategies to reduce bias and foster welcoming and inclusive environments in your student organization. Our goals for the workshop are to (1) improve the experiences of all students who participate in those organizations, and (2) reduce the incidences of bias and discrimination reported in those spaces. (p. 7)

After crafting the student learning outcomes and training goals, the scope of the training should now be clear. Will you engage in diversity training, or will this training also include elements of social justice?

Develop a Diversity/Social Justice Vision/Mission Statement.

With your team of students still on board, but before you design training, develop a diversity/social justice vision or mission statement. An example from Barron and Grimm (2002) is actually a

vision statement that they found to be lacking: “Together, we imagine a writing center as a place where people can come together across their differences to share interpretations inevitably informed by racial, class, social, and cultural identities, where in learning about difference, our own perspectives become transformed, and thus we begin to communicate, to solve problems, to teach, and to coexist more fully” (68). They wished later that they had included a statement committing to exploring how the writing center “is implicated in institutional structures that remain oppressive to students of color” and one that focused more on mainstream students making a commitment to “productive diversity” (69). Thus, you may find that you want your diversity/social justice vision statement to be very specific and all-encompassing. Alternatively, you may design a more succinct diversity statement such as the one that can be found at Macalester College’s MAX (Macalester Academic Excellence Center):

The MAX Center employs equitable training and tutoring practices, including anti-racist, anti-oppressive pedagogies, to accommodate and empower Macalester’s diverse student population and to fulfill our role in the college’s commitment to an inclusive, equitable learning environment. (para. 2)

This mission statement also ties to the college's mission to DEI, which is ideal.

Design the Training: Scope, Sequence, Content, Activities, Feedback, and Assessment. We hope that the training shared by the authors in this document (and in the Appendix) will provide you with guidance for designing your own training. From our perusal of the literature, we have determined a few best practices.

Setting the Stage. First, the importance of setting the stage well to promote buy-in from your student staff cannot be emphasized enough. Including students in the initial planning stages of training as described above is an important first step. Sheridan et al. set the stage for their implicit bias training by opening the workshop with “discussions and exercises designed to gain student buy-in to the goals of the workshop, and to motivate them to want to learn about and address their own implicit bias habits” (p. 8). For learning center staff, this may take the form of asking students to reflect on any time they worked with a student who was different from them (race, class, background, ethnicity, age, etc.). What were their first impressions? What did they think the student assumed about them? What did they assume about the student? Did they adjust their communication or strategies based on those assumptions? Other ways to encourage buy-in may include asking students to reflect on their future careers and civic engagement. How might the systems, structures, and organizations they work and live in

contribute to inequity? How will they recognize that, and will they have the tools to work for diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Creating Space and Framework for Civil Discourse. Next, you must create a space and framework for frank, honest, open, and interactive discussion, as well as readiness for emotional and politically-charged discussion and possible push-back from mainstream students. Barron and Grimm (2002) suggest the trainers read “Talking about Race, Learning about Racism: The Application of Racial Identity Development Theory in the Classroom” by Beverly Tatum. Tatum notes that emotional responses must be addressed or students will continue to resist any discussion about oppression (p. 2). As students encounter challenges to their belief systems for the first time (“I’m colorblind,” “Everyone gets an equal opportunity,” “Individual effort is all that matters”) they may be resistant to listening to different perspectives which are bound to be uncomfortable. Barron and Grimm refer to this as “Opening the Box” (64). Moving slowly and allowing time for discussion is key. The “Talking About Race” website of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture offers a “questioning frame of mind” which may be useful as the trainer sets the ground rules for open discussion before the training begins.

Seek clarity: “Tell me more about _____.”

Offer an alternative perspective: "Have you ever considered _____."

Speak your truth: "I don't see it the way you do. I see it as _____."

Find common ground: "We don't agree on _____ but we can agree on _____."

Give yourself the time and space you need: "Could we revisit the conversation about _____ tomorrow?"

