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PLACING INTO REMEDIATION AND ITS EFFECT ON STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION OF ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY

By
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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

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Abstract

This phenomenological, qualitative study for the Dissertation in Practice analyzed thirteen incoming community college students’ reactions after being informed they placed into remedial reading and/or English courses at a local community college. The cohort consisted of a traditional aged, freshman student, who came from diverse backgrounds, who were academically categorized as average to above average high school performers. During one-on-one interviews students reported generally negative feelings toward their emotional state as they recalled the enrollment and registration process at community college. Students did not express beliefs that their own abilities, or self-efficacy, had been altered upon hearing of their need to take remediation reading and/or English courses, but rather felt a sense of immediacy and importance toward their academic priorities as they considered their upcoming academic semester. Students maintained an internal-loci of control and recommended future students prepare for the placement test using preparatory material before taking the placement test.

Keywords: self-efficacy, remediation, student perception, community college, placement test
Dedication

This research is dedicated to all students who dream of success, manage set-backs and adversity, and celebrate completion of their academic goals. Your commitment to success never ceases to inspire.
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To my Chair, Dr. Donnette Noble, who ably managed my progress from afar, absorbing both my own life challenges, along with her own. Thank you for your commitment to excellence, and demonstration of resiliency and mentorship. To Dr. Jeffrey Pedersen, a colleague and friend, who lives up to his salutation, “Let me know how I can help”. To my former committee member, Dr. Karen Cook, who first shared with me her passion for Servant Leadership. It was my pleasure to share this journey with her if even for a short time. To my parents, David and Janet Reese, who never imagined seeing this daughter, at this place; yet always cheered me on like someday, it might all make sense. And to my husband, Michael Cavanaugh, who researched programs with me, encouraged me, and corrected my faulty thinking when I got discouraged. His patience, intelligence, support, and love have done more to assist me, and those he loves, then he might ever realize.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background

For close to four hundred years, the American college and university system has been in a state of evolution. Higher education, once considered an opportunity only afforded to elite, White, males has now become an institution hosting millions of students seeking personal and economic improvement, regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic background. Changes brought about by social, political, and economic forces removed barriers and shifted public thinking about who is eligible to attend college (Kinzie, Palmer, Hayek, Hossler, Jacob, & Cummings, 2004) and have enabled a projected 20.9 million students (US Department of Education, 2017) to enroll in postsecondary education. Yet, not all who enter college or university complete their academic goal of degree completion.

Research has found that those who enter post-secondary education in need of academic remediation encounter significant challenges in completion of their degree goals. In fact, 41 percent of those enrolling at public, open enrollment, two-year institutions are required to take remedial coursework (Skomsvold, 2014), a figure far higher than those enrolling at four-year institutions. Recognizing that enrollment in college is not the only solution to college degree completion, and the benefits of degree completion outweigh the benefits of enrollment alone, the focus of this research was to understand the meaning students associate with being identified as in need of remedial reading or English course work and how this information impacted their perception of academic self-efficacy.

While higher education in America celebrates a 400-year history, community
colleges have only become an integral component over the last 100 years. During these last 100 years, the community college has expanded its broad-access mission as a public institution and enrolls tens of thousands of students annually (US Department of Education, 2017; Jenkins & Rodriquez, 2013). Community colleges have enabled millions of people to pursue postsecondary education (Coley, 2000). Expansion of the community college concept was an outcome of a nationally determined economic, political, and social agenda, which included prioritization of universal education for the masses. The economic, political, and social contributors to the growth of community colleges included landmark societal influencers like the Government Issued (GI) Bill for returning Veterans, the Baby Boom of the post-World War II era, the Civil Rights and Women’s movements, and the transition from a national rural, agrarian-based economy to an urban, industrialized economy (Coley, 2000). These changing societal priorities contributed to community colleges’ relevance as it competently met the market needs for a differently-abled workforce (Coley, 2000).

In 1940, a national debate initiated the shift of America’s perception of equity and access to higher education. The debate provided the catalyst for altering the American perspective on both the purpose and possibility of higher education, which contributed to the legitimization of community colleges. Until that time, the utilization of, and respect for, community colleges remained in the shadows of four-year colleges and universities. In 1947, United States (US) President Harry Truman, created a task force entitled the Commission on Higher Education. The Task Force produced a report recommending improved access to postsecondary education for more US citizenry (Gilbert & Heller, 2013), which led to a transformation of the higher education landscape.
According to Gilbert and Heller (2013), Truman’s Commission on Higher Education laid the foundation for American higher education policies and practices, arguing that if the country wished to develop economic strength in the global market, it had to stop depriving itself of the vast number of potential leaders and socially competent citizens. A key recommendation set the goal of doubling the number of students attending college by the year 1960. However, what the Commission failed to consider was that once greater numbers of students enrolled, how ably would these same students’ progress toward degree completion. The Commission’s recommendations significantly heightened the federal government’s role in postsecondary education and assisted new populations of students in taking advantage of educational opportunities regardless of race, creed, gender, economic status, or national origin (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). However, it left colleges and universities wrestling with how to assist greater numbers of these new populations with their academic degree completion goals.

