RAISING AWARENESS OF TUTORIAL SERVICES: 
LEVERAGING ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES TO BOLSTER STUDENT SUCCESS 
AND DECREASE EQUITY GAPS ON URBAN COLLEGE CAMPUSES 

by 
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Abstract

The California Community College Chancellor’s Office Vision for Success includes goals to increase the number of students earning certificates and degrees, increase the number of students who successfully transfer to four-year institutions, and decrease equity gaps for historically underrepresented students in the system (CCCO.org). Existing research suggests that academic support services, such as tutoring, could help bolster term GPAs, rates of persistence, and completion, as well as graduation rates (Grillo & Leist, 2013; Rickard & Mills, 2018; Coladarci, et al., 2010). However, these services are historically underutilized at higher education institutions, and often the students who need the most help are the least likely to seek it (Winograd & Rust, 2014). The deployment of a needs assessment indicated that these findings hold true at the institution of focus in this research, a community college located in Northern California, serving between 21,000-24,000 students annually. The institution is a Hispanic-Serving Institution, and identifies its disproportionately impacted students as those who identify as: veterans, former foster youth, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, black/African American, Latin-a/o/x, and low socioeconomic status. Through exploration of contributing factors such as stigma, identity, awareness, utility, accessibility, and prior experience, this dossier frames an applied project and future research study that will be used to raise awareness of these services, re-frame and de-stigmatize them for students, and better position them to increase utilization.

Keywords: academic support services, learning centers, tutoring, academic help-seeking, historically underrepresented college students, urban education, higher education

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Chapter 1

Data collected and analyzed by the National Student Clearing House, an organization that tracks almost all American college enrollments, indicate that success on a four-year degree path does not become a reality for most students. In fact, “only 50 of the more than 580 public four-year institutions in America have on-time graduation rates at or above 50 percent for their full-time students” (Complete College America, 2014, p. 5). This statistic applies to the western ideal of traditional college students, who embark on their higher education journeys at four-year institutions directly after high school. Students who are not immediately able to attend four-year institutions still have an alternative course for earning a college degree, but the path is not without its challenges.

Compromised of 116 institutions, and serving over 2.1 million students, the California Community College system is the largest educational system in the nation (California Community College Chancellor’s Office). The system was originally designed as a bridge for freshman and sophomore undergraduates looking to continue their upper division studies within the University of California system. Since its inception, the system has evolved to serve as a gateway to all types of four-year institutions for transfer students, and offers programs and courses for community members looking to increase job-skills or participate in learning for the sake of self-enrichment. Due to their comparatively low tuition fees and strategic geographic locations within large urban areas and small rural communities alike, the community colleges have become the collegiate entry point for many students from under-served communities (Reyes, et al., 2019) and low socioeconomic backgrounds. According to demographic research conducted by the College Board, 51% of community college students identify as a race other than “white,” and statistics from the American Association of Community College (AACC)
indicate that 71% of all first-time college students at two-year institutions identify as members of the Black, Native American, Asian and Hispanic communities.

Despite the lower fees, increased access, and convenient locations of so many community colleges in the state of California, data indicate that the graduation outcomes for students who begin their higher education journeys at two-year institutions are lower than their counterparts who begin at four-year institutions. “Overall, 39.2 percent of the students who began at a two-year public institution completed a degree within six years…Slightly less than half of the students who began at a two-year public institution (46.2 percent) were no longer enrolled by the end of the study period” (Shapiro, et al., 2018, National Student Clearing House, p. 19). Time-to-degree projections for students associated with historically disproportionately impacted groups tend to be even longer. These students often enter institutions of higher education with high hopes, only to be placed in non-transferrable remedial courses that lengthen their courses of study.

Colleges up and down the state have spent multiple decades trying to rectify this problem for all students, but with special focus on disproportionately-impacted populations. Campuses have taken on equity initiatives, retention strategies, increased the number of campus affinity groups, altered hiring practices to increase diverse staff, and created new personnel positions in an effort to get more students across the finish line of degree or certificate completion. Despite these best efforts, many of the same equity and achievement gaps still exist.

Recognizing this, California state legislature passed Assembly Bill 705 (AB705) in October of 2017 in an effort to rectify the time-to-degree pipeline. According to U.S. Department of Education (2016, 2017), the majority of students enrolled in remedial courses are students of color and those from low-income families. Nationally, 75% of all Latinx students,
75.5% of low-income students, and 78% of all Black students enrolled at community colleges take remedial courses (U.S. Department of Education, 2017), lowering their chances of academic success. AB705 called for a comprehensive overhaul of the California Community College system and introduced a movement that eliminated placement tests and remedial courses suspected to perpetuate this type of systemic bias. In the practice of academic tracking, a seemingly well-intentioned organizational tool, “whose aim is to facilitate instruction and increase learning” (Hallilan, 1994, p. 79) by grouping students by both academic and nonacademic factors, “a greater proportion of minority and low-income students are assigned to lower tracks” (Hallilan, 1994, p. 80). Similar to academic tracking, college placement tests put a disproportional number of students belonging to low-income and historically disadvantaged ethnic or racial groups in remedial coursework when compared to their privileged peers, contributing further to the growing equity gaps. Thus AB-705 mandated that community colleges create course sequences that make it possible for students to complete college-level Math and English in two semesters.

While AB705 removed enrollment barriers for California Community College students, it has presented a new set of challenges for the 116 institutions within the system in how best to support students who historically spent multiple semesters in remediation, find success in transfer-level courses within their first year of enrollment. Many colleges began to lean on their academic support services to help students find success, thus making services such as tutoring more crucial to student success than ever before. However, institutions quickly realized that simply providing these services was not enough. Despite the fact that student services and academic support resources at California Community Colleges have historically been offered to students free of charge, most institutions indicate that the services are largely underutilized, and
that the students who need the most help are often the least likely to seek it (Winograd & Rust, 2014).

**Problem of Practice**

With deep equity gaps in their success data, a community college situated in an urban part of California’s northern central valley serves as the focus of this research and identifies its most disproportionately impacted students as those who align with any of the following groups: Latinx or African American, first-generation college students, low socio-economic status, veterans, former foster youth, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. According to student support services data, only approximately 4% of the institution’s 21,000 student population accessed tutoring services. Research efforts related to this problem will seek to uncover why students, particularly those associated with disproportionately impacted groups, do not access tutoring services more often, and endeavor to understand how this service could be better positioned to increase utilization, strengthen academic success, and contribute to the closure of equity gaps.

Potential factors contributing to a low-levels of utilization of academic support services for community college students include students’ prior experiences in academic institutions, perceived stigma, student motivation, accessibility and awareness of services, and culture and identity as influencers in academic engagement. These factors will be explored through the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1969, 1984, 1986, 2002), whose evolving theories of economic, social and cultural capital, originally developed in 1960s France, still hold relevance when examining the academic success of disproportionately impacted students in schools today.
Theoretical Framework

As a sociologist, Bourdieu was fascinated by social stratification and the power held by different classes. He posited that the power held by certain groups that had access to the most connections and resources, and thus those with the most power, tended to reproduce heirs capable of wielding the same power. Conversely, those who did not have access to resources, connections, or power reproduced heirs without access as well, thus replicating the social, cultural, and power dynamics of the previous generation. This concept was termed cultural reproduction and segued into his theories of capital within human societies (Bourdieu, 1990).

Pierre Bourdieu’s Theories of Capital

Bourdieu recognized that capital came in multiple forms, and was not limited to the traditional economic definition. Though literal monetary capital clearly had a connection to power, Bourdieu defined social and cultural capital as non-monetary forms of credit or credibility within a society that could mobilize or repress individuals (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu, acquisition and exchange of these different types of capital was possible, but not necessarily easy for all people; the majority of one’s capital was dictated by one’s upbringing and cultural roots; it was practically baked into one’s identity, highlighting the structural constraints of certain classes, genders, and races within society. It appeared that people’s ways of viewing and navigating the world, their dispositions and ways of being came from their roots and prior experiences. Bourdieu defined these ‘schemata or structures of perception, conception and action’ as a person’s Habitus (Bourdieu, 2002, p, 27). Furthermore, one’s Habitus could create advantages or disadvantages within the world if it was a match or mismatch within the society or institution one was trying to navigate. This “cultural knowledge (i.e., facts, information, skills, and familiarity with social processes), particularly knowledge of
how institutions work…shows the long shadow that social class origins cast on life outcomes" (Lareau, 2015, p.2)

It became evident to Bourdieu that these structural inequities were easily observed in French classrooms, and he utilized his developing theories of capital in conjunction with Habitus to examine why it appeared that middle-and-upper class children were more successful in school than their lower-class counterparts. While unfortunate, these same types of equity gaps are still observable in schools today, but the tenets of Bourdieu’s theories offer a strong framework through which to explore existing literature related to this complex problem of practice.

Figure 1.1
Bourdieu’s theories of capital as they influence power, success, and mobility
Review of Existing Literature

Using Bourdieu’s (1969, 1984, 1986, 2002) and Bourdieu & Passeron’s (1977, 1990) theories of social, economic, and cultural capital as a framework, the proceeding sections will survey contributing factors, cited in existing literature, that have impacted utilization of academic support services, such as tutoring.

The various facets of a student’s identity, including his or her racial, ethnic, or cultural identity and knowledge, influence the ways in which the student engages with academic environments and support systems (Akerlof & Kranton, 2002; Chang, et al., 2020; Jack, 2016; Stephens, et al., 2012; Wood & Williams, 2013). In this context, “identity” is related to any markers or labels that students use to categorize themselves and others within a social setting, such as school, and relates directly back to Bourdieu’s concept of the Habitus. Facets of identity include affiliating labels that pertain to race and culture, as well as those that relate to a student’s perceived aptitude or interests (labels such as “nerd” or “jock”) (Akerlof & Kranton, 2002).

Researchers focused on issues related to academic support concur that there is a positive correlation between tutoring and student success. This consensus, coupled with statistical evidence indicating that disproportionately impacted students have lower rates of persistence and graduation, serves as motivation for research examining why these students do not access tutoring services more frequently. While there is likely a number of reasons, many field practitioners would encourage institutions to first examine the mismatch between the culture and identities of their students and the culture and values of their campuses.

Student Habitus, Motivation, and Prior Experiences with Higher Education Institutions

Student values and the ways that students perceive academic institutions, faculty members, and student support services in higher education environments are often anchored by
the experiences they have had in the past (Ashwin & Trigwell 2012; Jack, 2016). Bourdieu characterized these experiences as intertwined concepts of cognizance and identity and called them *Habitus*. This term encapsulates the knowledge and ways of navigating society inherited from childhood or amassed from a collective cultural group. According to Bourdieu one’s habitus shapes one’s expectations of the systems and people around them. Persisting into college, one’s habitus may act as a barrier when “the cultural norms that govern campus life exacerbate class differences (Lareau & Weininger 2008; Lee & Kramer 2013; Lehmann 2014)” (Jack, 2016, p. 2); thus, from evoked prior experiences, mobilizing factors such as motivation, or confidence can be drawn or shuttered (Ashwin & Trigwell, 2012).

Navigating these complex environments of higher education institutions can test students’ motivations in that the benefits and expectations pertaining to academic support may be unclear to students with no prior college experience. For example, attending a single tutoring session does not offer a guarantee of immediate results in the form of increased test scores, course grades, or overall GPAs for students. This uncertainty about the return on investment for the time spent participating in academic support might lead students to weigh alternative uses of their time with more immediate and predictable rewards, such as working. Students may also feel unmotivated to seek help if they are already failing, or may not believe they, as the student, are part of the problem that is keeping them from success. Ciscell’s et al (2016) study indicates that “the more serious the trouble, the less likely that the student will seek help” (Ciscell, et al., 2016, pp. 40-41).

Researchers Prochaska and Prochaska (1999) indicated four prevailing reasons that suggest why students do not employ consistent self-regulatory strategies. These reasons include beliefs that they cannot change, that they do not want to change, they do not know what to
change, or they do not know how to change. (p. 84). Potacco’s, et al. (2013) study utilized coupon incentives to motivate students to access tutoring and found that students were more motivated to participate when the rewards of the activity were clear and immediate. One such incentive was that a coupon from an hour of tutoring could be exchanged for an extra point on an exam, with a maximum of six additional points. Prior research conducted by Williams and Stockdale (2004) drew conclusions about “the importance of reward type and value to effectiveness, stating that if a reward is highly valued, the activity will be highly valued and may enhance the student’s sense of perceived competence and self-determination” (Potacco, et al., 2013, p. 40). When the benefits and reward of tutoring is unclear, students with more community on their college campus may feel unmotivated to attend tutoring if there are alternatives available, even if those alternatives may not be as effective in boosting student success. Findings in Ciscell’s et al (2016) study indicated that some students “found easier or more comfortable options to meet their tutoring needs” (Ciscell, et al., 2016, p. 48), such as studying with friends who they could seek out any hour of the evening while studying, or forming larger study groups with other peers.