Set boundaries. "Please do not say _____ again to me or around me. ("A Questioning Frame of Mind" section)

The Kansas State University's Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy (2020) principles of civic discourse described above may also be useful ground rules to establish. Also useful is Karl Rohnke's Comfort, Stretch, and Panic Model, based on the Yerkes-Dodson Law, a concept developed in 1908 that established the relationship between arousal and performance (Limacher, para. 3). We reach peak performance in our "stretch" zone, when we are pushing ourselves and challenged with something new or unknown. When we are pushed too much, we enter the "panic" zone, where we are distressed and overwhelmed and enter into a fight or flight response. We are so uncomfortable that progress may be impossible (paras. 9-11). The diversity trainer needs to recognize when students may be stretching too far into the "panic" zone and adjust the discussion as necessary.

Content Scope and Sequence. Regarding the content of the training, many practitioners suggest beginning training by building awareness of diversity and social justice issues before embarking on more personal reflection exercises such as implicit bias. This "building awareness" portion of the training could include information about the history of systemic, structural, and institutional racism to explore frameworks that maintain injustice as well as defining the terms you will be discussing. Many effective resources are listed in the Appendices and References.

After delivering information for the purpose of creating awareness and opening discussion, you might choose to next move into a personal exploration of implicit bias. The training program from the College of Charleston described in this document is a great resource for exploring implicit bias. Many practitioners use the Implicit Association Test (Project Implicit, 2011) as a starting point. Sheridan et al. also provide a detailed explanation of their implicit bias workshop, including teaching students about two strategies that do not work to interrupt implicit bias: "stereotype suppression," which means that you don't think about stereotypes and just treat everyone the same, and "belief in personal objectivity," or believing that you are not personally influenced by implicit bias (p. 9). Framing the concept of implicit bias is thus an important step for achieving

student buy-in. As we have learned from a review of the literature, simply asking students to take the IAT is not enough; while exposing implicit bias is an important first step for addressing racism on college campuses, we don't want our students to explain away their behavior as "just part of my implicit bias," which puts too much attention on the individual and not on institutional and systemic racism which perpetuates rather than disrupts social injustice. Bias reduction strategies must be part of the training, but so must the understanding that implicit bias is one part of a comprehensive effort for achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Throughout training, focus on competency development by providing ample opportunity for role-play, activities to practice strategies, and detailed feedback from trainers. King et al. emphasize that competency development allow learners to "achieve behavioral goals to a greater extent than focus on awareness or knowledge alone" (894). Demonstration through role-play, partner and group activities, small and whole-group discussion, and journaling can all be effective ways to focus on competency development.

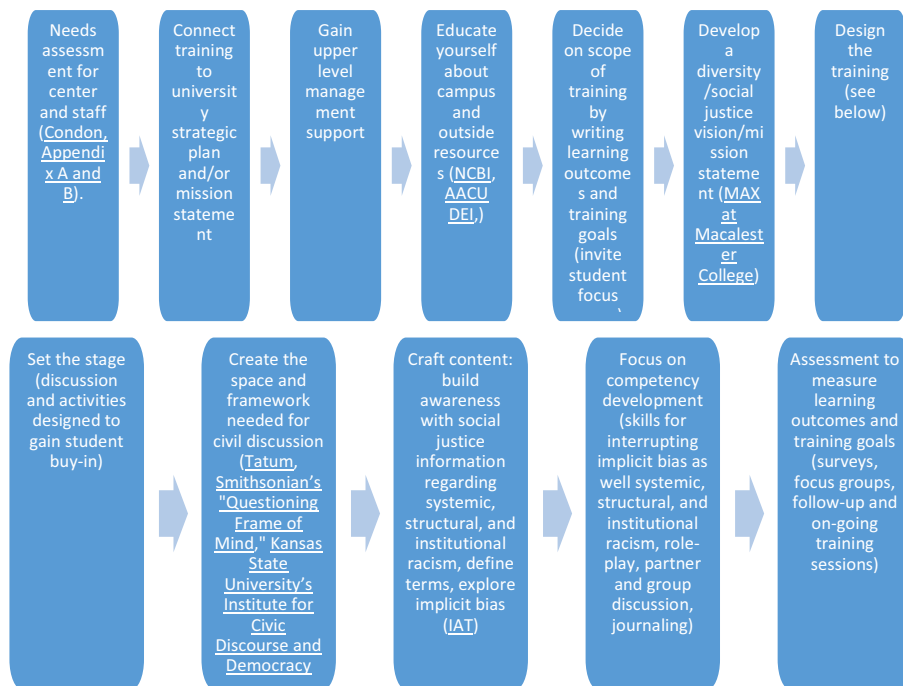
Finally, it is imperative to integrate assessment of training outcomes into the program. The learning outcomes and training goals that you developed in the pre-training phase should be measurable; don't forget to measure them! Surveys, focus groups,

