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## The Journal of Education Research and Interdisciplinary Studies



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## ~ Message From the Executive Director and Founder~



Welcome to the Early Spring 2022 Edition of the *Journal of Educational Research and Interdisciplinary Studies*. It is an honor and privilege to share the Journal of Educational Research and Interdisciplinary Studies [JERIS] with you. The aim is to provide quality educational research and refined educational practices that will afford you as the reader to be empowered as a leader/practitioner as well as serve as an active transformational change agent within your higher educational institutions.

Thus, the [JERIS] is published four times throughout the year allowing current educational researchers to conduct thorough research in a number of academic areas. In doing so, JERIS is committed to publishing information that will assist higher educational institutions with the needed tools to improve the overall quality of instruction, leadership, teaching and learning, retention (administration, faculty, and students), student engagement—while providing additional scholarly resources that will aid in supporting diversity and multicultural education. Lastly—I asking you to support [JERIS] by sharing it with your esteem colleagues and encourage them to read it and to submit a scholarly research article for publication.

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## LEADERSHIP: UNDERSTANDING ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE



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Author: Dr. Karlisha C. Booze, Assistant Professor, Department of Visual and Performing Arts & Media Studies—Fort Valley State University

### Introduction

It is common to have a mixture of races within businesses. What makes the businesses difficult is when people of different races are working together and cannot communicate with each other effectively. Communication is extremely important in all businesses. It is a way that people interact with each other to complete a specific task or share ideas. At times, the communication within organizations is poor and lack effective leaders who can demonstrate how much impact poor communication skills can affect companies.

### Ethical Concerns When Improving Communication

Addressing this issue is just the beginning of the research but tackling the ethical concerns will take most of the time. Yes, people make mistakes when information is misunderstood. Yes, indirect communication can lead to failure. But what does effective communication consist of? Effective communication consists of observation, making good decisions and listening. These are just a few of ethical concerns when looking to find a way to improve communication skills in the workplace.

## Observation

Observing the way people act and handle certain situations can determine how well they communicate. For an example, in the broadcast industry some producers have different styles on how they produce a show or determine which story is most important. In the past, the author of this paper interned at a local television station in Macon, Georgia and shadowed a producer as he produced the news cast. The method he used was to start the news off with hard news and continue to have the show flow with national news. One day, the producer was absent. So, the associate producer came in and produced the show leading with national news. At this point, the intern knew that there is a way things can be done differently. She observed, and then moved on to asking questions. When the producer returned the next day, the intern asked was it a standard way of producing news cast because she had seen it done differently than what she had been taught. The producer explained that it is determined by the producer. She went on to say that each producer has their own style. In this case, there was a lack of communication between the producer who was training the intern. In the beginning, the producer should have explained to the intern that it was his own style the way he was producing the show. This lack of communication could have caused the intern to produce news casts that way once she found a permanent position somewhere else. The intern did the right thing by observing then asking questions. The value of observations depends crucially on propositions and information (Hicks, Biedermann, Koeijer, Taroni, Champod, & Evertt, 2015). If people observe and ask questions in the workplace more, it can help decrease the number of issues that arise due to misunderstandings.

## Making Good Decisions

Management makes the decisions within organizations. However, it is an ongoing concern that the issues being made are unethical. Why are these issues seemed to be unethical? It is because the decisions are not well thought out. To make ethical decisions, information needs to be clear and everyone in the company needs to know what is going on. Some ways to help make ethical decisions is to ask questions, share ideas or have strategies set aside that can be used when determining how to fix a problem. Though management are the leaders in businesses, it is okay if they are not sure about something before making a final decision. They can always ask questions and receive input from others with some experience or knowledge of the area. In the case mentioned earlier, the intern asked questions about the way she had observed a task done differently. If she had not asked, she would not have known the truth.

While working together, employees must communicate with each other. It is beneficial for management to have frequent meetings as a group to share ideas and hear others' opinions. Collaborating with each other helps minimize confusion. In addition, sharing different ideas can possibly help management look at things from a different perspective. So, speaking up and addressing issues or concerns often will help with keeping organizations running smoothly. Also, the interaction makes employees become more familiar with each so that when anything needs to be addressed, they are comfortable with talking to each other.

If strategies are put in place to fix communication issues, the problems will not last long. Some strategies can include open door policies, company guidelines and face-to-face meetings. Open door policies allow workers to talk to management at any time regarding issues or concerns that are bothering them. Implementing company guidelines will keep employees aware of the expectations and what will not be tolerated. If they are aware of these things, it is likely they will avoid breaking the rules. Within these guidelines, how important effective communication is should be expressed. A lack of face-to-face contact can frequently lead to miscommunication and misinterpretation as communicating electronically can negatively impact on the receiver's understanding of the message (Morgan, Paucar-Caceres & Wright, 2014). When people talk face-

to-face, it allows them to get instant feedback and ask questions if they are confused about something. Some business leaders say this is the best form of communication. Moreover, as a leader, applying a plan to your business can help the communication process more effective.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there are several ways out there to improve communication skills in the workplace, but the issue is constantly growing as more ineffective leaders run business. To fix the problems, it starts with the leader of the organization. At times, the communication within organizations is poor and lack effective leaders who can demonstrate how much impact poor communication skills can affect companies. If the leader does not know how to run the business, this issue will continue.