Disproportionately impacted students who participated in Jack’s (2016) study attested that their prior experiences were a pitfall in their academic journeys at one of the nation’s top universities. Jack’s (2016) study distinguished three classes of students: the middle-class, privileged poor, and the doubly disadvantaged. Students identified as middle-class cited being at ease in college, and viewed their instructors as partners in their academic journeys. Students identified as privileged-poor were those who has been granted opportunities to attend prep-schools or participate in college preparatory activities through scholarships, and noted having learned how to better navigate academic environments through their experiences interacting with
privileged peers. Jack used the term “doubly disadvantaged” to describe students who came from low socioeconomic backgrounds and did not have access to more privileged activities, such as preparatory school, through scholarships or any other means. These students had difficulty navigating the college landscape, as they lacked the skill set or desire to engage in the academic environment beyond class time, even when they recognized that other peers were reaping the benefits of such engagement (Jack, 2016).

Jack’s (2016) and Stephen’s et al. (2012) findings are reflections of the cultural, social, and economic capital theories that Bourdieu (1969, 1984, 1986, 2002; Bourdieu 1977, 1990) postulated beginning in the 1960s. He recognized a similar pattern in developing his capital theories as he observed that French students hailing from high-society families succeeded in school at rates much higher than their low-income peers. The students from high-society families had cultural capital valued by the school system, and the economic capital to buy supplies that enhanced academic performance or could afford to correct academic deficiencies through additional private instruction. Just as Jack (2016) discovered in researching students in higher education institutions today, Bourdieu theorized that converting capital, whether it was economic, social or cultural, to gain agency or power, was particularly difficult for students from low income families, which widened the achievement gap between them and high-society peers.

**Core Values of American Higher Education Institutions**

American universities tend to value and emulate the norms and culture of American middle-class society and have systems more easily navigated by students from multi-generational college-going families (Chang, et al., 2020; Jack, 2016; Stephens, et al., 2012;). For example, despite the system’s efforts to increase the diversity of leadership personnel in academic institutions higher education rewards independence, a white, middle class value. In a
study that surveyed deans, vice presidents, managers and directors from institutions across the nation they reported favoring the value of independence over that of interdependence, a value more familiar to students from low-come backgrounds (Stephens, et al., 2012).

It has been inferred that this mismatch in fundamental values creates an immediate disadvantage for students hailing from disproportionately impacted groups, such as first-generation college students and those who identify with historically underrepresented populations, such as Latinx and African American students, and bleeds into a greater cultural mismatch between these students and higher education institutions (Chang, et al., 2020; Duncheon, 2018; Wood & Williams, 2013; Jack, 2016). According to Jack (2016), this potential “…cultural mismatch that working-class undergraduates experience increases stress (Stephens, Townsend, et al. 2012), heightens their sense of isolation (Aries 2008; Ostrove and Long 2007), threatens their academic identities (Collier and Morgan 2008; Tinto 1987), undercuts academic performance and persistence (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Pike and Kuh 2005; Terenzini et al. 1996), and can prompt them to withdraw from campus life (Bergerson 2007; Lehmann 2007; Suskind 1999)” (p.3).

In a study conducted by Stephens et al. (2012), two different welcome letters were issued to incoming freshman at a large private university – one letter that was modeled after the university’s actual welcome letter and embodied values of independent learning, and the second letter focused more on interdependence. After reading the letter, students were asked to complete a verbal reasoning test and solve as many anagrams as they could in a 10-minute time span. As predicted, when a cultural mismatch occurred, students performed poorly on the test compared to students who were culturally matched – even more interestingly, students who were not first-generation, performed consistently no matter which letter they received. Over the
course of two years, it was discovered that students originally citing values and motivation of interdependence also performed worse in terms of GPA and persistence than peers citing more traditional middle-class values (Stephens, et al., 2012). While the internal turmoil created by cultural mismatch with one’s academic institution is more than enough to make students feel discouraged and isolated, the mismatch may also contribute to fear of external judgement or exclusion by peers in the form of stigma.

**Stigma and Academic Identity**

These interconnected factors of identity and values can lend themselves to stigma, or feelings of condemnation for being associated with a particular circumstance, characteristic, or relation. Such feelings can further discourage students from engaging in campus activities, including academic support services such as tutoring (Chang, et al., 2020; Ciscell, et al., 2016; Winograd & Rust, 2014; Wood, 2014). Participation in certain extracurricular or help-seeking activities has the potential to signal economic or social type to onlooking peers (Bursztyn et al., 2019), which can feel threatening to a students’ identity. Those hailing from low-socioeconomic communities may feel pressured to play-it-cool in school (Bursztyn et al., 2019), as concerns about face loss and group harmony are often heightened among ethnic minority students (Chang, et al., 2020). Face loss is synonymous with loss of respect or a certain cultural identity for many disproportionately impacted students. The respect of their communities is of great importance, and maintaining that respect is often tied to adhering to cultural norms and values that may not align with their academic goals. This anxiety related to being subject to stigma in academic environments is cited as one of the reasons that the students who need the most help are the least likely to seek it (Ciscell, et al., 2016).
However, the construct of stigma is not strictly limited to what peers might think of other peers. Existing research suggests that students also fear the judgment of what tutors might think of them while engaging in academic support activities, or even what students think of themselves for needing to seek academic support.

…Most of the students who identified stigma as an obstacle to seeking help did so not with actual evidence of themselves or others being stigmatized, but rather by citing their own assumptions about the stigmatized nature of tutoring. Some students were afraid that they would be judged hardly, not by their peers, but by the tutors themselves, who would see their academic work as inferior (Ciscell, et al., 2016, p. 44).

In studying the perception of black males in community colleges, Wood’s (2014) findings converged with those of Ciscell, et al. (2016), Jack (2016) and Winograd and Rust (2014) in illuminating that “stereotype threat and self-stigma present challenges to adaptive academic help-seeking beliefs and behaviors” (Winograd & Rust, 2014, p. 19). Failure to seek academic support can then cascade into other demotivating consequences such as course failure or academic probation, which further contribute to overall academic disengagement. A large portion of the men studied by Wood (2014) remained quietly disengaged while being observed on campus and expressed apprehension to engage due to feelings of academic inferiority – which was identified as the meta-theme of the study. “In general, academic disengagement was evidenced by a disinclination to engage in the classroom with faculty or fellow students or outside of the classroom with campus academic paraprofessionals (e.g. tutors)” (Wood, 2014, p. 792).

**Power and Positionality in Higher Education Institutions**
Yet another element crucial to the exploration of why or how students access academic support is the power and social dynamics in higher education institutions. While many researchers, including Jack (2016) and McCallen and Johnson (2019) have conducted studies that infer the importance of relationships with institutional agents to the success of disproportionately impacted students, those relationships are not always easy for students from historically disadvantages groups to forge. For first-generation college students, this worry around forging relationships in academic institution is of heightened significance because these students, “by definition embody the concepts of upward mobility in breaking the intergenerational inheritance of their parents’ educational level” (McCallen & Johnson, 2019). This is no easy feat; researchers commonly tie one’s ability to excel to the availability of social and cultural capital (Perna & Thomas, 2008). While it might not necessarily be that institutional agents such as tutors, academic advisors, or faculty members do not want to engage these students, disproportionately impacted students often hold certain beliefs about power and social dynamics, fueled by their Habitus, that can hold them back from attempting to establish such relationships.

Jack (2016) extensively discusses the idea that “the doubly disadvantaged lack the skill set or desire to engage” (Jack, 2016, p.89) authority figures at Renowned University as a roadblock for these students. While Jack (2016) was specifically referring to faculty members, Colvin (2007) highlights that the same resistance to engage “authority” can also extend to peer-to-peer interactions. While the benefits of peer tutoring have been correlated in multiple studies, it can be awkward and challenging for both students and tutors to navigate shifting positionality in order to have a productive tutoring session. In observing tutoring interactions unfold in classrooms over the course of eighteen months, Colvin (2007) saw a distinct dichotomy in the
way students responded to the presence of a peer tutor. Some recognized the tutors as a source of authority right away. “Students viewed tutors as having a particular position beyond their role. As soon as tutors walked through the door, they changed, in the eye of students, from being ‘one of them’ to having at least a perception of power. As interactions occurred, tutors had to continually adapt their performance to assert that image to others” (Colvin, 2007, p. 176).

Beyond this immediate assignment of power bestowed to tutors by some students, others exercised a different resistance to engaging tutors in Colvin’s (2007) study. Some made the tutor work to gain positional power. “Power and resistance are joint performances that begin in the reciprocity of a relationship…many students did not automatically assign power to those tutors. They gained positional power as they demonstrated the ability to help the students in the ways that the students wanted to be helped” (Colvin, 2007, p. 177). This finding indicates that, at least with peers, there may be room for students to negotiate power and positionality a bit more than they might be inclined to do with more official authority figures, such as faculty members. Colvin (2007) noted that once tutors gained trust with students through demonstrated ability and fostered relationships, the students engaged and sought the tutor’s input much more frequently. This may be one of the reasons many researchers have found that “peers are often considered the most powerful influence in undergraduate education, even more so than advisors and instructors (Duch et al., 2001; Ender & Newton, 2000; Fortney et al., 2001; Garside, 1996; Newcomb & Wilson, 1966)” (Colvin, 2007, p. 166).

**Accessibility**

A final factor contributing to the way and frequency with which students access academic support services relates directly to the accessibility of these services. If colleges can help degrade some of these perceived economic, social, and cultural barriers, and make these peer-
based academic support services feel more accessible, students might be apt to utilize them more frequently. Accessibility is a broad term referring to a number of issues that may keep students from being able to participate in academic support activities. One of the first stumbling blocks in the factor of accessibility is that not all institutions agree on the best way to position or staff services, and the extent to which they should be endorsed to students. Even within academic institutions, there can be disagreements between the instructional administrators and the student service administrators. Academic support services, such as tutoring, can get caught in this tug-of-war because these services often rest in the middle of the interests of both parties. In their study aimed to uncover the best way to restructure tutoring services, Stewart and Hartman (2001) noted that “each institution has its unique culture. At this institution, a number of issues affect the structure and management of the Academic Skills Lab. These issues include funding sources, faculty union work rules, student population, state mandates, space availability, position in an academic department, and the ability to hire qualified personnel” (Steward and Hartman, 2001, p. 43). Unfortunately, these systemic challenges sometimes detract from creating robust, accessible support services for students.

Accessibility is another aspect colleges might consider in the efficacy review of academic support services. Accessibility covers a wide range of factors including physical location on campus, availability of online services, center aesthetics, competency of the staff, availability of subject tutors, operational hours, and the level of student awareness with regards to the existence of such services. These factors together, and individually, contribute to the problem of practice. Students interviewed by Cicsell, et al. (2016) frequently cited time commitments as major personal obstacles to accessing tutoring services.
Many students simply felt that they did not have the time to come in for tutoring, or that their schedules conflicted with the timing of the study sessions and tutoring hours. Some students cited poor time management, and a few cited living off campus as a hindrance to coming in for tutoring, but most cited work as the primary obstacle… (Ciscell, et al., 2016, pp. 46-47).

In designing services to meet the needs of community college students, institutions must consider the cultural, economic, and social influences, as previously outlined, that might impact a student’s willingness or ability to access academic support, even if they perceive the activity to be important. In a study conducted by Veres (2015), examining the factors impacting student services utilization, results indicated that factors such as students’ commute times and employment status were negatively correlated to utilization. “Working for pay had the strongest relationship to identified importance and utilization. Regardless of the service, each was negatively related to increased time working for pay… Though significant for all, usage of tutoring services, and personal counseling services were the two most affected” (Veres, p. 4, 2015).

Academic support services are also not accessible if students do not know about them. Lack of awareness was identified as a major barrier to accessibility in Ciscell’s, at al. (2016) study. “…Another barrier to students seeking help was a lack of knowledge about the services offered, the qualifications of the tutors, (e.g., “Are they majors in the areas they’re tutoring in?”), the tutor center location and hours (e.g., “I don’t think I even knew there was one”), or what was likely to happen during a tutoring session” (Ciscell, et al., 2016, p. 47). While exploring the utilization patterns of first-generation college students, Winograd and Rust (2014) also found that the measure of self-stigma students carried about academic support services directly
correlated to their awareness of such services. This indicates that colleges may need to consider reframing academic support services in order to shift perception and increase both awareness and utilization of services for students.

**Summary and Conclusions**

There are multiple factors potentially limiting disproportionately impacted students from accessing academic services on college campuses. While there is consensus among researchers affirming the efficacy of academic support services, and data that indicated programs, such as peer tutoring, increase student success, researchers have uncovered several barriers to access over the years that might keeping these services underutilized on college campuses. The positionality of these services in terms of the way they are presented through campus norms and values may create a cultural mis-match for first generation, and low-income students as well as students of color who are more comfortable navigating systems built on interdependence rather independence (Chang, et al., 2020; Jack, 2016; Stephens, et al., 2012;). Additional factors such as those related to accessibility, including external demands on time involving work or commuting (Veres, 2015) and lack of awareness of services (Ciscell et al., 2016) may also contribute to underutilization.

If students do possess the time to participate, and the awareness of services, it would be crucial for them to also possess the confidence to overcome the fear of stigma as it has historically related to academic help-seeking behaviors. The triumph over stigma does not come easily for many students, as fear of judgement is not limited solely to peers, cultural communities (Bursztyn, Egorov & Jensen, 2019; Chang et al., 2020) or tutors themselves; self-stigma is also prevalent (Ciscell, 2016) amongst disproportionately impacted students.
As part of the mission of the California Community College Chancellor’s office in “making sure students from all backgrounds succeed in reaching their goals and improving their families and communities, eliminating achievement gaps once and for all” (CCCCO.edu), it is crucial that academic support services, especially tutoring, are de-stigmatized, properly positioned, operational when students need to access them, and offer safe spaces for all students.