and subsequent training sessions can all serve to measure learning outcomes and goals.

Diversity/Social Justice Training Flowchart

We leave you with a flowchart (Figure 12) that we hope will help you to move through the process of conceptualizing and putting into action diversity/social justice training for your learning center student staff. It is our goal to offer a diversity training framework that will (1) serve to protect freedom of belief, speech, agency, differing political viewpoints, and open discourse among all students while (2) examining the history, policies, and practices of our society and particular institutions for signs of unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources--and examining our own selves for implicit biases that contribute to an unjust environment.

Figure 12.
Diversity/Social Justice Training Flowchart



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Appendix A

Social Justice Training for Academic Support Student Staff at a Small, Private University

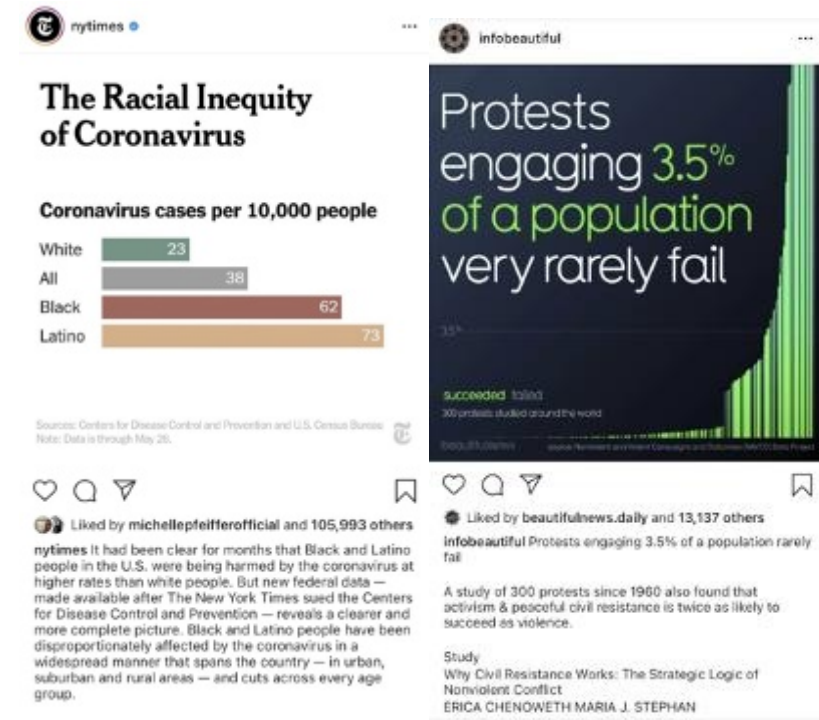
Learning Objectives

At the start of the module, students were provided with learning objectives that set their expectations of the pivot in our training material that would take us away from metacognitive learning strategies as we expanded our knowledge of the social justice movement. Objectives included explicitly connecting our work to support students holistically with our university's mission to create a global, responsible citizenry; understanding the origins of systemic racism and its lasting effects still evident in society today; defining anti-racism; identifying new knowledge and perspectives; and articulating personal action steps to sustain the movement.