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## **Literature Review: The Impact of Non-Academic Determinants on the Academic Success of Community College Students**

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Author: Dr. Patricia Burke-Black, Director—Morgan State University

College completion is a complex issue (Mertes & Hoover, 2014), and it is essential to examine multiple factors to address this issue (Nakajima et al., 2012). Approximately 60% of the community college students who do manage to transfer to four-year institutions, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, lose between 10% and 90% of their earned credits (O'shaunessy, 2014). Community college students generally lag behind university students in terms of academic achievement (Huerta, Watt, & Reyes, 2013). Despite their plans, community college students are significantly less likely to earn a bachelor's degree compared to students who initially enroll in a four-year institution (Monaghan & Attewell, 2014).

Much research has acknowledged issues of cognition and intelligence as academic determinants. Scholars have focused on specific effects of some non-academic factors on student achievement, such as socioeconomic status (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Herbers et al., 2012), race or ethnicity (Mickelson, Bottia, & Lambert, 2013; Wood & Newman, 2015), gender (Wanzek, et al, 2013), first-year students (Permezadian & Credé, 2016) home environment variables (Altschil, 2012; Boswell & Passmore, 2013; Linder et al., 2013), peer influence (Palardy, 2013; Wang & Eccles, 2012), and college satisfaction (Strahan & Credé, 2015). Additional non-cognitive skills, such as emotional intelligence (Mega, Ronconi, & De Beni, 2014; Schutte, Malouff, & Thorsteinsson, 2013), and self-efficacy (Wood, Newman, & Harris, 2015) have also been studied.

The specific effects of some non-academic factors on student achievement in a community college setting have been scantily studied. This review was organized into the following sections: the conceptual framework, a discussion on the inputs, environments, outputs, and non-academic determinants that have an impact on the community college context.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study uses Astin's Input-Environment-Output model (I-E-O), originally developed in 1984 (Astin, 1984, 1985, 1999; Astin & Antonio, 2012). Astin's I-E-O model was designed to show the relationships between three constructs that have an impact on student outcomes. Astin's Input-Environment-Output model consists of Inputs, which refer to the personal qualities of the students, such as demographics, behavior, political views and their previous educational background at the onset of the college experience. Environment refers to the students' experiences as they relate to the academic arena, friends, teachers, organizations, relationships, and extracurricular activities. Outputs refer to the progression of development for the student (Rice et al., 2013), which led to Astin's 2007 development of the Student Development Theory.

An advantage of this model resides in its capacity to assess the impact of environmental factors on student outcomes (Astin & Astin, 1996).

Astin and Antonio (2012) offered three key points regarding the I-E-O model first developed by Astin (1991), primarily that the effectiveness of education must be evaluated through both inputs and outputs, rather than solely outputs alone. No one output can be determined by a single input alone, and data on inputs and outputs cannot provide a comprehensive picture of education without taking into account educational environments and experiences.

A large number of studies of higher education have used Astin's model (Ahmad, Anantharaman, & Ismail, 2012; Marsh, 2014; Patterson, Krouse, & Roy, 2013; Rany, Souriyavongsa, Zain, & Jamil, 2013a; Rany et al., 2013b; Rice et al., 2013; Schuetz, 2014). The I-E-O model (Astin, 1984) allows researchers to identify determinants in specific categories, and thus isolate them, which would make it easier to understand which factors must be addressed to develop a solution to problems in higher education.

**Inputs.** Astin's model of Inputs refers to the characteristics, such as the personal development of the students, demographics, behaviors, and their previous educational background at the onset of the college experience. The topic of inputs in the community college context creates a clearer understanding of what institutions and policymakers must address to assist in the academic success of students in the United States.

In opposition to past research, today's understanding of the achievement gap among subgroups of the community college student population has helped current scholars identify which factors have bearing on student academic achievement or completion. For example, research conducted in 1982 resulted in policy recommendations that advised colleges to increase diversity in their student population by providing support programs for minority students, incorporating minority viewpoints in the curriculum, and hiring and promoting more minority faculty and administrators (Astin & Astin, 2015). Furthermore, they recommended that standardized tests be used more for course placement, counseling, and evaluation, instead of using them to screen and select students to be admitted (Astin & Astin, 2015), as these tests have repeatedly been shown to more reliably identify excellent test-takers, rather than excellent students who are likely to achieve positive life outcomes (Meyer, 2015; The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015).