In order to design a strategy geared to better position these services to meet student needs and to bolster the success of students belonging to disproportionately impacted groups, a needs assessment will be deployed at the institution of focus. Upon conclusion of careful data analysis, findings of the needs assessment will be leveraged to create a targeted intervention related to the campus’s academic support services.
Chapter 2

The extant literature explored in chapter 1 provided evidence that this problem of practice is multifaceted, and requires consideration of many complex contributing factors in order to better understand why disproportionately impacted students may not be accessing academic support services more consistently. While the California community college system, as a whole, is aiming to eliminate equity gaps and champion more disproportionately impacted students to success (California Community College Chancellor’s Office), these efforts are complicated by factors including, but not limited to, institutional red tape, human behavior, and blind spots at the local level.

In order to better understand the most prevalent factors impacting students at the institution of focus, a concurrent parallel mixed-methods needs assessment was conducted to better understand the perspectives and experiences of college tutors and current students. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected for each participant group simultaneously, and analyzed in tandem to reveal prevalent patterns related to factors such as hesitancy created by discomfort at the thought of stigma or judgement stemming from oneself (Ciscell et al., 2016), one’s peers, or one’s cultural community (Bursztyn, Egorov & Jensen, 2019; Chang et al., 2020), external demands on time, such as those related to commuting or work (Veres, 2015), lack of awareness of services (Ciscell et al., 2016), or distress related to transcending traditional social hierarchies in order to forge relationships with authority figures (Jack, 2016; Colvin, 2007), such as faculty members or tutors, in order to secure academic help.

Empirical research suggests that academic help-seeking is an important part of student success, particularly for disproportionately impacted students, as trends indicate that sessions have a higher impact on minority students, who typically have lower GPAs than their white
counterparts (Buchanan et al., 2019). In addition, participation in tutoring often has positive impacts on term GPA. According to results of a study conducted by Coladarci et al. (2010) students who participate in tutoring performed better than non-participatory peers. Moreover, existing research indicates that GPAs increase with each additional hour of tutoring, and that tutoring participation has a tangible impact on retention. The odds of a participatory student persisting are almost twice that of non-participatory students. Just as with GPA, the odds increased more as students participated in higher hours of tutoring (Coladarci et al., 2010). This insight is valuable, as it validates academic support as a legitimate strategy to increasing academic success for disproportionately impacted students and closing equity gaps.

**Context**

The professional context is a community college situated in the northern end of California’s central valley. The institution serves between 21,000-24,000 students annually and has a diverse student-body make-up that is representative of the demographics found within community colleges throughout the state. The institution is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), and serves a number of other historically underrepresented racial and ethnic identities, with less than 25% of the campus population identifying as “white.” In addition, 89% of the college’s students qualify for the Board of Governors fee waiver, deeming most students as low-socioeconomic status.

**Purpose of the Needs Assessment**

Research exploring student perceptions and utilization patterns of academic support services is currently limited. While there are a number of studies that explore potential tangentially related factors, direct insight from college students, particularly those identifying with disproportionately impacted populations, seems increasingly necessary in order to better
understand why “the students who need the most help are the least likely to seek it” (Ciscell, et al., 2016). This research aims to understand how academic support services, such as tutoring, could be better positioned within the California community college system to increase utilization, strengthen student success, and contribute to the closure of equity gaps.

Research Questions

This study was conducted to gain insight into the overarching question of why community college students, especially those belonging to disproportionately impacted groups, do not utilize academic support services more frequently. The following research questions guided the needs assessment:

- RQ1. How do prior experiences with tutoring contribute to students’ decisions to seek academic support?
- RQ2. What beliefs do tutors and students hold about stigma as it relates to help-seeking and participation in tutoring?
- RQ3. What are students’ experiences with, and awareness of, the academic support services offered at the institution?

Methods

This needs assessment design employed a mixed-methods design to collecting primary data in order to answer the outlined research questions. A mixed methods approach was appropriate for this assessment, as it allowed for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously in a convergent parallel design, and afforded opportunities for clarity, elaboration and triangulation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) of emergent patterns and themes across all data types. The collection and analysis of multiple sources also brought deeper dimension to the study, as the research questions sought both concrete utilization and awareness
data in addition to insight into students experiences that are not always well-captured through exclusively quantitative means.

**Sample and Recruitment**

Data were collected in the Summer and Fall of 2021 from two overlapping groups. Participants included students who were currently enrolled and/or students who were employed as tutors at the professional context of focus, a two-year institution situated in the northern end of California’s central valley. All participants were individuals over 18 years of age, and willing to share experiences and insights about accessing academic support services, such as tutoring, before and after entering an institution of higher education. At the time of data collection, approximately 24,000 students were enrolled at the institution, annually. It was appropriate to draw the sample from this population because the student demographics at the institution were largely representative of those found at other community colleges throughout the state of California. The following sections outline the participant recruitment procedure for each group as well as demographic information of participants.

**Tutor Survey & Focus Group Participants**

Participants were recruited through convenience sampling on a voluntarily basis for both tutor survey and focus group participation. Sixty tutors received an invitation to participate in a survey designed to assess their experiences and perceptions through email in Summer 2021. The preamble of the survey detailed the goals of the research, and reminded participants that their participation was voluntary, and that they could choose to stop participating at any time. Survey questions did not ask for any information that could be linked to the specific identity of any tutor participant. Thirty-six tutors responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 60%. Of the thirty-six respondents, 100% completed the survey. The tutor survey did not solicit demographic
information related to age, race, gender, or sexual orientation. Focus group participants were identified through the initial tutor survey, as the last question asked survey participants directly if they would be willing to partake in a focus group, and to include a valid email address if they were so willing. Twenty tutors indicated a willingness to participate in a focus group and were sent a follow up email with dates and times of focus groups, which were conducted through zoom throughout Summer 2021. Ultimately nine tutor volunteers followed through with participation in a focus group. Tutors participating in focus groups were not asked to state their age, race, gender, or sexual orientation.

**Student Survey and Focus Group Participants**

In Fall 2021, all currently enrolled students at the institution of focus received an invitation to participate in the student survey through their campus email account. The survey detailed the goals of the research, reminded students that their participation was voluntarily, and informed them that they could choose to stop participating at any time. Participants were only asked for de-identified information throughout the survey. One hundred and six students responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of approximately .05%. Of the 106 respondents, 9 students indicated that they were under the age of 18, so those surveys were eliminated from the data analysis process. Fifty of the remaining 95 respondents completed all 38 items within the survey, leading to a completion rate of 52.6%. Within the group of students who completed the survey, 76% identified as female, 22% (n=11) identified as Latin-o/a/x, 18% (n=9) identified as Asian, 14% (n=7) identified as Black or African America, and 24% (n=12) identified as White. Sixty percent (60%) of participants indicated that they were first-generation college students, and 64% indicated that they qualified for financial aid or a tuition fee waiver.
Forty one percent (41%) of participants indicated that they were heterosexual, 60% indicated that they were not currently employed, and 34% of participants were between the ages of 18-24.

Student focus group participants were also recruited on a voluntary basis through announcements made through email, and in the campus’s learning management system (LMS). Informed consent letters were distributed to all participants and required individual verbal consent through zoom before the commencement of the focus group questions. Focus group participants were students currently enrolled at the campus. Eight students participated in the student focus groups and were asked to choose codenames to utilize for the duration of their participation to protect their identities while the session was being audio recorded. Students participating in focus groups were not asked to state their name, age, race, gender, or sexual orientation during the session.

**Instrumentation**

The following section provides an overview of constructs measured in this needs assessment, as well as operationalized definitions of those constructs and the appropriate instruments utilized to measure them.

**Constructs**

Three constructs constituted the basis of the needs assessment: accessibility, prior experiences, and identity. Within accessibility and prior experiences, there are subconstructs of utility, awareness, and stigma, respectively. Table 2.1 has been included to provide operational definitions of these constructs as they relate to this research effort. The definitions, within the specified professional context, shaped both the instruments utilized to collect data, and the methods of data analysis.
Table 2.1
Operationalized Definitions of Constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Operational Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>‘1a: capable of being reached’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘1b: easy to speak to or deal with’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘2: capable of being used or seen’ (Merriam-Webster, 2021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Experiences</td>
<td>Prior experience encompasses all knowledge gained through past exposures and interactions, both within formal educational institutions, and informal learning spaces. Prior experience, in this study, also pertains to interactions with people (such as faculty, staff, or other students) within educational institutions, as well as experiences with the institutions themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Identity will be defined more literally in the needs assessment through generalized demographic information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>The definition of utility, for the purpose of this study, is broad, and encompasses concepts such as frequency of use, aspects of functionality, and the more traditional understanding of utility that seeks to determine whether services are useful or beneficial from the student perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>‘The quality or state of being aware : knowledge and understanding that something is happening or exists’ (Merriam-Webster, 2021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stigma</td>
<td>‘A mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person’ (Oxford Languages, 2021).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measure 1: Surveys

In order to measure the constructs of accessibility, awareness, utility, prior experiences and stigma as they related to the utilization of tutoring services, primary data were collected through a 38-question survey that was distributed to all currently enrolled students through campus email, and an 8-item tutor survey that was distributed to 60 campus tutors. Survey participation was voluntarily and respondents had to be over the age of 18.
Student Survey

Student survey questions were organized by construct with eight questions geared to measure accessibility, twelve geared to measure utility and awareness, 10 geared to measure prior experiences, and seven geared to measure identity in the form of demographic questions (Appendix I).

Figure 2.1
Sample of Student Survey Items

ACCESSIBILITY:

Please answer the questions below about the accessibility of Delta College Tutoring Services using the following Likert scale:

1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3- Neutral  4- Agree  5- Strongly Agree  6- I’m not sure

1. The tutoring centers at Delta College are conveniently located within the campus.
2. Tutors are generally available when I need them.
3. Visiting a tutoring center is intimidating.

Tutor Survey

In order to measure tutors’ prior experiences and perceptions of stigma surrounding academic support services, primary data were collected through a seven-question survey to be administered through email (Appendix III).

Figure 2.2
Sample of Tutor Survey Items

Please answer the questions below about providing tutoring services using the following Likert scale:

1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3- Neutral  4- Agree  5- Strongly Agree  6- I’m not sure

1. Students generally show up to tutoring prepared for their sessions (with the correct materials, questions ready, etc).
2. Tutoring is for students who are behind or failing their courses.
Measure 2: Focus Groups

As compliments to the initial campus-wide survey and tutor survey, a series of both student and tutor focus groups were conducted to further explore the constructs of stigma and prior experiences as they related to academic support service utilization. Participation was voluntary, and participants had to meet the same requirements to participate as set forth for the surveys – currently enrolled or employed at the college, and over 18 years of age. In the general student focus groups, five questions were geared toward gaining insight into students’ prior experiences, and three were geared toward better understanding the role of stigma as it relates to academic help-seeking behaviors (Appendix II). In order to further explore tutor perceptions of stigma and prior experiences within their roles, seven open-ended questions were posed, plus follow up questions for clarification or expansion, as necessary (Appendix IV).

Data Collection Procedure

The needs assessment procedure was executed over the course of four months in the Summer and Fall of 2021. The assessment was split into two phases based on access to, and availability of, the participant groups. Collection procedures for quantitative and qualitative data are outlined in the following sections.

Data Source 1: Surveys

Tutors were the first group for which needs assessment data was collected. The surveys designed to measure the constructs of accessibility, awareness, service satisfaction, prior experiences and stigma were distributed before focus groups were held. Both surveys (student and tutor) were designed in Qualtrics; the tutor survey contained 8 questions, and the student survey consisted of 38 questions. Due to the distance learning circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, both tutor and student surveys were distributed through campus email.
On June 21, 2021, sixty tutors received an invitation to participate in the survey through email. The survey was left open for participant responses for two weeks, and closed on July 5th. On September 22nd, the general student survey was deployed to all currently enrolled students in a link sent through their campus email accounts. Distributing the survey to all students allowed for higher probability of collecting data from diverse students, with the hope of enabling the analysis of smaller populations within the sample, such as subgroups disaggregated by race, age, employment status, students who had previously accessed academic support services, and those who had never accessed support services. Though the survey was initially distributed to approximately 21,000 students, this large sample size shrunk significantly, as participation in the survey was voluntary. Historically, campus surveys distributed in a similar fashion have garnered response rates well below 50%, and this survey garnered a response rate of .05%.

While the vast majority of currently enrolled students at the institution of study are over the age of 18, the institution does have early-start programs for high school students. This created a small opportunity for some minors to participate in the survey through a campus email address. In order to screen out minors, the very first question of the survey prompted participants to indicate their age. Participants who indicated that they were under the age of 18 were directed to a screen thanking them for their time. The survey inquired about age a second time in the section outlining demographic information by asking participants to indicate their age group, as a further precaution to screen out any minors who might have taken the survey by mistake. The survey remained active and open for student responses for 16 days to garner as much participation as possible.
Data Source 2: Focus Groups

In order to gain further insight into the constructs of past experiences and stigma, a series of focus groups were held. Tutor focus groups were held in the summer of 2021. Nine tutors participated in three separate sessions. Tutor focus group participants were recruited through the initial tutor survey by indicating their willingness to participate in a focus group in the final survey question. Willing participants were then sent information on focus group meetings through email, and were asked to attend whichever session best fit their personal schedules. Participants were asked to select codenames for use during the interview process to ensure anonymity, and conversations were audio recorded. Due to distance learning circumstances, these focus groups were conducted on Zoom, and participants were asked to have their cameras on for the duration of the session for better researcher observation. As the researcher also worked as a supervisor to the institution’s tutors, tutor participants were also reassured that all information being collected was being utilized strictly for research, and would not impact their employment in any way.