Media to Make Content Relevant

Popular, mainstream, and scholarly media helped make social justice content relevant and understandable for student staff. Definitions and examples expanded knowledge through short videos, social media posts, and news outlets, including:

- Act.TV's "Systemic Racism Explained"
- NPR's "Housing Segregation and Redlining in America"
- Today Show's "Protesting in America: A history of rebellion and change"
- Proctor and Gamble's ad, "The Choice"
- Netflix and Hulu's new genres
- NASCAR bans the Confederate flag
- NFL plays the Black National Anthem
- NASA renames its headquarters
- Harvard Implicit Association Test



Instagram: New York Times, 2020

Instagram: Information is Beautiful, 2020



LinkedIn: The Female Lead, 2020

Defining Terms

Following are excerpts from the training module of context and definitions around the most widely used terms and phrases of the social justice movement.

Implicit Bias

Everyone possesses [implicit biases], even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges...

The implicit associations we hold do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse...

Implicit biases are malleable. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques. (Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, 2015)

Colorblind Ideology

...most underrepresented minorities will explain that race does matter, as it affects opportunities, perceptions, income, and so much more. When race-related problems arise, colorblindness tends to individualize conflicts and shortcomings, rather than examining the larger picture with cultural differences, stereotypes, and values placed into context. (Williams, 2011)

All Lives Matter

Do all lives matter? Of course, they do.

But, if all lives matter, why does the NAACP say black Americans are five times more likely to get arrested? Doesn't seem like ALL lives see justice in this area, right?

And, if all lives matter, why does a study from Harvard say that black employees are less likely to get outstanding promotions at work than white employees?

If all lives matter, why does the Pew Research Center say black households have only 10 cents in wealth for every dollar held by white households?

If all lives matter, why do people stop me in stores asking if I work here or give me threatening looks when I eat at a nice restaurant or stay at a fancy hotel? (WTHR.com 2020)

Defund the Police

Those dollars can be put back into social services for mental health, domestic violence and homelessness, among others. Police are often the first responders to all three, she said.

Those dollars can be used to fund schools, hospitals, housing and food in those communities, too -- "all of the things we know increase safety," McHarris said.

Would defunding police lead to an uptick in violent crimes?

Defunding police on a large scale hasn't been done before, so it's tough to say.

But there's evidence that less policing can lead to less crime. A 2017 report, which focused on several weeks in 2014 through 2015 when the New York Police Department purposely pulled back on "proactive policing," found that there were 2,100 fewer crime complaints during that time.

The study defines proactive policing as the "systematic and aggressive enforcement of low-level violations" and heightened police presence in areas where "crime is anticipated."

That's exactly the kind of activity that police divestment supporters want to end. (Andrew, 2020)

Juneteenth

Nix defines Juneteenth as Emancipation Day, June 19, 1865, which commemorates the end of slavery in the US when Union troops arrived in Galveston, TX to free the nearly 250,000 people still enslaved there (2015).

The date's significance lies in its timing. It took place two and half years *after* President Lincoln signed the Emancipation

Proclamation, and 89 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The “Emancipation Proclamation didn’t instantly free any enslaved people. The proclamation only applied to places under Confederate control and not to slave-holding border states or rebel areas already under Union control” (Nix, 2015).

The Declaration of Independence, which severed our ties with the British on July 4, 1776, declares the following:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. (US, 1776)

Black Lives Matter

According to BlackLivesMatter.com, the network was founded in 2013 “in response to state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism” by leaders who were “enraged [after] the death of Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of his killer, George Zimmerman” (2019).

The BLM movement has “ousted anti-Black politicians, won critical legislation to benefit Black lives, and changed the terms of the debate on Blackness around the world. Through movement and relationship building, [its organizers] have also helped catalyze other movements and shifted culture with an eye toward the dangerous impacts of anti-Blackness” (2019).

We are guided by the fact that all Black lives matter, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status, or location.