Astin and Astin (2015) also recommended that community colleges should promote and assist their traditional-age students (18-22 years) in attending school full-time, so that community colleges could provide experiences to their students that are similar to those found in four-year colleges.

**Environment.** The environment of an institution has been seen to determine the number of important outcomes for its students. The environmental factors to be considered in the next section are the school's organizational climate and student engagement. Environment refers to the students' actual experiences during the educational program (Astin, 1993). The environment includes everything that occurs during the program that might impact the student. The environment can include personnel, extra-curricular activities, relationships with instructors, courses, friends, roommates, etc. (Astin, 1993). Additional allocated resources for schools, administrators and policymakers would better equip institutions to provide the best environments for their teachers and other staff to do their jobs (Baker et al., 2016). This, in turn, empowers

the school's teachers and other staff to connect both academically and emotionally with the students, providing both disciplinary structure and student support, and through this, increase student engagement and achievement (Ruzek et al., 2016; Shukla, Konold, & Cornell, 2015). They have been found to correlate with one another, as the school's organizational climate affects the efficacy of teachers, because they are provided the resources that they require to do their job fully (Baker et al., 2016; Pogodzinski, 2015; Pogodzinski, Young, Frank, & Belman, 2012; Reyes et al., 2012).

Education scholar George Keller (2008) described the transformation of education best in this current environment as a transformation in higher education that is plagued by the transition of our current society. Many homes are single-parent households where the parents must work and are not available to be at home to assist children with homework. Changes in technology are easily accepted and noted by society, but fewer researchers have noted changes brought about by the change in the economy, the women's movement, and family life and guidance and their impact on post-secondary education. Today, students read and write less, as they are listening and watching hours of the internet and television. Reading and writing, at one time the fundamentals of education, are now being replaced by computers and technology.

Changing behaviors in our society have substantially impacted American education. This new environment in society impacts education on a radically different level than in the past. Effective teachers are more available for faculty-student engagement, and able to positively influence student engagement (Swecker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013; Wood & Newman, 2015), which then affects student achievement and completion (Price & Tovar, 2014; Quaye & Harper, 2014).

Outputs. Much research has been conducted on the demographics and characteristics of community college students, and what school administrators and policymakers can do to engage them in their education and serve their needs. However beneficial such information might be, arguably the most important factor in assessing community colleges is whether they are producing the kinds of student outcomes we wish them to produce. According to Astin (1984, 1985, 1991, 1999), what determines educational outcomes are the inputs that the students bring to the table and the environments that schools create for students to realize their talents.

By determining and identifying what student outcomes are desirable, school administrators and policymakers could tailor their learning environments to produce these student outcomes, with respect to the students' inputs. However, the question of what kind of students we wish to produce in the United States is complex and a number of scholars have advocated for specific qualities. According to Garcia (2014), cognitive skills alone are often insufficient to measure academic and life outcomes. Non-cognitive skills have been found to play at least an equal role in determining the success of students because the development of good non-cognitive skills would help ensure that the students' cognitive skills would be put to good use (Farrington et al., 2012). Essentially, what Farrington et al. (2012) and Garcia (2014) have found is that students must not just be academically competent but must graduate with the requisite non-cognitive skills that would most likely lead to their success after school. These values were echoed as well by Astin and Astin (2015).

Astin and Astin (2015) have also noted that current educational trends have moved farther away from the values outlined above, as structural barriers have remained that discourage minorities and the socioeconomically disadvantaged from enrolling in college, which is one of the most important factors in predicting positive life outcomes (da Silva & Ravindran, 2016; Hu & Wolniak, 2013;

Strayhorn, 2012). As a result, it appears more important than ever to reaffirm the importance of producing American graduates who are committed to social change, tolerance, and economic, racial, and educational equity, because these individuals eventually shape American policies in the future (Astin & Astin, 2015). It is thus essential that colleges shape these young adults into citizens that uphold our values and shape policies in the future that could bring about greater equity in the world (Astin & Astin, 2015).

## **Non-Academic Determinants**

In response to research that has identified the numerous complex interactions between inputs, environments, and desired outputs, community colleges have initiated changes to cater specifically to their student demographics (Wood & Newman, 2015). Most studies on the non-academic determinants related to student achievement, however, have focused on four-year institutions (Wood, 2013). Applying the results of such studies to community colleges can result in policies that do not address the needs specific to community college students (Ma & Baum, 2016; McClenney et al., 2012).

The needs of four-year students are markedly different from the needs of community college students, as four-year students are significantly less likely to be from low-income, minority backgrounds compared to community college students (Backes et al., 2015; Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2011; Ma & Baum, 2016). For example, Jenkins and Rodriguez (2013) found that financial considerations are the largest concern among community college students in choosing to enroll, in contrast to four-year college students, who often choose to enroll based on academic considerations.