Student participants were recruited through announcements through email, and through the campus learning management system at the institution. Recruiting through these two channels increased the likelihood of a diverse sample pool. Focus group participants were asked eight questions focused on prior experiences and stigma in addition to clarifying and follow up questions that allowed for expansion.

As with tutor focus groups, student focus group participants were asked to select codenames for use during the process to ensure anonymity, and conversations were audio recorded. Due to distance learning circumstances, these focus groups were conducted on Zoom,
and participants were asked to have their cameras on for the duration of the session for better researcher observation.

**Data Analysis**

This needs assessment took a mixed-methods approach to collecting primary data in order to answer the outlined research questions. As a result, both qualitative and quantitative processes were employed in tandem to reveal patterns across the different types of data and reveal any areas necessitating further exploration.

The general student survey and tutor survey data were analyzed using a series of quantitative methods. Since both surveys aimed to measure a number of constructs, the quantitative analysis procedure provided insight for all research questions posed in the study. To begin, descriptive statistics were conducted on the entire sample, as well as multiple subgroups of interest. Tests for normality, including Levene’s Test, the Shapiro-Wilk test, histograms, and Q-Q plots, were utilized to determine if parametric or non-parametric tests were appropriate for analyzing the results from the tutor and student surveys, as it was crucial not to assume that the data were normally distributed (Wagner, 2017). These tests revealed that the data for both surveys were not normally distributed, thus resulting in the use of non-parametric tests to determine difference of means between subgroups, such as those related to gender, sexual orientation, and race, within the samples.

Upon completion of qualitative data collection, information for both the general student focus groups and tutor focus groups underwent a multi-layered qualitative analysis process adapted from processes previously employed by both Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) and Lochmiller and Lester (2017). Audio files from the focus groups were organized and labeled “based on the data type, participation pseudonym, and date of data collection” (Lochmiller and
Lester, 2017, p.168), and then played back twice in order to gain further familiarity and allow adequate time to ponder questions and assumptions related to the study structure, framework, research questions, and participations before transcribing or coding.

The transcription process yielded a condensed transcript. This transcript type was optimal for capturing exact quotes of participants without transcribing unnecessary words, pauses, or participant actions. Once transcription was complete, data was ready for coding and the researcher assigned a combination of descriptive and emergent codes. Codes were then categorized based on similarities or relationships and then further grouped into broad themes. Qualitative mapping (Buzan & Buzan, 1993) was used at various stages of the analyses to ensure reflection throughout the process, and emergent themes found in qualitative data were regularly triangulated against results from quantitative data. Tables 2.2-2.4 display student and tutor codes and themes related to the constructs.
Table 2.2

*Student and Tutor Codes related to Accessibility and Awareness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection is crucial</td>
<td>Greetings assure students that they’re in the right place</td>
<td>“I personally really enjoy camera on because it makes me feel more welcome or accepted in a way, because I’m able to see another person it's just seeing a blank screen.” – J, Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No cameras on makes students feel awkward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff and Space play a role - Staff need to be welcoming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>online is more difficult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding support is difficult</td>
<td>Tutors are aware of services</td>
<td>“yeah I think the writing Center was more visible when it was located on the library second floor. Very often, I got students who said that they didn't know that that place actually existed.” – R, Tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tutors know where services are located but students do not</td>
<td>“I would say no, because online Tutoring… the tab; I wouldn't, if it were me and I was in the class, I would never click on it. I kind of would probably not understand that it was through the College…. I can say that that's the part that's unclear online and then when it was in person, I knew a lot of students who have no idea where was the building itself” – B, Tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insufficient Signage labeling buildings and centers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 2.3**  
*Student and Tutor Codes related to Prior Experiences and Stigma*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Themes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Codes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Evidence</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Tutors believe students hold a negative perception of tutoring | Tutoring carries a stigma  
Students see tutoring as a punishment  
Attending tutoring can be intimidating | “I think for some students, it can be very intimidating to go to Tutoring like “R” said, they don’t quite know what it is and they might have a negative mentality or understanding of going to Tutoring so it does cause defensiveness.” – J, Tutor  
“Oh yeah I guess that some students assume that being sent to tutoring as some kind of punishment. That way they perceive it as something negative.” – R, Tutor  
“I definitely feel that when students hear or see the word Tutoring, and I say this from personal experience, because I used to feel this way before I started working at the job, I thought that the word “tutoring” implied that, you know, a student who has a tutor is usually somebody who needs help outside of the class and there is a perception that if you need help outside of the class that you are a slower learner or maybe you're behind...” – B, Tutor |
| Tutors have a positive association with tutoring | Tutoring as a positive study habit  
Tutoring as a sign of self-awareness  
Tutoring as a sign of determination/grit  
Tutoring isn’t just for students who are struggling | “Do I think that tutoring says anything about a student’s intelligence? Umm..I guess it implies that they’re smart. If they need help, it’s a very smart thing to do” – K, Tutor |
| Tutors tend to see more students who identify as female voluntarily attend tutoring | More females participate in tutoring  
Male students and help-seeking stigma | “Yes, I would agree with “R.” I see a lot more female students, and I don’t know. I think they (Male students) have kind of, like, a harder time asking for help, so it's usually female students I usually get.” – E, Tutor |
### Table 2.4

**Student and Tutor Codes related to Utility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutors believe students hold a negative perception of tutoring</td>
<td>Tutoring goes more smoothly when expectations are set in advance of a session by an instructor</td>
<td>“What I expect from a tutoring session is that the student that comes asking for help, is doing it in advance...unfortunately, the majority of times students that come looking for help, the [assignments] is due like the next day... and they haven't done the readings, so they don't have enough context to provide.” – R, Tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tutor expectations are often not met by students</td>
<td>“Students don't come as prepared as I would like; sometimes ...they expect me to read instructions and give them the summarized version, so I see this kind of like a... I don't want to say lazy, but yeah, a little bit of laziness in a way..” – E, Tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“In my opinion, if I take the time to come to tutoring, I want the tutor to show me how to do it or answer my questions, not ask me what I think.” -T, Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness impacts utility</td>
<td>Polarized preparedness</td>
<td>“I would say that I either get students who need a lot of help, who are struggling a lot in their classes, or students who are excelling in their classes and they just want it, they just want to make sure that they that they will get an A.” – R, Tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different session productivity for students seeking drop-in tutoring vs. participation in embedded tutoring or SI</td>
<td>“I feel like with tutoring there's a bigger gap; there's less people that are in the middle; there's either very dedicated students who come knowing exactly what to ask, or I get people who are asking me first day of class, second day of class type of questions.” – B, Tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students forced or incentivized to come to tutoring, versus those who attend willingly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differences in students in structured vs. non-structured tutoring programs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results and Discussion

Analysis of these data sets happened in a concurrent fashion and allowed for triangulation of multiple findings, in addition to revealing several disconnects between quantitative findings and qualitative findings. There were also several limitations of this study, many of which were likely related to the nature of fully online learning and communication, as imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several outcomes hypothesized in existent literature did not materialize through the analysis of the quantitative or qualitative data. When differences of means tests were conducted for various groups, such as gender identities, first-generation college student status, and race against various dependent variables, no significant difference was detected. Expected perceptions related to stigma did not present themselves strongly in the quantitative data, but did manifest in the qualitative data, and it appeared that prior experiences had little influence on whether or not students chose to engage in academic support in the form of tutoring. Overall, many findings were contradictory of much of the existent literature in the field. However, multiple barriers to data collection may have hindered the discovery of generalizable results.

The findings consistent with the literature were those related to awareness of academic tutoring services, and underutilization. Many participants indicated a lack of awareness when it came to types of services available and location of such services on the college campus. Of respondents who completed the survey, 34% had never utilized campus tutoring services, 42% indicated that they did not know where to locate the Math and Science Learning Center and 54% indicated that they did not know where to locate the Business, Humanities and Social Science Learning Center.
Major limitations of data collection specifically revolved around the rate of survey responses and completion, as well as the number of participants who volunteered for focus groups. While it is not common for voluntary online surveys to solicit response rates below 50%, a response rate of .04% seemed unusually low. While students may have been legitimately uninterested in participating in the survey, the low participation rate was more likely linked to circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 crisis.

The institution of focus was largely operating through online learning at the time of the needs assessment deployment, with over 70% of its course offerings still fully remote. The institution was observing a record-number of students dropping courses late in the semester, or simply disengaging without officially withdrawing. Many educators speculated that this behavior was due to screen and/or Zoom fatigue or difficulty navigating fully online course loads. In addition to high levels of academic disengagement, student email accounts at the institution of focus have storage constraints. Students who were not disciplined about deleting unnecessary emails would stop receiving new mail without notice, and thus may not have even been aware that the survey was deployed. Finally, the ongoing and evolving nature of the pandemic prompted the institution of focus to deploy a series of their surveys to the student body that aimed to gauge feelings about vaccine mandates, course modality preferences, and return-to-campus plans. The high number of surveys deployed to students during the term when the needs assessment was conducted may have deterred students from taking the survey.

In addition, getting students to commit and follow-through with participation in a focus group in an online environment was difficult. In a normal global climate, college campuses buzz with life, and students often spend extra hours on campus studying, visiting with friends, going to office hours, eating in the cafeteria, or participating in sports or clubs. The sheer number of
students on campus at the institution of focus pre-pandemic would have likely made it easier to solicit focus group participants. Asking students to make an additional, voluntary online commitment proved problematic. Advertising in online spaces where it felt like there was little connection to the work, purpose, or researcher may have deterred students from volunteering. In addition, competing priorities, work schedules, and screen fatigue seemed to stymy efforts to garner participation. In a normal campus environment, there is also much more room to incentivize potential participants in the form of offering free food, or a raffle prize. The lack of feasible incentives in an online environment created an additional barrier that would not have existed in a pre-pandemic world.

The needs assessment data lead to questions around how to raise student awareness of academic support services such as tutoring, and how to shift their perceptions of those who utilize such services. These questions would have been difficult enough to answer in a pre-COVID world, but the shift to online learning and distance education further exacerbate many equity gaps and leave historically underrepresented students even more vulnerable (Jones, 2021; Barber et al., 2021; Bouchey et al., 2021). These challenges in reaching students on either side of the digital divide and the questions revolving around how to bolster their academic success in a new era of learning create the foundation for the dossier literature in the next chapter.
Chapter 3

The results of the needs assessment offered insight into some of the most salient factors influencing participation in academic support services by community college students. The data revealed trends consistent with some findings of other studies explored in Chapter 1, such as underutilization of support services and student awareness of those supports, and provided a solid foundation on which a dossier project could be built. The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges in data collection throughout the needs assessment process, and highlighted the difficulty of reaching disproportionately impacted students to gauge their needs, a task that often proves challenging even under normal circumstances. COVID-19 has exacerbated many equity gaps, and widened the digital divide for many school districts (Jones, 2021), prompting the need to swiftly build multi-faceted and equitable student support services in order to retain students.

To meet the short-term, intermediate, and distal outcomes of this research study, the process must be broken down into parts. Short-term outcomes of this research include (1) raising awareness of academic support services and (2) reframing tutorial services for students, while the intermediate and distal outcomes include (3) increasing utilization of services and (4) leveraging tutoring as a tool to close equity gaps. While a campus-wide, online awareness campaign would be a sound intervention for addressing low rates of student awareness of tutoring services, further research will be required to understand how to better position these services to increase utilization and decipher how to find and engage the campus’s most disproportionately impacted students in order to bolster their academic success and reduce equity gaps. Dossier projects will focus solely on the initial components of a much more comprehensive effort by creating digital content in the form of videos to bolster student awareness of academic support services and begin the process of reframing tutorial services for students.
This chapter will serve as a literature review of existent studies related to the efficacy of nudges, just-in-time messaging efforts, and multi-media marketing campaigns designed to increase awareness of certain information, products, or services both on-and-off community college campuses in an effort to gain insight into what makes campaigns of this type successful. Multiple frameworks, rooted in psychology, marketing theory, and behavioral economics, will be used to guide the examination of these related concepts. These frameworks include the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985), the Motivation, Opportunity Ability framework (MacInnis et al., 1991; MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989), and Nudge Theory (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008).

Frameworks

Developed from a previous theory known as the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), which posited that two elements – attitude and subjective norms--fueled individuals’ behaviors and actions, awareness campaigns have historically relied on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to frame their efforts to change levels of public knowledge and alter public behavior(s). The Theory of Planned Behavior built upon the Theory of Reasoned Action and included a third element of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) which was coined perceived behavioral control.

In essence, the Theory of Planned Behavior postulates that together, the three elements of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control contribute to an individual’s behavioral intentions. Researchers in marketing, psychology, and behavioral change, fields anchored in the study and prediction human behaviors, have long believed that an individual’s behavioral intentions are the best determinant of their behaviors and whether or not an individual will act. Given these elements, the TPB provides a strong foundation for this scholastic research,
as the theory can be applied to scenarios in a college setting, especially those related to voluntary activities, such as participation in tutoring.