We make space for transgender brothers and sisters to participate and lead.

We are self-reflexive and do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege and uplift Black trans folk, especially Black trans women who continue to be disproportionately impacted by trans-antagonistic violence. (BlackLivesMatter.com, 2019)

Appendix B

KEY BIAS-RELATED DEFINITIONS FOR CSL STUDENT EMPLOYEES

What is bias?

A preference for or tendency toward a particular viewpoint or outcome. Bias stems from the internalization and institutionalization of particular values, beliefs, and assumptions. Not to be confused with bigotry, which is motivated by ill intent, bias can coexist unconsciously with good intentions, but nevertheless result in outcomes that are inclined to favor some groups over others.

What is a bias incident?

Acts or behaviors motivated by the offender's bias against aspects of a person's identity such as (but not limited to) age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status.

While these acts do not necessarily rise to the level of a crime, a violation of state law, university policy, or student code of conduct, a bias act may contribute to creating an unsafe, negative, or unwelcome environment for the victim, anyone who shares the same social identity as the victim, and/or community members of the College of Charleston.

What is a hate crime?

An act or attempted act by any person against the person or property of another individual or group which in any way constitutes an expression of hostility toward the victim because of his/her race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, gender, or ethnicity.

What are microaggressions?

The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target

persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

What is a stereotype?

An exaggerated belief, image or distorted truth about a person or group—a generalization that allows for little or no individual differences or social variation. Stereotypes are based on images in mass media, or reputations passed on by parents, peers and other members of society.

What is privilege?

Power and advantages benefiting a group derived from the historical oppression and exploitation of other groups.

What is discrimination?

A biased decision based on a prejudice against an individual group characterized by race, class, sexual orientation, age, disabilities, etc.

What is anti-bias?

An active commitment to challenging prejudice, stereotyping and all forms of discrimination.

WHERE CAN I REPORT BIAS INCIDENTS AT THE COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON?

When you witness an act of bias or discrimination that negatively affects an individual or individuals in our campus community, regardless of whether you challenge or interrupt the act, you can choose to report the incident and/or make an appropriate referral if a member of our community is in distress.

WHERE CAN I REPORT AN INCIDENT?

Type of Incident	Where Do I Report?	Location	Email/Reporting Form	Phone
Discrimination	Equal Opportunity Programs	Robert Scott Small Suite 115	eop@cofc.edu Complaint Form	(843) 953-5754
Bias Incident	Cougar Inclusion Team		Report a Concern	
Hate Crime	Public Safety -Crime Action Line -Silent Witness -911 (for emergency)	89 St. Philip St. beside St. Philip Garage	If you wish to remain anonymous: Silent Witness Form	(843) 953-4998 (Crime Action Line)
	Cougar Inclusion Team		Report a Concern	

If you are unsure of what to do, the following offices/individuals are resources where you can seek guidance about a bias incident directed towards you or others:

Campus Resource	Why They Can Help	Location	Contact Info
Office of Institutional Diversity	Work to transform our campus community into an inclusive and equitable learning and living environment where faculty, staff, students, are affirmed regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, ability or place of origin.	Robert Scott Small 2nd Floor	(843) 953-5079 oid@cofc.edu
Office of the Dean of Students	Assists students in need, advocates for students, consults with students about questions or concerns.	Stern Center	(843) 953-5522
CSL Staff	Bias incidents can harm and make members of our community feel unwelcome. Please contact Abe or Richa if you are concerned about a bias incident you witnessed or were the recipient of while working or using the CSL.	Addlestone Suite 116	(843) 953-5635

University of Baltimore. (n.d.). *Diversity Dictionary*. Diversity and Culture Center Diversity Dictionary.
<http://www.ubalt.edu/campus-life/diversity-and-culture-center/diversity-dictionary.cfm>

TUTOR TRAINING ROLE PLAY

Jordan: Well, I've given it three weeks. If you can't help me understand this stuff, then I'm done!

Ariel: I'll certainly be glad to try to help.