Scholars have identified several non-academic factors as influential for retention in the community college student population, namely, employment, care for dependents, availability to technology, the support including, social support, financial support, and support to cope with non-academic pressures. Each one of these factors will be discussed below.

**Age.** In the same way that SES and personality factors can influence whether a student's cognitive abilities are developed, further studies have shown that some student inputs can influence how they perform at school (Jenkins, Belanger, Connally, Boals, & Duron, 2013). Astin and others identify that recognizing the developmental stage that a student is in at the time of attending class presents a positive correlation to his success.

Student development has become more complex as our students are a part of a fast paced and changing society. We must consider which developmental factors need to be addressed in order to produce the most productive student.

The shifting student demographics impact traditional practices in our classroom and on college campuses. Understanding new styles of communication through the use of technology is an example of student development which must be addressed. Student development is the conceptual foundation that allows institutions to assist students with their personal changes, growth, and development. The student development theory is a holistic theory which includes the physical, biological, social, and environmental factors that affect students. If we wish for future students to

be progressive citizens of the world, it is essential that colleges nationwide prioritize the development of their students' values and character and make college accessible for everyone (Astin & Astin, 2015) There appears to be a controversial lens in the literature, the first supports that older students achieve at a higher rate than their younger counterparts. The opposing lens talks about the deterioration of retention due to age in older students.

Gender. Normally, speaking of gender, one speaks of specific roles and behaviors which also transfer to the academic environment. Gender has been based on one's physical-biological and behavioral characteristics. In the past some professions considered engineering science and agriculture to be areas where men are dominant while women's roles contained typing, catering, and nursing. This study has considered if non-academic determinants do have an impact on gender.

According to Sadker (1999), girls' home economics and boys' shop classes are gone. According to the top 10 gender bias update, the following has been noted:

1. Females major in foreign languages, music, drama, and dance while males major in computer science, physics, and engineering.
2. Public schools are creating single-gender classes and schools hoping to eliminate distractions for students.
3. Gender-related safety and health concerns have been noted amongst physically and sexually active students.
4. The dropout rate is high amongst boys in the earlier years, but as soon as students move more towards high school the rate of dropouts increase among females.
5. Gifted programs are usually populated at higher levels with females.
6. Men tend to make more money and manage organizations, so society assumes that they are also at higher learning levels in school this. This is not necessarily true, females often receive lower grades on standardized tests, but males usually receive lower course grades.
7. Classroom interactions with teachers often find males in the spotlight whether it is wanted or unwanted attention.
8. There is a gap in the math and science areas which is increasingly decreasing.

9. Boys usually enter schools with more computer experience than girls, the Stereotype still exist with girls still attached to data processing in clerical courses when it comes to technology.
10. Additional research is still needed to see if gender bias still exist or is educational equality now a socially resistant issue.

Race. Community colleges provide educational opportunities to populations that have traditionally been underserved (Ma & Baum 2016). Community colleges have open admission policies, low tuition, and are geographically close to their students' communities, which make them suited for students who would otherwise bypass higher education, such as first-generation, low-income college students or adults who have returned to school for additional training (Jenkins & Rodriguez, 2013; Ma & Baum, 2016).

Essentially, this shows that students' inputs, some of which are their characteristics based on SES, whether they are a first-generation undergraduate or not, do affect academic achievement in terms of making certain outcomes more difficult. This implies that to improve college retention and completion rates, it is imperative for schools, administrators, and policymakers to recognize the variety of inputs their students bring to the educational experience. By understanding these inputs, administrators and policymakers would be able to tailor their school's intervention programs to better serve the needs of their students. While issues of retention and graduation exist as well in four-year colleges, community colleges not only face lower rates of retention and graduation, but their student population is also more likely to be affected financially, socially, and emotionally of failing to complete their degrees, compared to their counterparts in four-year colleges. Most of these students are from low-income, minority, or first-generation college students, who are the most likely to face challenges in pursuit of their goals in life (Backes et al., 2012). Without a college degree, these individuals could become more susceptible to poverty and further widen the achievement gap.

Equity refers to the level playing field for higher education, inclusive of any race and gender, and the institutional responsibility of schools to ensure that no one is discriminated upon, especially in the admission process (Astin & Astin, 2015). For example, research conducted by authors in 1982 resulted in policy recommendations that advised colleges to increase diversity in their student populations by providing support programs for minority students, incorporating minority viewpoints in the curriculum, and hiring and promoting more minority faculty and administrators (Astin & Astin, 2015). Furthermore, they also recommended that standardized tests be used more for course placement, counseling, and evaluation, instead of using them to screen and select students to be admitted (Astin & Astin, 2015), as these tests have repeatedly been shown to more reliably identify excellent test-takers, rather than excellent students who are likely to achieve positive life outcomes (Meyer, 2015; The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). Astin and Astin (2015) also recommended that community colleges should promote and assist their traditional-age students.