For example, utilizing the framework, one would assume that if students believe the act of receiving tutoring has positive benefits (the students have a positive attitude about tutoring), their fellow peers look favorably upon the activity (subjective norms), and the student has confidence that they can master the material through tutoring (perceived behavioral control), then in theory, they would be more likely to partake in the activity than students who are missing one or more of the defined elements.

As Planned Behavior Theory is a framework rooted in psychology, pairing it with a theory rooted in consumer marketing and awareness-building is necessary for the advancement of this research. Motivation Opportunity Ability theory (Ölander & Thøgersen, 1995) overlaps with certain elements of Planned Behavior theory and integrates them into an expanded framework to account for additional factors that can influence human awareness, behaviors, and actions. This framework strives to explain behavior through three determinants: motivation, opportunity, and ability.

Central to the Motivation Opportunity Ability (MOA) framework is the concept that consumers are more inclined to alter their current behaviors or take up new behaviors if they perceive that performing the activity is in their best interest and understand the ramifications of not partaking in the activity. This first piece relates directly to consumer motivation. The second determinant, opportunity, posits that next, the consumer must have the means and/or options to pursue the behavior or activity. The final determinant, ability, would mean that the consumer possesses the skills, knowledge or competencies to perform the activity or behavior (de Jonge et al., 2014; van Geffen et al., 2020). “Other interpretations of the MOA framework
expand the definition of motivation beyond self-interest and include elements from the Theory of Planned Behavior such as behavioral intentions, values, attitudes, subjective norms, needs, habits, as well as goals that can be shifted through awareness (Baumhof et al., 2018; van Geffenet al., 2020; Thøgersen, 2009; MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989)” (Soma et al., 2021, p. 2).

Integrating elements of human psychology and behavioral therapy into an economic model, Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein developed the Nudge Theory in 2008. Nudges are simple stimuli that may encourage people to make a particular choice or change their behavior. According to Thaler and Sunstein, nudges can include “any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people’s behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. To count as a mere nudge, the intervention must be easy and cheap to avoid” (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p.6). In their book, Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness, Thaler and Sunstein analyze the various ways in which nudges can be deployed. Their analyses cover the role of nudges in the decision-making process on a broad range of topics, covering everything from school choices, Medicare enrollment, financial decisions, and sustainability practices.

Peer Tutoring and Student Success

Before further examining existing literature related to the intervention, it is crucial to investigate the correlation between tutoring utilization and student success to understand its relevance to this research effort. In this context, student success is defined by the California Community College Chancellor’s office through its Vision For Success statement. Student success translates directly to increasing course completion rates, the number of degrees and certificates awarded, the number of students achieving transfer to four-year institutions, the
semester-to-semester persistence rates, closing equity gaps, and reducing excess unit accumulation for community college students (California Community College Chancellor’s Office). Under this operational definition, a number of researchers have designed studies to control for various factors, such as age, gender, and prior academic performance and drawn on secondary data in the form of institutional records to discover that there is an observable, consistent correlation between utilization of academic support services, like tutoring, and increased student success (Stephens, et al., 2012; Coladarci et al., 2010; Grillo & Leist, 2013; Kostecki & Bers, 2008).

Students who access tutoring not only achieve course completion at higher rates than non-participatory peers, but they also persist from semester-to-semester at increased rates (Coladarci, et al., 2010; Grillo & Leist, 2013; Rickard & Mills, 2018). Participation in tutoring can be used as a predictor for retention and graduation with considerable accuracy. Results of multiple studies indicate that learning assistance center utilization increased the probability of success and persistence more than prior skill level, self-selection, or other college admissions criteria, such as high school GPA, or SAT/ACT scores (Grillo & Leist, 2013; Wurtz, 2015). In one study employing logistic regression analysis on retention, results indicated a simple, yet strong, conclusion: the odds of a participatory student persisting were almost twice that of non-participatory students (Coladarci et al., 2010). Another set of researchers used binary logistic regressions and a mediation analysis to construct models to estimate how certain variables increase or decrease the odds of becoming part of another category (such as “graduate” or “non-graduate”).

While grade point average (GPA) is not explicitly named by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office as part of the definition of student success, it is important to note
that higher course grades and overall increased GPAs are also observable when students participate in tutoring, and like persistence/retention and graduation rates, GPAs increase proportionally with the number of hours of participation in tutoring activities (Rickard & Mills, 2018, Grillo & Least, 2013).

The positive correlation between tutoring utilization and student success is central to this research, however, disaggregated data within recent studies reveal more about the prevalence of the problem of practice as it pertains to specifically to disproportionately impacted students. Upon disaggregating their data to account for racial/ethnic identity as a control, Grillo and Leist (2013) discovered that students who identified with minority groups were 24% less likely to graduate, overall. Trends discovered in the research of Buchanan, Valentine, and Frizell (2019) also indicated that tutoring sessions, specifically those held in the supplemental instruction format, had a higher impact on minority students, who typically had lower GPAs than their white counterparts, reaffirming that utilization of tutoring and academic support services is a crucial part of student success for disproportionately students. These findings highlight one of the defining goals of student success outlined by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office: closing equity gaps. They also relate directly to the structural inequities for certain races and genders that Bourdieu (1986) theorized in his research, and pave a path for exploring culture and identity as an influence in academic engagement. Through increased student awareness of academic support services, the institution of focus may be able to later take sequential steps to increase utilization of these services and reduce equity gaps.

**Awareness Campaign**

Awareness campaigns exist in an ongoing fashion in the world around us. From brand recognition to early health screenings, millions of companies and institutions make efforts to
increase awareness of their products and services for customers and patients. The industry that might be most adept at raising awareness is the public health sector. This industry creates campaigns designed to encourage healthy habits, increase awareness of symptoms, risks of contracting certain diseases, and the dangers of partaking in certain activities, to protect human lives and encourage participation in regular preventative health screenings.

Much can be learned from these awareness campaigns efforts. Marketing experts, Scianarrio and Prudente (2021), indicate that further research and exploration must be done around the target audience before marketing campaigns can even begin and that applies to both informational/awareness campaigns and consumer product campaigns. “Practitioners need to uncover important ‘learnable’ components related to business, brand, culture and audience, while also relying on internal mechanisms such as judgment, interpretation and creativity to guide decision-making” (Scianarrio and Prudente, 2021, p. 83).

Researchers and marketers working on major public health crises do not disagree. When health crises ensue, awareness campaigns are a strong defense for reducing transmission, slowing the spread of disease while cures can be developed, and increasing screenings or other proactive behaviors as long as they are well-tailored to their target audience and specific in the way they call the audience to action (Meyer 2008). A perfect illustration of such efforts could be seen in the years 2020-2021, which were littered with public health campaigns related to effective hand-washing, the importance of mask-wearing, and the benefits of vaccination, all related to COVID-19. However, research and analysis on the most effective HIV/AIDs Campaigns indicate that not all awareness campaigns are built equal. Understanding and addressing factors on topics that may be complex or carry a certain level of stigma can aid in the efficacy of the campaign. Some of the most successful HIV/AIDs messaging campaigns were those that addressed: knowledge
(helping people to recognize risks of certain behaviors and the symptoms of HIV/AIDS), attitude (deconstructed stigmas and attitudes about HIV/AIDS and people with HIV/AIDS) through knowledge empowerment, behavioral and cognitive involvement (the information-seeking habits of the target audience), and innovation (creating campaigns that address elements of behavior theories behind the campaign, such as self-efficacy) (Melkote et al., 2014).

**Increasing Awareness of Academic Support Services**

Despite the benefits of peer tutoring as evidenced by multiple studies at both two-and-four-year colleges domestically and abroad, utilization of these services tends to be low at the vast majority of institutions. Raising awareness and utilization of these services is critical, as peer tutoring support provides one of the most cost-effective ways to increase persistence, GPA, and rates of completion. Research also indicates that the process of peer tutoring is invaluable to both tutors and tutees in other social and emotional ways. “Peer tutoring results in motivation (Carroll, 1996; Falchikov, 2001; Fraser et al., 1977; Millis & Cottell, 1998) and learning for students (Fraser et al., 1977; Johnson & Johnson, 1985), as well as learning (Entwistle, 1997; Millis & Cottell, 1998) and empowerment for the tutors themselves (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989; Miller & MacGillchrist, 1996; Parkin & McKeany, 2000)” (Colvin, 2007, p. 166).

The needs assessment survey provided evidence that it is difficult to gauge why students, particularly those who are struggling academically, do not access these services to increase their success. As the population of the community college of focus includes students with diverse needs, who hail from diverse backgrounds, and have various external obligations, there may be a number of reasons, but one reason illuminated by the results of the needs assessment was that of awareness. Of the students who voluntarily completed the needs assessment survey, 35% had never utilized campus tutoring services.
This survey outcome is consistent with findings in many pieces of the literature explored in chapter 1 and provides an impetus for a dossier project aimed to increase awareness of peer tutoring services at the institution of focus, and reframe these services for students. While academic institutions may not seem like spaces that would need to engage in awareness-building campaigns, such efforts have been made in academic spaces in the past.

Thorpe and Bowman (2013) set out to increase awareness of library services at their home institution, Indiana University Kokomo. Leveraging marketing techniques taken from multiple bodies of literature related broadly to effective marketing practices and more specifically to public and academic library marketing, Thorpe and Bowman (2013) designed a multi-modal campaign. While their various marketing efforts to increase awareness delivered mixed results in their analysis (many faculty members and students indicated being aware of library events after the intervention, but their participation rate dipped below that of the desired 20%), their efforts demonstrate that campaigns to raise awareness or alter student behaviors are iterative, and require ongoing evaluation and adjustment.

Just as Thorpe and Bowman (2013) sought to increase awareness of library services, many financial aid offices participate in marketing and campaigning efforts to increase awareness and completion of crucial student financing forms, such as the FAFSA. Castleman and Page (2016) took a different approach in testing the efficacy of a personalized text campaign aimed to increase the number of students completing their FAFSA in order to maintain their financial aid status going into their sophomore years of college. This experiment is what’s known as a “nudge,” as the text messages acted as a gentle reminder to students to complete a task with a looming deadline.
With a sample of 774 students, the researchers randomly divided the participants into two groups – a control group, which would receive no nudges in the form of text messages, and a group that would receive text nudges every two weeks. For the group that did receive the text nudges, the text did not merely just remind students that deadline to re-file their FAFSA was approaching, but rather included other crucial information about maintaining a certain GPA to remain eligible for financial aid, and instructions on how to gain assistance with the financial aid process. The results of FAFSA completion rates for control group participants vs. those who has received nudges were analyzed through regression analysis. Ultimately, there a significant response from students who received the text nudges to re-file their FAFSA paperwork. Freshman who received texts where over 13% more likely to re-secure their financial aid and remain enrolled through their sophomore year (Castleman & Page, 2016).

While there is limited literature directly related to ways to increase awareness of campus tutoring services, the researchers in this space provide ideas for cost-effective ways to do so. Potacco et al. (2013) conducted a study at William Paterson University utilizing coupons as an incentive to participate in academic support activities. Potacco et al. (2013) implemented a series of no-cost efforts to increase awareness on a small group of students in hopes of increasing participation in peer tutoring. These methods were framed by theories of motivation and rewards. Students were given coupons, which were worth a small number of exam points for various courses. In order to “cash in” the coupon and secure the exam points, students had to attend 1.25 hours of group study sessions. Coupon redemption was analyzed at three different times throughout the semester and the data were utilized to compare the academic achievement of student participating in the study groups against their non-participatory peers.
Potacco et al. (2013) cited these efforts to increase participation in academic support activities, and thereby increase scholastic achievement, were successful. “…The odds of receiving a failing, “D” or “F” grade were significantly lower for students attending study group sessions before the first exam” (Potacco et al., 2013, p. 36). Pugatch and Wilson (2018) employed similar methods for increasing awareness and participation in peer tutoring services at a higher education institution through a series of nudges (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) in the form of postcards with information related to peer tutoring services. University students in this study were given one of three different postcards. One set of postcards were simply informational, one set of postcards framed tutoring services as a way for students to increase their academic performance and meet people, and the last two sets of postcards offered incentive for participation in the amounts of $5 or $10. Efforts made by Pugatch and Wilson (2018) were successful in that there was an increase in awareness and utilization of peer tutoring services among students who received any of the four types of post cards. These studies provide a foundation for an awareness intervention and supply cost-effective strategies for implementation and study design.

The Importance of Multimedia

Pre-COVID, many colleges already struggled to provide equitable, high-quality support services to their students. Colleges across the nation tended to do a better job of implementing on-campus services than online or remote services, but limited service in both modalities meant that a large portion of students were under-served even before the pandemic. Working students, or students with other external commitments that demanded their time or attention would have been unable to access such services during regular business hours. “Calhoun, Green, and Burke (2017) showed that this gap in service between face-to-face (F2F) and online students may be
related to inadequate coverage of online student needs in student affairs preparation programs, suggesting a more systemic issue around service offered to online students in-practice” (Bouchey et al, 2021, p. 30).