Jordan: I hope you can. I hate my Orgo class.

Ariel: Organic Chemistry is definitely not easy.

Jordan: No really, I hate it... the book doesn't help, and I sit in the class and I can't understand anything the professor is saying. I go up to ask her questions later and just give up after I keep asking her to repeat herself. She can speak English, but it's no English I recognize. This "communication" barrier just makes a stressful class that much harder.

Ariel: I've experienced similar situations with professors and TAs. It's hard. But it gets easier – you can adapt.

Jordan: Why should I have to? I'm the one paying the money – the least they could do is get professors you can understand.

Ariel: She's probably one of the most intelligent professors in the field.

Jordan: What good is that doing me? This is Organic Chemistry – one of the hardest subjects. Her brains sure aren't helping me any. If I wanted this I would have gone to a cheaper school, skipped class, and just tried to learn from the book. No joke, there should be an English Fluency exam, and if they fail it, they can't teach!

Ariel: Yikes. Isn't that a little much, Jordan?

Jordan: I don't think so. I'm probably going to have to drop the class.

Ariel: I'm sorry you're feeling that way. Hopefully we can get you on the right track. Plus, if you give it time, it might get easier.

Jordan: I don't know. I'll figure it out. Seriously, though, why should I put up with crappy teaching? I get it – diversity's important, but I'm not learning a thing. Am I just supposed to accept it and fail the class?

Ariel: I'm sorry. I don't know what else to tell you...

Jordan: Help me tell the damn school to hire people who can actually speak English.

Ariel (*sighing under her breath*): Ok... I think I get your point...

Jordan: Yesterday it took me the entire class to understand she was even saying "inductive effect." Don't you think that's ridiculous?

Ariel: Have you tried talking to her about not being able to understand her? Maybe it's not the first time she's had this conversation with a student – and maybe she has some tips that can help you.

Jordan: I could do that, or I could drop the class and retweet one of the guys in the class who posted a pic of a woman in a hijab that says, "My Prof Can't Speak English." Then I'd at least feel better.

Process Questions:

Ask the audience for their reactions.

If they don't initiate, then here are some process questions:

- Is this a situation you think you would experience in tutoring, among friends/classmates, etc.?
- How would you respond to Jordan if you were Ariel?
- How would you respond if you were a bystander who overheard the conversation?
- Where did you find bias in this role play?
- How did Ariel attempt to interrupt the bias?
- What are other ways could Ariel have handled the situation?
- Do you think this is an incident that should be reported on campus? Why or why not?

Pertinent Publishing Parameters

The Learning Assistance Review (TLAR), the national peer reviewed official publication of the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA), publishes scholarly articles and reviews that address issues of interest to learning center professionals (including administrators, teaching staff, faculty, and tutors) who are interested in improving the learning skills of postsecondary students. Primary consideration will be given to articles about program design and evaluation, classroom-based research, the application of theory and research to practice, innovative teaching and tutoring strategies, student assessment, and other topics that bridge gaps within our diverse profession.

Categories for Submission

Articles

Topics. TLAR will accept manuscripts that address our purpose as defined above. We publish scholarly articles and reviews that specifically address these issues.

Types. TLAR will accept manuscripts following all four of the article types outlined in the American Psychological Association Manual: empirical study and articles on review, theory, and methodology. Follow the APA manual for specific requirements and structure for each type. All manuscripts need a clear focus that draws a

correlation between the study, review, theory, or methodology and learning assistance practices.

Joining the Conversation

Idea Exchange. Discussion directly relates to articles published in TLAR. Submissions are limited to fewer than four paragraphs and are to be constructive idea exchanges. In addition to the name, title, college, and contact information from the submitter, Idea Exchange submissions are to include the details of the referenced article (Title, author, and volume/number, and academic semester/year).

Further Research. These are article submissions that have a stated direct link to prior published TLAR articles. These articles will be considered following the manuscript submission guidelines.