Marital Status. Like age, there are conflicting views on the impact of marriage on community college students' achievement. One view looks at married couples as older than average college students and more responsible (Yess, 1981). Being older, it is assumed these types of college students are more motivated, disciplined and mature to balance academics with life. The opposing view is that married students don't have as much time as younger single students with common demands such as jobs, children, and spouses (Yess, 1981). The effect of the marital status of college students on their academic performance indicates married students make higher grades than unmarried students; however, married students with children do not achieve higher GPAs than those without children. (Ma, 1979). Marriage in itself can be a distraction when also trying to focus on classwork. It was also determined that students did better when they grew up in family environments with less conflict, including parental conflict such as divorce (Amato and Sobolewski 2007).

Highest Academic Credential. This implies that to improve college retention and completion rates, it is imperative for schools, administrators, and policymakers to recognize the variety of inputs their students bring to the educational experience. By understanding these inputs, administrators and policymakers would be able to tailor their school's intervention programs to better serve the needs of their students. This is a critical and foundational input in Astins' I-E-O model. States that allocate larger portions of their annual budget have been found to have higher rates of academic achievement rates and college completion (Baker et al., 2016). It was surmised by Baker et al. (2016) that the more money spent on education, the better schools would become. Previous research related to this has provided support for this hypothesis, but the topic still remains controversial.

Funding provides the critical foundation for which college students need to continue to be successful in their college experience. The relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and achievement has been supported through the literature. In the United States, the pronounced effects of having low SES on an individual's academic achievement have been well-documented, identified by studies such as those conducted by Turkheimer and Horn (2014) and Tucker-Drob and Bates (2016).

Financial Aid. Community college students often choose to leave school due to financial considerations (Jenkins & Rodriguez, 2013). Financial support is required on two fronts. First, community colleges require targeted funds to develop and implement programs that can address the specific needs of their student population (Baker & Corcoran, 2012). In a study conducted by Baker, Farrie, and Sciarra (2016), researchers examined the use of targeted funds to districts that serve economically disadvantaged children for all states from 1993 to 2012. High amounts of expenditure for schools in these states and districts were then found to lead to higher staffing levels, lower class sizes, and competitive teacher wages (Baker et al., 2016).

These factors have been seen to lead to higher academic achievement rates among students, because they influence whether quality teachers choose to remain or leave for another school with better conditions, in terms of staffing levels, class sizes, and wages (Fischweicher, McAtavey, & Kopp, 2015; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Sass, Hannaway, Xu, Figlio, & Feng, 2012; Winheller, Hattie, & Brown, 2012). Such schools are often located in suburban communities, where students are predominantly comprised of high-socioeconomic status (SES), White

individuals, thus leaving urban, minority students further disadvantaged, who are the ones most likely to attend community college (Baker et al., 2016).

Second, financial support may also be required, as financial difficulties are more commonly seen as a barrier to education for students in community colleges (Harper & Quaye, 2015). Community college students are, on average, older than their four-year counterparts (Patel & Assaf, 2013). Based on their research, the average age of community college students is 29 years old, compared to 23 years old for those in four-year institutions, which means that they are therefore less likely to rely on parents or family to help them access education (Patel & Assaf, 2013). If they are unable to gain financial support, these students were less likely to be retained, which affects our country's ability to produce skilled workers and compete in the global market (Carnevale et al., 2012; Ma & Baum, 2016).

Community colleges are known for trying to achieve equity in education (Dowd, 2007). Open access to enrollment requirements and low tuition allow many minorities to achieve the same academic goals. There is an increased economic return for persons obtaining an advanced degree beyond high school. (see Table 1).

Table 1.

*Changes in Weekly Earnings, Estimated Taxes Paid, and Unemployment Associated with each Change in Educational Attainment*

Highest Level of Educational Attainment	Weekly Earnings		Estimated Annual Taxes Paid (2011)		Unemployment Rate (2011)
	Median	%increase from the prior level	Amount	%increase from the prior level	
Less than High School	451		4679		14.1
High School or Equivalent	638	41	7330	54	9.4
Certificate/Some College	79	13	8949	18	8.7
Associates Degree	78	7	435	8	6.8
Bachelor's Degree	1053	37	13527	45	4.9

Source: Mullin & Phillippe (2013). Community College Contributions. Washington, D.C.: AACC.

Open access has traditionally been the mission of the community college, but there is still one obstacle, financial aid. There appears to be a parallel of inequality in the absence of effective financial aid. The process of applying for financial aid offers a level of complexity which undermines its effectiveness, and students often need assistance in navigating the system. While loans are not popular, they are an important tool for access to college. The lack of guidance in applying for financial aid can lead to the decision a student makes about whether or not and where a student can enroll. The institution chosen often depends on the amount of financial aid available for the student. Loans are critical in the financing of a student's ability to remain in school. College is now accessible but may not always be affordable and is more often considered an investment (Baum et al., 2014). Often lost in accountability debates is the fact that a student's success still depends considerably on a student's background and financial resources (Dowd, 2007).