The announcement of COVID-19 as a pandemic increased the amount of online support offered by community colleges, as all educational institutions were forced online, but this shift to online support didn’t necessarily close the gap in service for disproportionately impacted populations. While more services became available online outside of traditional business hours, the sudden shift to 100% remote learning illuminated the challenges of connecting with students online. Bandwidth issues stymied attempts by many colleges to build online infrastructure comparable to on-campus services, many faculty and staff members lacked training on the intricacies of online systems, campuses quickly realized that large numbers of students did not have access to laptops or stable internet connections, and even higher numbers of staff and students were without computers with microphones and cameras. In addition, student faced challenges in working from home, homeschooling their children or siblings, losing jobs, battling mental health issues triggered by the pandemic, and caring for themselves or others ill if the virus entered their homes. Research conducted at UCLA “showed significant disparities in remote learning that disproportionately impacted under-represented minorities and first-generation students. These students had significantly greater expectations to help siblings with remote learning, and first-generation students also suffered greater economic and food insecurity related to COVID-19” (Barber et al., 2021, p. 1). Given these circumstances, Bouchey et al (2021) stated that “In fact, students may find it even more difficult to stay motivated in their learning, presently, as they balance working obligations and family needs (Blankstein et al.,
(2020; Fishman & Hiler, 2020; Hinton, 2020), suggesting a heightened need for scaffolding student support that can be offered virtually.” (Bouchey et al., 2021, p. 31).

Colleges have spent the last two years striving to create laptop and Wi-Fi hotspot lending programs to ensure that all students have the tools they need to remain successful in school. Many counseling and wellness programs have also increased supports related to mental health and helping students develop coping mechanisms amidst the pandemic. Now that some of those foundational pieces of the learning puzzle are more secure in place, campuses can shift to focusing on expanding remote services and meeting students where they are. In Bouchey et al’s (2021) study, many student services professionals mentioned positive realizations emerging as a result of the pandemic. “Offering student support services virtually not only supports online students, but also supports campus-based students, whether they are on-campus or otherwise. In other words, virtual student services provide access to all students” (Bouchey et al, 2021, p. 31).

With this realization, it’s now important for institutions to examine how to offer these services more effectively moving forward. As the COVID-19 pandemic has persisted for multiple years, it’s likely that some of its effects on educational institutions and student preferences and behaviors will remain permanent, even after it has ended. Thus,

“Contemporary institutions of higher education may be better off thinking about computer server space, rather than space for a new student lounge, for example.

Importantly, this potential shift in mindset challenges institutions to carefully consider how to build levels of community in a virtual setting, as well as how they support their students’ social and emotional learning” (Bouchey et al, 2021, p. 31).

Many institutions of higher education had been resistant to providing robust online services, but a switch to providing these services online may increase both employee and student satisfaction
while also allowing campuses to shrink equity gaps. In addition, many students have overcome fears related to online learning and have acclimated to some of the nuances during this time period. With so many people relying on digital content to get news, information, order groceries, and perform school work, it’s critical to examine how to best integrate technological tools into student support services, such as tutoring.

Many marketing experts cite the utilization of multimedia channels as effective ways of expanding their reach (Andreasen, 2002; Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002). Tools such as social media platforms, instructional videos, text reminders, and emails have the potential to make a much larger impact than traditional plain text in today’s world. According to Walter and Gioglio (2014), “The brain processes visual information 60,000 times faster than plain text,” (Walter & Gioglio, 2014, p. 55) which helps explain why video platforms such as Vine, and TikTok are now so prevalent among daily social media and internet users. Students born in Generation Z were already spending a significant amount of time of their phones and internet even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the effects of the pandemic and the force to online learning may have actually been to their benefit.

Because this generation is the first to be born into a world where the internet already existed, this new generation of tech-users are actually wired differently. “Their use of technology has developed the visual ability portion of their brains, visual forms of learning are more effective for these learners” (Rothman, 2016, p.1). Rothman coins these learners “master skimmers” and cited that when they are forced to read plain text, they only spend about 4.4 seconds searching for hyperlinked words or skimming for every 100 words on the page (Rothman, 2016). “These findings are relevant both to ongoing policy efforts to increase college
success and completion among low-income students and, more generally, to efforts to harness
technology to improve students' educational outcomes” (Castleman and Page, 2013, p. 401).

**Dossier Overview**

In an effort to distil the momentous task of increasing utilization of academic support services by disproportionately impacted students to reduce equity gaps, the dossier project will that address the first simple step: awareness. Students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, race, gender, for first-generation college student status, cannot access services of which they are not aware. Using a theory of treatment and logic model to map the large undertaking of increasing utilization of these services highlighted the many inputs, outputs, activities, and outcomes that would be necessary in order to achieve the desired outcomes. The process illuminated the fact that such efforts and outcomes could not be achieved within a single semester, but would likely be a multi-step, multi-year effort.

To begin the journey to meeting the distal outcomes, dossier project efforts begin with the goal of increasing awareness and reframing tutorial services for students through the creation of two videos designed to be shown at future orientations, posted in Canvas shells, and shown in classrooms on the first day of class. Components of the creation of the videos, such as the timing, language, and channels of deployment will be developed alongside students and faculty. The input of these stakeholders is crucial, as students are the target audience of the messages, and faculty have an acute awareness of the various times throughout the semester when students are most likely to seek academic support. Building the campaign with collective input will also increase the probability of achieving measurable success as the success of a solution is in direct relationship to “the degree of involvement and participation of key stakeholders in the development of the problem solution” (Vroom, 2003, p. 968)
Similarly, creating videos that feature student voices as testimonials for tutoring services is strategic as there are power dynamics and hierarchical structures that exist in college classrooms (McCallen and Johnson, 2019). Messaging that comes from campus authority figures such as faculty members, or program personnel can sometimes feel daunting or overwhelming to students. Many studies have revealed that students tend to trust each other and may be more likely heed advice received from peers; “peers are often considered the most powerful influence in undergraduate education, even more so than advisors and instructors (Duch et al., 2001; Ender & Newton, 2000; Fortney et al., 2001; Garside, 1996; Newcomb & Wilson, 1966)” (Colvin, 2007, p. 166). Utilizing peer voices to portray authentic student learning experiences in the tutoring centers is the first step in achieving one of the immediate outcomes of this overarching study, which are increasing awareness and reframing tutoring services for students.
Chapter 4

Results of the needs assessment, which were discussed in chapter 2, revealed that many participants at the institution of focus were unaware of the academic support services available or where they were located. Of respondents who completed the survey, 34% had never utilized campus tutoring services, 42% indicated that they did not know where to locate the Math and Science Learning Center, and 54% indicated that they did not know where to locate the Business and Social Science Learning Center. These results have inspired a multi-pronged research project to produce materials that introduce college students to academic support services through channels and mediums to which they feel connected.

The literature in chapter 3 highlights the many ways in which concepts such as intention and action, and awareness and utilization are very different. Acknowledging that increasing student utilization of services involves multiple constructs such as accessibility, prior awareness, academic identity, stigma, and utility, as discussed in chapter 1, this goal will span multiple semesters and is a more distal outcome of a much larger research effort. While efforts related to increasing utilization of tutorial services in order to help students increase their overall success will be ongoing, this dossier has to begin with the first step to increasing utilization, which is increasing awareness among students that these services even exist, and reframing them so that they might be more inclined to utilize them. This chapter will discuss the steps that will be taken to formulate an effective awareness-building and service re-framing campaign for tutoring support at the institution of focus that will later support more robust research efforts to increase utilization of academic support services, such as tutoring.
**Dossier**

Dossier project efforts begin with the goal of increasing awareness and reframing tutorial services for students through the creation of two videos designed to be shown at future orientations, posted in Canvas shells, and shown in classrooms on the first day of class.

The messages and campaign materials will be deployed through the preferred and most utilized channels, as indicated by students, in order to increase chances of messages getting received and reviewed. Videos will be developed with stakeholder input to provide basic information on where and how to access tutorial services in addition to featuring testimonials from real students on the benefits and experience of participating in tutoring.

Though no actual intervention is necessary for the completion of this dossier, a logic model was created to map the process, inputs, and outcomes associated with the longer-term research efforts. This logic model aids in the identification of assumptions as well as external factors that may impact future interventions and research related to this concept. It is very likely to be utilized as a practical tool by the institution of focus to guide further research efforts around academic support services after the conclusion of this project. The activities discussed are embedded within both the logic model, and a theory of treatment that have a high degree of alignment, and can be referenced in their complete forms in Appendices V and IV.

**Guiding Theories and Frameworks**

Utilizing Nudge Theory (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008), and a combination of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985), and the Motivation Opportunity Ability Theory (Olander & Thøgersen, 1995) as guiding frameworks, this project will focus on the process of creating the tools and materials that will eventually address the proximal outcomes of (1) increasing awareness of tutorial services and (2) beginning to reframe said services for students at the
institution of focus (for full logic model, reference Appendix V). The project will be composed of the pre-work and steps related to the inputs and activities necessary to create a series of videos centered around the tutoring process. One video will be a brief informational video on where and when students can access tutorial services; the other video will feature real student testimonials on their experiences in the learning centers.

Creating videos that feature student voices as testimonials for tutoring services is strategic as there are power dynamics and hierarchical structures that exist in college classrooms (McCallen and Johnson, 2019) between faculty members and students. Jack’s (2016) research indicates that it’s not uncommon for historically underrepresented students to view members of campus personnel as authority figures, so messaging that comes from campus authority figures such as faculty members, or program personnel can sometimes feel daunting or overwhelming to students. Thus, utilizing peer voices to portray authentic student learning experiences in the tutoring centers may prove effective in encouraging students to trust the messaging of the campaign videos and result in increased awareness of tutoring services for students.

The goal of the videos is to push information and reminders to students about tutorial services at the moments when they need them most, not during high-flow information periods such as the few weeks flanking each side of the commencement of a new term. Those weeks are packed with campus communications, and students often become overwhelmed by the amount of information they must process in order to begin school. The videos will be crafted throughout the Summer 2023 term, and will be in a draft form so that audience testing can be performed throughout the Fall 2023 semester before their release to the general student population.
Development Plan and Inputs

In order to create the outputs that will later build into longer-term research efforts, the efforts of this dossier focus solely on the development stages of the inputs. Three critical inputs have been identified: (1) insight from faculty, staff, and students on where and when students need and find particular information pushed to them, particularly information related to academic support; (2) collaboration with distance education teams and the marketing and communications department to craft messaging content and identify messaging deployment strategies, and (3) student and tutor testimonials about experiences and benefits of tutoring. Without the ability to obtain IRB approval, the work around garnering these inputs is in infancy stages.

Garnering Insight from Faculty, Staff, and Students

To begin working toward garnering input from faculty, staff and students, efforts were focused around creating a draft of faculty focus group questions with the intention that such tools get deployed at the conclusion of this dossier. Focus group questions were crafted to mirror some of the student needs assessment survey questions around awareness or tutorial services awareness, and then expand upon them.

Just as faculty have valuable insight around student behaviors, the institution’s staff likely also have an understanding and awareness of when and how students might go about seeking out particular academic support services. Many counselors, academic advisors, program managers, and resource specialists meet with students belonging to various campus affinity groups on a regular basis in order to ensure students stay on track to achieve their academic goals. These personnel will also be called upon to provide their insights through focus groups alongside faculty members. A sample of a few different types of questions from the faculty and
staff focus group can be viewed in figure 4.1; for the full list of questions, reference appendix VII.

Figure 4.1

Sample of Faculty and Staff Focus Group Items

1. How frequently do your students need or currently receive reminders/information from you about academic support, or other campus resources?
2. When do you believe your students would most benefit from receiving information about the availability of tutoring services?

Finally, it’s important to incorporate the voices of students, as they are the central stakeholders of these research efforts. Because response rates were so low when the needs assessment survey was deployed through student email, a different approach will be taken to garnering student input this time. Students will still be asked to participate in interviews/focus groups about their preferences around communication modality and when they might benefit from receiving reminders about tutorial services. A sample of a few different types of items from the student focus group can be viewed in figure 4.2; for the complete list of focus group questions, reference Appendix VIII.

Figure 4.2

Sample of Student Focus Group Items

1. How might you benefit from the creation of a short video that explains how tutoring services work and where they are located?
2. How do you prefer to receive campus communications about important services or information?
3. How frequently would you like to receive reminders/information from the college about academic support, or other campus resources?

Analysis & Strategy with the Marketing and Communications Team

Answers from the focus group questions will be analyzed through a coding process. Data will undergo a multi-step analysis process adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) and
Lochmiller and Lester (2017). Audio recordings from the groups will allow participant voice to shine through, as the condensed transcript promotes the extraction of direct quotes from participants without pauses, or insignificant gestures (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Descriptive and emergent codes will be developed during analysis and similar codes will be grouped together under broad themes. It would be ideal if this stage of the analysis could happen with participation from the marketing team to allow for triangulation amongst multiple coders.

Working with the marketing and communications team, the second phase of the research will begin by utilizing the findings (including broad themes and preferences) from the qualitative data collection phase to inform the treatment and design of the quantitative phase and further intervention efforts. Leveraging the participant voice captured in the focus groups, a strategic communication plan and multiple marketing materials will be created as part of the multi-pronged awareness campaign with the short-term goal of increasing student awareness, and starting to shift student perceptions, of academic support services. Such materials could take many forms, but may include a just-in-time texting campaign, a campus banner campaign, or a video module during orientation.