Book Review

Book review requests should be accompanied with two copies of the book to facilitate the reviewing process. Potential book reviewers are urged to contact the editorial team for details.

Manuscript Guidelines

Manuscripts and reference style must be in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Submissions that do not comply with APA style will be returned to the author(s). Manuscripts must be original work and not duplicate previously published works or articles under consideration for publication elsewhere. The body of the manuscript may range in length from 20 to 30 pages, including all references, tables, and

figures. Longer articles will be considered if the content warrants it. The authors are responsible for the accuracy of all citations and references and obtaining copyright permissions as needed. The only acknowledgments that will be published will be those required by external funding sources.

Submission Guidelines

The title page must include the title of the manuscript (not to exceed 12 words), and the name(s) and institutional affiliation(s) of all authors. The lead author should provide work or home addresses, telephone numbers, and email information where applicable.

The second page should be an abstract of the manuscript.

To start the reviewing process, the lead author will be required to sign a certificate of authorship and transfer of copyright agreement. If the manuscript is accepted for publication, a second authorization agreement must be signed by the author or authors.

Submission Packet

- Cover page
- Original manuscript
- Masked manuscript for review
- Abstract (maximum 100 words)
- Figures and tables according to APA style

Materials emailed to: TLAR@MissouriState.edu

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Review Process

Author(s) will receive an e-mail notification of the manuscript receipt. The review process may include a peer-review component, in which up to three members of the TLAR editorial board will review the manuscript. Authors may expect the review process to take about three months. Authors may receive one of the following reviewing outcomes:

- accept with minor revisions
- revise and resubmit with editor's review only
- revise and resubmit for second full editorial board review
- reject

As part of the reviewing correspondence, authors will be electronically sent the reviewers rankings and general comments on one document and all the reviewers' contextual markings on one manuscript. Manuscript author(s) must agree to be responsible for

making required revisions and resubmitting the revised manuscript electronically by set deadlines. Manuscript author(s) must abide by editorial revision decisions.

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NCLCA Membership Information

The National College Learning Center Association defines a learning center at institutions of higher education as interactive academic spaces which exist to reinforce and extend student learning in physical and/or virtual environments. A variety of comprehensive support services and programs are offered in these environments to enhance student academic success, retention, and completion rates by applying best practices, student learning theory, and addressing student-learning needs from multiple pedagogical perspectives.

Staffed by professionals, paraprofessionals, faculty, and/or trained student educators, learning centers are designed to reinforce the holistic academic growth of students by fostering critical thinking, metacognitive development, and academic and personal success.

Join NCLCA

NCLCA seeks to involve as many learning center professionals as possible in achieving its objectives and meeting our mutual needs. Therefore, the NCLCA Executive Board invites you to become a member of the Association.

The membership year extends from October 1 through September 30. The annual dues are \$50.00. We look forward to having you as an active member of our growing organization.

Membership Benefits

- A subscription to NCLCA's journal, *The Learning Assistance Review*
- Discounted registration for the annual fall conference and Summer Institute
- Regular issues of the *NCLCA Newsletter*
- Voting privileges
- Opportunities to serve on the Executive Board
- Special Publications such as the *Resource Directory* and the *Learning Center Bibliography*
- Opportunities to apply for professional development grants
- Access to the Members Only portion of the website, including electronic versions of *The Learning Assistance Review*
- Announcements of other workshops, in-services, events, and NCLCA activities



Michael Frizell is the editor of *The Learning Assistance Review*, the National College Learning Center Association's peer-reviewed journal. He was also part of the editorial team for NCLCA's first book, *Learning Centers in the 21st Century*. Michael currently serves as the Director of Student Learning Services at Missouri State University and holds an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from the University of Arkansas at Monticello.

As an official publication of the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA), *The Learning Assistance Review* (TLAR) seeks to foster communication among higher education learning center professionals. Its audience includes learning center administrators, teaching staff, and professional or student worker tutors, consultants, mentors, and faculty members and administrators who are interested in improving the learning skills of post-secondary students.