**Employment Status.** Students who are employed in addition to attending school have been observed as less likely to be retained compared to their counterparts who do not have to work. Over 25% of community college students have been found to work 40 hours or more per week (Gault, Reichlin, & Roman, 2014). Scholars have observed that students who are employed may find it more difficult to remain in college and attain academic success than those who are studying full-time (Scott-Clayton, 2011). While a positive effect can be found among students who work a reasonable number of hours on campus, a negative effect has also been found for those who work long hours in jobs outside of campus (Dundes & Marx, 2006; Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2003).

For instance, in Wood (2013), African American men who attended community college were found to be more likely to study part-time and have a job at the same time, compared to those in four-year institutions. This demographic characteristic has been seen to lead to lower student achievement rates, especially when their specific needs are left unmet by the school (Wood & Newman, 2015). Some researchers have found that having a part-time job had no effect on students completing their degree (Boswell & Passmore, 2013). However, the study was limited by the number of factors investigated and failed to take into account how these factors can correlate with college achievement and completion by influencing other determinants of student success. Nevertheless, the increased likelihood of studying while working among community college students seems to indicate that programs that target working students in community colleges should be explored, given how prevalent this demographic is among their student population (Wood, 2013).

In a study conducted by Dadgar (2012), it was found that employment does not hinder academic progress, measured by GPA, and working moderate hours while studying may help community college students enroll in more courses and accumulate more credits. However, given the demographics of community college students, jobs that offer moderate hours of work while being geographically close to their school can be difficult to find. These findings, along with the findings obtained by Scott-Clayton (2011), seem to indicate that community colleges would do well to increase the number of on-campus jobs to help their students pay for their education while giving them enough free time to commit to their education.

**Access to Technology.** An emerging trend in American society has been the increasing number of digital learners. Digital learners or Digital Natives are considered those students born after 1980

with access to technology and the internet (Margaryan, Littlejohn, & Vojt, 2011). This generation has been given these names because of their constant exposure to and immersion in technology. For students, technology is engrained in their culture and virtually every activity; it is part of their identity (Kuntz, 2012).

Technology is one effective method to employ in teaching methodology and for disbursing information. Innovation in pedagogical design can assist in bridging the gap between what instructors design and what students need in order to feel engaged (Frost, 2011). Faculty members must be capable of finding ways to incorporate technology into the classroom environment to enhance student engagement, which in turn enhances learning outcomes.

Research has revealed that faculty members' teaching methods focus mainly on such traditional instructional methods as lectures (Barr, & Tagg, 1995). In this day of widespread familiarity with technology and its uses, it is a critical question to find ways to achieve an interaction between technology and academic instruction that is efficient and effective for students to feel engaged in their learning.

Access to technology impacts contemporary students in higher education in many ways today. Being restricted to brick-and-mortar classrooms is not the only option for students; in fact, online education is quickly advancing as part of the higher education curriculum. Some of the emerging technologies used in higher education today, such as videos, are being used to reinforce lessons. Recording lectures and webinars is also a prominent and effective tool used by faculty.

A recent study posted by Williams (2015) reports that 33% of students have missed class or a deadline because their tech devices were lost or stolen. Students engaged in day-to-day activity have reported 50% of their laptops, mobile phones, and other devices lost, stolen or broken. Replacing a lost, stolen, or broken laptop, mobile phone, and other devices cost approximately 29% of community college students' funds with students spending more than \$400.

Learning Management Systems is another prominent technology tool used in many of the higher education institutions. These systems are not only capable of preparing and administering educational content and resources, but these learning management systems are also able to assess and measure classroom performance. Collaboration platforms, such as online classes, hybrid classes, and blended classes are making education more accessible and flexible for students. The Horizon Report 2014: Higher Education Edition suggests that this is a growing model in higher education. A bigger question is whether a student that has access to the technology hardware also can afford resources necessary to handle the monthly subscription necessary for the media.

Dependent Care Needs. Since community college students compared to those in four-year institutions are more likely to have children, it is important for community colleges to help alleviate the difficulty of caring for children while studying. According to Bettinger, Boatman, and Long (2013), the presence of responsibilities outside of school can make it more difficult for students to focus on attaining academic success. It is therefore important for community college leaders to consider developing programs that target their students who have children, because not having enough time to care for their children has been seen to influence whether a student remains in

school or not, due to the primary importance most of them place on the welfare of their children (Bettinger et al., 2013; Wood & Ireland, 2014).