**Gathering Student Testimonials About the Tutoring Experience**

As peers are often the most powerful voice in the classroom (Colvin, 2007), creating testimonials is an important component of the long-term goals of the greater research scope. Testimonials will likely showcase short snippets of multiple tutor and tutee interviews where students demystify the tutoring process through their personal narratives. The testimonials may address misconceptions students once held about tutoring, positive experiences students have had in the tutoring centers, goals that students achieved as a result of working with a tutor, or what to expect during a tutoring session. Creating the testimonials in a short-video format will align with
the research, theories, and frameworks proposed to guide the research as it is now known that the “the brain processes visual information 60,000 times faster than plain text” (Walter & Giorglio, 2014, p. 55). In order to capture the desired information from tutors and tutees, the students who volunteer to be featured in the testimonials will be given a short list of questions from which they can choose to answer. Each respondent will likely be asked to answer 2-3 of them, and short pieces of their responses will be compiled into a more comprehensive montage of testimonials.

A sample of a few of such questions can be viewed in figure 4.3; for the full list of sample questions, reference Appendix IX.

Figure 4.3
Sample of questions to be presented to students featured in testimonial videos

1. What did you expect when you arrived for your first tutoring session?
2. Can you tell us a little about your experience working with campus tutoring services?
3. How you feel that participating in tutoring has benefitted you personally or academically?

**Next Steps: Future Intervention**

As indicated in the commencement of chapter 4, this project will serve as a starting point for many more years of experiments and small research projects that will unfold in an effort to work toward a more distal outcome of shrinking equity gaps through the use of tutoring as a tool to increase term GPAs, rates of persistence, and completion, as well as graduation rates (Grill & Leist, 2013; Rickard & Mills, 2018; Coladarci, et al., 2010) for historically underrepresented students, and dismantling the stigma associated with academic help-seeking (Bursztyn, et al., 2019; Winograd & Rust, 2014). After the conclusion of this dossier, future research efforts will move forward from the conceptual development of the materials necessary to generate inputs to the actual garnering of the inputs. The surveys and focus groups will be facilitated to collect
input from faculty, staff and students, the data will be analyzed alongside marketing and distance education teams, and student testimonials will be captured in a professional nature consistent with the institution’s brand standards. The videos and other nudges created from the phase 1 inputs of faculty, staff and students will then be deployed, and a post-intervention analysis will take place six months-to-one-year after the intervention begins.

Participants

Recruitment efforts for the intervention will mirror those made for the initial needs assessment. Participation will be voluntary, and as a result, the researcher will cast a wide net in order to garner as much participation as possible. Participants in this study will be currently enrolled students at a community college located in northern California, as well as currently employed tutors, faculty and staff. Though the college has early-start programs, participants in this study have to be 18 years of age; no students enrolled in college coursework as part of their high school experience will be permitted to participate. While any willing student will be invited to participate in the focus groups, recruitment announcements will also be made at the meetings of clubs and campus programs designed to engage disproportionately impacted populations, such as AFFIRM, PRIDE, Puente, Guardians, and the Veterans Resource Center. This practice will help ensure representative input from a diverse student body. There is no maximum number of participants for this study. There will be no costs associated with participation, nor will there be any payment or incentive offered for participation in this research study.

Research Design

The future intervention will be administered utilizing an exploratory sequential design (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Multiple evaluation designs were considered for this research, however, none of them fit quite as well as exploratory sequential design with regard to the
intentions and distal goals of this research effort. Exploratory sequential design allows a researcher to first collect data in a qualitative format and then use those exploratory findings to inform the next phase of data collection or treatment. This design lends itself nicely to the multi-pronged, multi-phase awareness campaign intervention because it is crucial to implement stakeholder input prior to launching any outreach efforts to bolster awareness. Conducting qualitative research in the form of focus groups and/or interviews with students, faculty and staff will allow the researcher to design the marketing campaign with the end-users in mind.

As students are the end-users, it’s crucial to understand their feelings, perceptions, and preferences around receiving campus communications and how and when they are most likely to be receptive to information about campus resources that may help them increase their academic success. More than simply collecting this qualitative data from participants, the results from this qualitative data collection phase will actually be utilized to inform the treatment (the awareness campaign communication strategies). According to Edmonds & Kennedy (2017), this is exactly the type of process for which exploratory sequential design is intended; “This two-phase approach is particularly useful for a researcher interested in developing a new instrument, taxonomy, or treatment protocol” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The researcher uses the qualitative (exploratory) findings from the first phase to help develop the instrument or treatment and then tests this product during the second phase (quantitative)” (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 201).

One of the greatest strengths of the exploratory sequential design is rooted in its intentional multi-phase blueprint. This design is meant to make space for an iterative process where “an individual researcher or team of investigators examines a problem or topic through an iteration of connected quantitative and qualitative studies that are sequentially aligned, with each
new approach building on what was learned previously to address a central program objective” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 100). Complete short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes can be viewed in the theory of treatment (ToT) model in Appendix VI.

This design will allow the researcher to make some inferences as to whether or not the intervention is having the desired effect of increasing awareness and shifting perceptions of tutoring services on the target audience by allowing for comparison to results garnered from a similar quantitative survey in the needs assessment (pre-test). However, the researcher will still have to “enumerate alternative explanations one by one, decide which are plausible, and then use logic, design, and measurement to assess whether each one is operating in a way that might explain any observed effect” (Shadish, et al. 2002. p. 14). This is particularly true due to the nature of community colleges, where the student turnover is frequent and the sample of students participating in the study will likely be inconsistent.

For these reasons, concurrent/parallel designs and explanatory sequential designs were not a good fit; nor would a strictly qualitative or strictly quantitative approach have worked for these particular research goals and questions. As this is a multi-dimensional problem of practice, where measurement of multiple complex constructs is necessary, it made sense to choose a mixed-methods design that provided an avenue “to fit together the insights provided by qualitative and quantitative research into a workable solution” (Johnson et al., 2004, p. 16).

**Purpose**

The purpose of the future intervention, with respect to the research questions, is to increase student awareness of academic support services, specifically tutoring, and begin reframing these services to better position them for student utilization. The first objective of
increasing awareness centers around a shift in student consciousness, where the second objective centers around a shift in student perception.

*Process Evaluation Questions*

**Q1:** Are the intended students being reached by the intervention?

**Q2:** How do students perceive the services being offered?

*Outcome Evaluation Questions*

**Q1:** Is the intervention effort having the desired effect on the audience by increasing awareness?

**Q2:** Has there been a shift in students’ perception of academic support services and those who utilize them post-intervention?

*Outcomes and Theory*

After implementation, data collection through surveys will give indication as to whether the intervention is reaching the intended audience, and having the desired effect on students. This process has several natural stopping points at which the researcher will pause to review what information gained, and evaluate how to proceed. Existent literature does not provide a proven roadmap for increasing awareness of academic support services, or reframing them for students. Thus, improvement science allows for continuous experimentation, observation, data collection and redirection in a Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle. Such “improvement activities bring up questions for a process evaluation, which in turn provides judgments of actions and feedback for strengthening them. Accomplishments, lack of accomplishments, and side effects command the attention of product evaluations, which ultimately judge the outcomes and identify needs for achieving better results” (Stufflebeam et al., 2003, p. 33).
The proximal outcomes of this intervention include increased rates of awareness of academic support services available on campus, particularly tutoring, which is underutilized at the vast majority of college campuses (Winograd and Rust, 2014), and dispelling stress and confusion by providing consistent just-in-time messaging that begins to reframe tutoring services (Pugatch & Wilson, 2014) for students. Efforts related to these outcomes will support the development of stronger academic identities for students at the institution of focus and will contribute to longer-term research efforts aimed to achieve intermediate and distal outcomes.

While building awareness and reframing these services is the immediate goal, it is ultimately student utilization that will contribute to the greater mission of the college, and distal outcome, of leveraging tutoring as a way to increase student success in the form of degrees/certificates awarded (Grillo & Leist, 2013; Rickard & Mills, 2018; Coladarci, et al., 2010) for historically underrepresented students and thereby narrow the campus’s equity gaps. There is consensus among researchers that tutorial services have the potential to contribute to these goals, as students who participate in tutoring tend to have higher term GPAs, rates of persistence, and graduation rates than non-participatory peers (Grill & Leist, 2013; Rickard & Mills, 2018; Coladarci, et al., 2010). Interventions in the form of nudges have been deployed in similar settings and have indicated that an uptick in participation in these services was measurable post-intervention (Pugatch & Wilson, 2018). A complete inventory of outcomes can be referenced in the final boxes of the logic model (reference Appendix V for full model). Table 4.1 represents the outcome evaluation data collection matrix associated with this research effort.

Table 4.1
*Outcome Evaluation Data Collection Matrix*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Evaluation Question</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Data Source(s)</th>
<th>Data Collection Tool</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Is the intervention effort having the desired effect on the audience by increasing awareness?</td>
<td>awareness</td>
<td>Currently enrolled students at the institution of focus</td>
<td>The data collection tool for this question/construct will be 8 survey items under the “awareness” heading of the student survey; specifically, items 8-15. These questions will be answered by respondents utilizing the following 6-point Likert scale: 1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3- Neutral 4- Agree 5- Strongly Agree 6- I’m not sure</td>
<td>The survey tool will be administered and distributed during the fall semester after the awareness campaign efforts have begun. The survey will remain open to student responses for a period of 3-4 weeks, likely from later October-late November, 2022.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Has there been a shift in students’ perception of academic support services and those who utilize them post-intervention?</td>
<td>Perception and stigma</td>
<td>Currently enrolled students at the institution of focus</td>
<td>The data collection tool for this question will be both quantitative survey responses and insight garnered from a series of focus group questions related directly to the constructs of perception and stigma. Focus group questions 6-8 are designed to garner insight on this construct and survey questions 16-25 will use the following 6-point Likert scale to measure perception as well. 1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3- Neutral 4- Agree 5- Strongly Agree 6- I’m not sure</td>
<td>The survey tool will be administered several times with multiple small groups of students following the closure of the student survey. These focus group (likely between 4-6 groups) will be take place from late November through mid-December, 2022.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges and Limitations

Aside from the research design itself, there may be circumstantial challenges in data collection. Though a different approach will be taken to collecting student data in this portion of the research effort, collecting adequate data from students was a challenge in the needs assessment that may persist.

According to Shadish et al. (2002) this type of research experiment most closely aligns with the definition of a quasi-experiment, which are designed “to test descriptive causal hypotheses about manipulable causes-as well as many structural details, such as the frequent presence of control groups and pretest measures, to support a counterfactual inference about what would have happened in the absence of treatment” (Shadish et al, 2002, p. 14). One of the hallmarks of a quasi-experiment is the lack of “random assignment. Assignment to conditions is by means of self-selection…” (Shadish et al, 2002, p. 14). In this case, the treatment is the multi-pronged marketing campaign to raise awareness of student support services. While the campaign will be designed utilizing participant voice and input to increase the chances of the campus communications being read, ultimately students will self-select whether to subject themselves to the treatment (thereby becoming part of the sample population) by choosing (or not choosing) to read emails, campus announcements, or texts containing the just-in-time information on tutoring services. This presents in a major challenging in increasing awareness, as the students the awareness campaign strives to reach are not a captive audience.

Additional challenges may arise around the actual creation and deployment of the videos. Because the videos and other nudges will be official campus communications, they must be taped and/or designed by the marketing and communications team to align with campus brand standards. This is a strength in that it allows for the collaboration and input of campus
stakeholders, but the department is also frequently bombarded with requests from other parts of
the campus, and may be tasked with higher priority projects that delay the professional editing
and launch of the videos and nudges.

Finally, some challenges of this design rest in the large amount of data collection that can be overwhelming for a single researcher. While other departments on campus will collaborate in an effort to facilitate the launch of some of the tools, such as the student survey, the bulk of the design, creation, and execution of this research will be done by one researcher. Administering multiple focus groups, and coding the subsequent data can be extremely time-consuming. In addition, while a mixed-methods design like this one generally allows for triangulation of results, conducting the study as a single researcher leaves considerable chance for researcher bias to creep into the data analysis. This threat to validity will be managed through the use of a reflexivity journal. “This validity procedure uses the lens of the researcher but is clearly positioned within the critical paradigm where individuals reflect on the social, cultural, and historical forces that shape their interpretation” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127).

Reflection

As a product of the community college system, I have a deep understanding of the needs and challenges of the students at the institution of focus. Community college students often have competing demands on their time, and less of a sense of community than students at traditional four-year institutions. These circumstances can make it easy for students to feel disconnected or disengaged from the classroom or campus activities, in general. I know now that my personal success in the community college was not the “norm,” and I attribute much of my ability to navigate the system to my parents, who provided multiple supports in allowing me to live at home and helping me understand transfer requirements, thus eliminating a number of barriers.
Now years later, as a community college faculty member, I see the barriers that students face from a different perspective, and realize that very few students have the type of familial support that I did as a student. While the institution cannot shift or change students’ family structures or prior experiences, we can find way to help build academic support services on campus that help students reach their academic goals. The research I’ve conducted over the last three years has helped me uncovered other constructs and barriers that impact utilization of academic support for historically underrepresented students, and has altered my approach to managing a student service, such as tutoring, forever. I feel infinitely more prepared to gather input from necessary stakeholders, and engage students voices to reposition these services so that they might contribute to the close of equity gaps on our campus.
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Appendix I

San Joaquin Delta College Academic Support Services Utilization and Perceptions Survey

Information collected within in this survey will be de-identified and will only be used for the statistical analysis of this research. By completing this survey or questionnaire, you are consenting to be in this research study. Your participation is voluntary, and you can stop at any time.