A blog post by Brent McBride, a professor of human development, speaks of the growing dropout rate of traditional undergraduate college students in the United States who are also parents. Traditional students are in various stages of their own personal development, and to have the responsibility of raising a child multiplies the likelihood they are at greater risk of not succeeding. The faculty are usually not aware of these types of responsibilities that exist outside of the class though they do impact performance in the classroom.

Affordable childcare is a challenge for any household, but it is a necessary support system needed for a college student to succeed. This issue is also a key factor in the long-term economic stability of our nation in that these students create human capital. The consequences are great in marginalizing the availability of persons in those various necessary vocational careers.

Adults are living longer, and family members are very often assuming caregiver responsibilities. The National Center for Education (2005) statistics estimate that 40% of the population between the ages of 18 and 24 enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions face the possibility of becoming adults' caregivers. College students providing care as adult caregivers were reported at a rate of 38%. This task is associated with an increased burden when coupled with classwork, reduced social engagement, increased stress and depression.

Support Systems. Support for learners was seen to correlate with student persistence, due perhaps to the presence of a supportive school environment and academic support programs to help the poorer students catch up to the level of the stronger students (McClenney et al., 2012). These correlations have been tested by scholars. In a qualitative case study conducted by Dudley, Liu, Hao, and Stallard (2015), the authors examined the reasons behind the gap in community college students' engagement. They gathered data from 63 community college students using the maximal variation purposeful method (Dudley et al., 2015). Both the CCSSE and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) were used. Dudley et al. (2015) found that the students' own perceptions and behaviors, the faculty's expectations and characteristics, the course characteristics, and institutional level support all influenced student engagement.

According to Tinto (1993), it is essential for students to integrate both academically and socially into their college environments to succeed. This may be difficult for first-generation college students whose culture at home or in their community is markedly different from the social and academic culture at their school (Tinto, 1993). Such students may feel disconnected from their school's culture and disengage from their education, which could possibly lead them to drop out of school (Tinto, 1993). Changes in values and character have been seen to occur because of the students' peer groups in college, which further supports the value of equity when considering college admissions policies (Astin & Astin, 2015).

For instance, Braxton et al. (2011), found that parents and spouses of community college students had more of an influence on the students compared to students from four-year institutions, because of added obligations outside of school. This implies that community colleges may need to develop programs that specifically involve their students' families and spouses to increase achievement.

Support to Cope with Non-academic Pressures. Community colleges cater to underserved populations, as evidenced by their open admission policies, low tuition, and geographical proximity (Ma & Baum, 2016). Foremost among these students are students from low-income, minority backgrounds who might have chosen to forgo higher education if not for community colleges (Jenkins & Rodriguez, 2013). Students from this demographic may require more support, as they usually face more difficult circumstances compared to their four-year counterparts (Ma & Baum, 2016). They are more likely to have obligations outside of school that can negatively affect their studies, such as being older, having children, having a job, and being a first-generation college student (Backer et al., 2012; Strayhorn, 2012).

First-generation college students generally face more challenges compared to those whose family members had attended college (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016). Community college students face non-academic pressures that are less likely to exist among other populations.

### Summary

Based on the reviewed literature, a gap in the literature exists regarding non-academic determinants that predict both student achievement and completion in a community college setting. George Keller's (2007) *Higher Education and the New Society* describes the imperative of acknowledging the social transformation affecting today's students. Keller recognizes the need for instructors and administrators to assess their programs in order to improve academic outcomes for today's contemporary, diverse student population.

Contemporary theorists identify new areas of focus. Their effort is to look at contemporary approaches to increase student achievement to see how consistent and relevant they are in the contemporary environment.

Low SES students and minorities continue to be underserved by the community colleges they attend, and their graduation rates have remained stagnant. The issue of student achievement in community colleges is a complex issue, due to the sheer diversity of its student populations and their needs. By investigating these factors and their influence on student achievement among community college students, a more holistic understanding can be gained on how to improve achievement and or completion in community colleges.

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## Substantive Suggestions for Increasing Enrollment from a Registrar's Perspective

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Author: Kathleen A. Styles, Retired Registrar



When tasked with increasing enrollment at an institution, the leader or president is most influential. Their commitment and dedication to sustaining the institution are vitally important. Their leadership style and knowledge base of critical offices within the institution are what defines enrollment and degree completion success. After having the opportunity of working under ten college presidents in various professional capacities including dean and serving as a registrar for almost two decades, the strategies that follow support a strong and viable institution.

At least once a year preferably at the beginning of the school year, the president should convene a meeting of college officials and staff (community forum) that demonstrates (dog and pony show) to all how all offices within the institution influence enrollment and the institution's graduation rate. Every office's role and the importance of institutional teamwork especially in classroom instruction, recruitment, admissions, advising, financial aid and the meaning of the letters FTE (full-time enrollment) should be shared. This promotes buy-in, commitment and sustainability of the institution.

A valuable administrative tool for institutional leadership is a Master Calendar that includes the Academic Calendar. The Master Calendar is an important administrative tool that contains listings and dates of all critical activities of the institution including all semester start and end dates, abbreviated session start and end dates, registration activities, important enrollment report and

other data deadlines for federal, state, local government, and other entities. It also includes closings, holidays observed and special events. This tool should be available to all decision makers responsible for submitting reports to the office of the president and elsewhere in a timely and efficient manner.

The Registrar's Office is the linchpin of the institution for so many reasons. This office is usually in Student Affairs or Academic Affairs. It is responsible for development of the course schedule in coordination with the Academic Affairs Division. Through an experienced and insightful academic leader, courses should be scheduled in a pattern to help students complete their degree/certificate requirements in a prescribed period of time as indicated in a degree audit system designed to guide students toward degree completion. Courses should be offered in multiple formats to meet the many needs of our diverse student populations.

Registration can be ongoing throughout the semester; however, one will want to have a general registration period. Registration dates are key indicators of enrollment over a period of time and provides the institution with key data concerning faculty inventory and hiring projections. In addition, registration trends can be noted along with peaks and lows during certain periods.

In order to develop a strategic enrollment plan, Enrollment Management and Marketing teams should meet to develop a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) analysis to look at their competition from neighboring institutions. Administrators may want to take a look at course enrollment and course offerings over the past three years. This information can be used to compare, fine-tune and project course offerings for students. Courses should be offered in person, online, hybrid and other formats to meet the ever-changing needs of students.

One can look at their competitors start and end dates and length of semester/sessions. This is a key factor for being proactive and creative in modifying your semester/session as long as you meet the required Carnegie units in an effective manner.

It is extremely important to develop a course enrollment monitoring tool for Academic administrators to review enrollment in classes 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% on a daily basis. This empowers the Registrar's office with class enrollment data to disseminate to the departments highlighting growth in classes which enables academic departments to make prudent staffing decisions.

Administrators can take a look at stop out students over the past three years. Reach out to these students via phone calls, Facebook, Instagram, and invitations to come in person or virtually to discuss returning to the institution. In addition, conduct in person and virtual advisement sessions for these targeted students on weekdays and weekends. Offer 24-hour advisors to assist students thinking about enrolling or re-enrolling. Get creative and look for funds that can be used to clear a small debt and or pay for one class while prospective students await approval for financial aid or other grant(s).

Lastly, successful enrollment and completion requires total engagement by the president and complete college community.

# Why it is Important for Leaders to Support Their Employees in the Workplace

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Author: Alvin Daughtrey, M.Div., M.S.



Whether you work in construction, over the roadways, in an office, factory, church, or classroom, every industry has a common constituency. People. Without them, commerce would be sluggish at best. For centuries, business owners have placed their priorities on growth, systems, and strategies to increase their bottom line, and while those are good decisions for business, leaders have other responsibilities. Employees are the life blood of an organization. When they are healthy, so is the company. Good maintenance will improve performance. Workers need to know that they are valued and that their contributions matter to the team and the organization. They are the engine that drives commerce.

When leaders engage their teams and care about the well-being of each member, they will appreciate the effect that it has on morale and the confidence that it builds among the unit. A healthy workplace is the result of implementing a health sustaining plan for workers. You could have a productive and reliable staff, but if you do not know them and respect them, challenge and support them by having their back, you will lose them. Therefore, leaders must be intentional about encouraging employees and keeping them motivated, and that is easier said than done for many of those who oversee the work of others. The manner in which you lead, and the method used to justify outcomes matter.

Uncaring and callous persons in charge cannot sustain a workforce based on distrust, deception, and manipulation. “Mean people are first and foremost meanest to themselves. They’re upset about their failures, their decisions, their actions. They loathe themselves and take it out on others.” Managerial decisions that disconnect employees will eventually compromise job satisfaction, engagement, productivity and produce turnover. Unwilling workers are an internal threat to business and the target of retribution; the ones criticized and persecuted on the job. Instead of

retraining unsuccessful leaders, companies tend to keep them in position until workers become frustrated and forced to act. Ultimately, the organization will lose top talent and revenue at the expense of ineffective governance.

Effectual leadership edifies and develops staff. People do not need to be managed! They look to their leaders to lead, teach, and advocate for them. Treat them like they matter because they do. Employees are the force behind the organization and a direct reflection of your leadership or the lack of it! Ask them if they have any work-related concerns. Make training accessible whenever it becomes necessary. Deliver correction with compassion. Learn something about those who are working for you without getting involved in their personal business. Compliment individual and team performance when merited and become a mentor, and you may discover that the highest form of leadership is to unselfishly serve those in your care.

## Reference

Veach, C. (2000). *Help! I work with people: Getting good at influence, leadership, and people skills*. Bethany House Publishers.

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## Recommended Reading

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