This survey focuses on academic support services at San Joaquin Delta College. By academic support services, we are referring specifically to drop-in tutoring, academic coaching, embedded tutoring, supplemental instruction, and academic workshops. Please answer the survey questions about your awareness, utilization, perceptions and accessibility of San Joaquin Delta College’s tutoring services based on your current knowledge and experiences. The survey is designed to be completed by currently enrolled San Joaquin Delta College students who are over 18 years old.

Please indicate your age group below:

a) Under 18 years of age
b) Over 18 years of age

ACCESSIBILITY:

Please answer the questions below about the accessibility of Delta College Tutoring Services using the following Likert scale:

1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3- Neutral  4- Agree  5- Strongly Agree  6- I’m not sure

4. The tutoring centers at Delta College are conveniently located within the campus
5. Accessing Delta College’s online tutoring services is simple
6. I find the physical environment of the tutoring centers (on campus) welcoming and safe
7. I am able to locate tutor schedules and tutoring center operational hours with ease
8. I have found the tutors at Delta College to be empathetic and patient.
9. Making a tutoring appointment online is easy
10. Tutors are generally available when I need them
11. Visiting a tutoring center is intimidating

SERVICE SATISFACTION:

Please indicate your service utilization and rate your service experiences with Delta College Tutoring Services using the following Likert scale:
1. If you have utilized tutoring services before, please indicate to what degree the tutoring session met your expectations:
   1-very dissatisfied   2-dissatisfied   3- Neutral   4- satisfied   5- very satisfied   6- I have not used tutoring services

2. If you have utilized tutoring services, how would you rate the customer service of the front desk/greeting staff on the following scale?

3. If you have utilized tutoring services, how would you rate the customer service of the tutor(s) you interacted with on the following scale?

4. Approximately how many times have you accessed tutoring or supplemental instruction services during your time at Delta College?
   - 6+ times
   - 3-5 times
   - 1-2 times
   - Never

AWARENESS:

Please answer the questions below about awareness of tutoring services using the following Likert scale:

1 “no”  2 “not really”  3 “sort of”  4 “yes”  (Winograd and Rust, 2014, p. 27)

Answer question 8, answer by marking all that apply.

1. Were you aware that Delta College offers tutoring for most general education subjects?
2. Did you know that all tutoring offered at Delta College is free of cost to currently enrolled students?
3. I have seen tutoring services outlined or advertised in a canvas course shell or on a course syllabus
4. I know how to access Delta College’s online Tutoring services
5. I know where the Math and Science Learning Center (Tutoring Center) is located on campus
6. I know where the ATTIC tutoring center is located on the Delta College campus (Humanities, Social Science, Business, Foreign Language Tutoring)
7. I know where and how to get help on a paper I am writing for a class
8. Which of the following tutoring centers have you heard of? If you have not heard of any tutoring services, please mark “I was unaware of these services” (mark all that apply)
   - Math and Science Learning Center (MSLC)
   - Supplemental Instruction (SI)
   - The ATTIC (Humanities, Social Science, Business, Foreign Language Tutoring)
   - English as a Second Language Tutoring (ESL)
• Academic Coaching (Embedded tutoring in English or Math)
• I was unaware of these services

PRIOR EXPERIENCES & STIGMA (Survey questions)

Please answer the questions below about your prior experiences with tutoring Services using the following Likert scale:
1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3- Neutral   4- Agree   5- Strongly Agree   6- I’m not sure

1. Seeking academic help in the form of tutoring would make me feel less intelligent
2. I have felt nervous about a counselor, professor, academic advisor, or other mentor ever recommending me to Delta College tutoring services
3. I have had mostly positive experiences with tutoring and other forms of academic support in the past
4. My self-esteem would increase if my grades improved after working with a tutor
5. If I was participating in tutoring on a regular basis, I would prefer that my friends and family members did not know about it.
6. I would be embarrassed if a tutor realized how behind I was in a course
7. My self-confidence would NOT be threatened if I participated in tutoring
8. A negative past experience with a tutor has kept me from accessing tutoring in the present
9. Tutoring is only for students who are struggling academically
10. I have never participated in any type of tutoring or academic support activity in the past

IDENTITY – Demographic information

1. Are you a first-generation college student*?
   a. I am a first-generation college student
   b. I am not a first-generation college student
2. Please specify your ethnic identity
   a. African-American or Black
   b. Asian
   c. Caucasian
   d. Latinx or Hispanic
   e. Native American or American Indian
   f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   g. Two or more ethnicities
   h. Other/unknown
   i. Prefer not to state
3. Please indicate your gender
a. Female
b. Male
c. Non-binary
d. Prefer not to state

4. Please indicate your current employment status:
   a. I currently work full-time
   b. I currently work part-time
   c. I am not currently employed
   d. I prefer not to state

5. Please indicate your age group
   a. 18-24
   b. 24-29
   c. 30-34
   d. 35-44
   e. 45-49
   f. 50+

6. Do you currently qualify for federal financial aid or a college tuition fee waiver?
   a. I currently qualify for federal financial aid or a college tuition fee waiver
   b. I do not currently qualify for federal financial aid or a college tuition fee waiver
   c. I prefer not to state

7. Please indicate your sexual orientation:
   a. Heterosexual or straight
   b. Gay
   c. Lesbian
   d. Bisexual
   e. Other
   f. I prefer not to state
Appendix II

Introductory Script – Student Focus Groups

Thank you for donating your time today to participate in this focus group. This focus group is being facilitated as a compliment to a recent survey that was distributed through campus email, and is part of a larger research effort to explore factors impacting the utilization of academic support services for students at San Joaquin Delta College.

We’re interested in learning about your prior experiences accessing academic support services as well as your perceptions of students who access these services. Student input is crucial to collecting accurate data that may allow the college to make necessary adjustments to these services so that they might better serve the campus community. We invite you to be honest in providing feedback, experiences and opinions throughout this conversation, and encourage you to ask clarifying questions if anything is unclear.

This focus group will be recorded, so we are going to ask participants to choose a codename to utilize throughout the interview. This process will ensure anonymity when the recording is later transcribed, and contributes to ensuring the comfort of participants as you share honest experiences.

Finally, we value the time and voice of everyone in attendance today. While not every participant needs to answer every question, we may directly ask certain participants if they have any insight to share if they have not had the opportunity to speak much.

Participation in this focus group is voluntary, and participants may elect to stop participating at any time.

Are there any questions before we begin?

STUDENT PRIOR EXPERIENCES (FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS)

1. Please tell us a bit about yourself (using your code name) – how many years have you been at the college and what are you studying?
2. Have you ever attended tutoring or an alternative form of academic support? (study groups, tutoring, supplemental instruction, etc) while at Delta College or at any point in your academic journey?
   a. If yes, please tell us about your experience
      1. What qualities or characteristics of the teacher or tutor made an impression of you?
   b. If no, why not?
3. Have you ever had a positive experience or outcome as a result of participating in an academic support activity? If so, please expand.
4. Have you ever had a negative result or experience while trying to seek academic support? If so, please expand.
5. Overall, how would characterize your experiences engaging with academic support services or activities throughout your academic journey?

**STIGMA (FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS)**

6. What are your thoughts and perceptions about the kinds of students who use academic support services (Ciscell, et al., 2016, p.43)?

7. Do you believe that seeking academic support implies anything positive or negative about your level of intelligence (Winograd and Rust, 2014)? How so?

8. Have you ever been concerned that you might be bullied or made fun of for seeking academic help or support?
   a. If so, who’s judgement is of concern?
   b. What is your family’s impression of academic support activities? Your friends?
Appendix III

Tutor Perceptions Survey

Information collected within in this survey will be de-identified and will only be used for the statistical analysis of this research. By completing this survey or questionnaire, you are consenting to be in this research study. Your participation is voluntary, and you can stop at any time.

This survey focuses on academic support services at San Joaquin Delta College. By academic support services, we are referring specifically to drop-in tutoring, academic coaching, embedded tutoring, supplemental instruction, and academic workshops. Please answer the survey questions based on your current knowledge and experiences working as a tutor. The survey is designed to be completed by currently employed San Joaquin Delta College tutors who are over 18 years old.

Please indicate your employment status below:

1. I currently work as a Delta College Tutor, or I have worked as a Delta College tutor at some point in the last 12 months
2. I am not a tutor for Delta College

Please answer the questions below about your perceptions/experiences providing tutoring services using the following Likert scale:

1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3- Neutral  4- Agree  5- Strongly Agree  6- I’m not sure

3. Students generally show up to tutoring prepared for their sessions (with the correct materials, questions ready, etc)
4. I mainly work with students who are succeeding academically and just want a little extra guidance
5. My tutoring sessions are productive
6. Students come to tutoring hoping the tutor will do the work for them
7. Tutoring is for students who are behind or failing their courses
8. Working as a tutor is rewarding

9. As a tutor, I would be willing to participate in a follow-up focus group to help the researcher gain more insight into my experience.
   A. YES  B. NO

   If you marked “yes” above, please provide your email below:
Appendix IV

Tutor Focus Group Questions

Thank you for donating your time today to participate in this focus group. This focus group is being facilitated as a compliment to a recent survey that was distributed through campus email, and is part of a larger research effort to explore factors impacting the utilization of academic support services for students at San Joaquin Delta College.

We’re interested in learning about your prior experiences as employees within the academic support framework as well as your perceptions of students who access these services. Student input is crucial to collecting accurate data that may allow the college to make necessary adjustments to these services so that they might better serve the campus community. We invite you to be honest in providing feedback, experiences and opinions throughout this conversation, and encourage you to ask clarifying questions if anything is unclear.

This focus group will be recorded, so we are going to ask participants to choose a codename to utilize throughout the interview. This process will ensure anonymity when the recording is later transcribed, and contributes to ensuring the comfort of participants as you share honest experiences.

Finally, we value the time and voice of everyone in attendance today. While not every participant needs to answer every question, we may directly ask certain participants if they have any insight to share if they have not had the opportunity to speak much.

Participation in this focus group is voluntary, and participants may elect to stop participating at any time.

Are there any questions before we begin?

1. Please tell us a bit about yourself (using your code name) – how many years have you been serving as a tutor? What subjects do you tutor?
2. Tell us a little about the type of students you serve in the tutoring centers?
3. How do you expect tutoring sessions to unfold?
   c. Do tutees generally meet those expectations?
4. What are your thoughts and perceptions about the kinds of students who use academic support services (Ciscell, et al., 2016, p.43)?
5. Do you believe that seeking academic support implies anything positive or negative about your level of intelligence (Winograd and Rust, 2014)? How so?
6. Are tutoring centers well-advertised and easy to find on the campus?
7. As an employee, do you find the tutoring centers comfortable and welcoming?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Context</th>
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**Logic Model**

**Inputs**
- More effective use of evaluation data
- Early identification of risks
- Enhanced planning and execution
- Improved collaboration among partners
- Enhanced communication and coordination

**Activities**
- Conduct surveys and focus groups
- Develop and implement intervention strategies
- Increase student engagement
- Provide targeted support services

**Outputs**
- Increased student engagement
- Improved academic performance
- Enhanced student retention
- Increased program participation

**Outcomes**
- Increased graduation rates
- Increased employment rates
- Improved career readiness

**Intermediate Results**
- Increased student satisfaction
- Improved faculty interaction
- Enhanced community partnerships

**Dissemination**
- Publish research findings
- Present at conferences
- Share best practices

**Assumptions**
- Success: Increased articulation leads to increased enrollment
- Increased articulation leads to increased graduation
- Increased graduation leads to increased employment

**Expected Impacts**
- Improved academic outcomes
- Enhanced career readiness
- Increased community engagement
Appendix VII

Faculty and Staff Input Survey – Tutorial Services Awareness Campaign

1. How aware are your students of the free academic support programs available to them?

2. How might your students benefit from the creation of a short video that explains how tutoring services work and where they are located?

3. How do you communicate with students enrolled in your courses?

4. How frequently do your students need or currently receive reminders/information from you about academic support, or other campus resources?

5. When do you believe your students would most benefit from receiving information about the availability of tutoring services?

6. How frequently do students request information from you about academic support options?

7. What seems to be your students’ preferred method of communication?
Appendix VIII

Student Focus Group – Tutorial Services Awareness Campaign

1. How frequently do you request information about the academic support services available to you as a student?

2. When it comes to receiving important updates or reminders about campus services, how do you prefer to receive information?

3. At what point in the semester would you like to receive reminders and information about topics such as tutoring services and other academic support programs?

4. How frequently would you like to receive reminders/information from the college about academic support, or other campus resources?

5. How might you benefit from the creation of a short video that explains how tutoring services work and where they are located?
Appendix IX

Guiding Questions for Student and Tutor Testimonials

1. Did you know what to expect when you arrived for your first tutoring session?
2. Can you tell us a little about your experience working with campus tutoring services?
3. Do you feel that participating in tutoring has benefitted you personally or academically?
4. What was your perception of tutoring before you attended a session?
5. How has your perception of tutoring changed over time?
6. Had anything ever stopped you from attending tutoring in the past?
7. If you are a tutor, what is one thing you’d really like students to know about tutoring?
8. If you are a current student, would you recommend Delta’s tutoring services to other students? If so, why?