Community colleges have recently come to recognize that access alone is insufficient in ensuring student success and postsecondary degree attainment. As the literature shows, the full benefit of a college education is realized only through the attainment of a degree and/or a credential (Klempin & Karp, 2015). Students who stop pursuing a college degree are found to have higher unemployment and loan default rates than those who complete degrees or credentials (Nguyen, 2012). It is in the attainment of the degree or credential that personal economic advancement is celebrated (Belfield & Bailey, 2011; Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013; Zeidenberg, Scott, & Belfield, 2015).

Community colleges have been considered the vehicle by which democratization entered higher education in the US (Roman, 2007). Research has found that students
who attend two-year community colleges are more diverse in age, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, as compared to four-year college and university attendees (Coley, 2000), and community colleges comprise approximately 35 percent of all students in higher education in the US (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). This growth in access and enrollment, for previously underserved populations, demonstrates the success community colleges have had in increasing access to higher education for the masses. However, enrollment alone does not address the reality that unless students complete their academic degrees, they often do not celebrate the economic return of the degree earned.

Community colleges grapple with the findings that more than half of the students who enter two-year community colleges arrive academically underprepared for the rigors of postsecondary education (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; Jones, Sugar, Vandal, Elston, Fernandez, Johnson, Johnson, Zaback, & Barrick, 2012). Some research has estimated that 51.7 percent of students who enter two-year colleges are in need of remediation, as compared to 19.9 percent of those entering the four-year environment (Jones, et al., 2012). For the purpose of this study, and in preservation of anonymity and overall integrity of the research, all derived data pertaining to the institution where the research took place will be referenced as data from Eastern Seaboard Community College (ESCC). ESCC (2015) reports remedial rates as high as 62 percent for incoming students (ESCC, 2015).

Community colleges struggle to remain focused on the work of educating the masses due, in some part, to their multifaceted mission. Community colleges aim to develop politically, locally engaged, and educated citizens (Roman, 2007), yet the open-enrollment model often presents unique enrollment challenges than those of four-year
institutions. The primary objective of community colleges’ is to assist students with education and skill acquisition through the completion of an Associate degree (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; Gilbert & Heller, 2013). Given the higher than average rates of entering community college students in need of remediation, the community colleges face the additional challenge to assist a large proportion of underprepared students gain the necessary academic skills so that they can be successful in their academic endeavors and complete their degrees and credential goals and benefit from the stability and economic return a college degree or credential bears.

**Statement of the Problem**

Since the 1970s, community colleges have committed to open-access enrollment practices. Yet, greater access to postsecondary education has not led to gains in the number of degrees earned, especially for underrepresented student populations. While community colleges have provided a mechanism of greater access to higher education for traditionally underserved students, many of these students are found to be academically underprepared in reading comprehension and English composition skills (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; Jones, et al., 2012). The National Center for Public Policy (2011), which provides national enrollment statistics pertaining to trends in the US, reports that more than half of low-income students from underrepresented populations, almost 50 percent of all Hispanic students, and 31 percent of all African Americans seek degrees first from community colleges, and of those who enter community college, two-thirds are determined to be in need of remediation (National Center for Public Policy, 2011).

The large number of students required to take remedial courses, though troublesome, is not the singular problem. Rather, the high percentage of students
requiring academic remediation is compounded by the reality that, given the four million dollars spent annually on remediating student academic skills in higher education (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016), large numbers of these same students do not complete their studies (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; Jones et al., 2012; Klempin & Karp, 2015). A review of the literature reveals core questions regarding the effectiveness of remedial education and poses significant questions pertaining to the return on investment for students and institutions. Community colleges are challenged to consider what else, aside from remediation, can be done to increase students’ success at the community college.

Remedial education reform advocates posit that, if greater numbers of traditionally underserved students were able to complete their academic degrees, these same students would directly benefit from the economic return of earning a degree (Belfield & Bailey, 2011; Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013; Zeidenberg, Scott, & Belfield, 2015). If students who are required to take remedial courses do not complete their degrees in equal or greater parts than those who do not need to take remedial courses, one might surmise the current approach to remediation is not preparing students for success regarding academic degree attainment (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study for the Dissertation in Practice was to gain understanding of the meaning students attribute to testing into remedial reading and/or English courses, and to what degree this understanding impacted their perception of personal academic self-efficacy. According to Tinto (1990), students enter college with pre-entry attributes that impact attainment of their educational goals. As no two students enter college with the same combination of pre-entry attributes, nor is
there an understanding of how these attributes may impact students’ perception of personal successes, research should be continuous in its search for understanding student motivation and persistence and should seek inclusion of differing student characteristics and attributes that might offer insight on new student success strategies.

Community colleges enroll greater numbers of first-generation and traditionally underserved students than competitive colleges and universities (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; Jones, Sugar, Vandal, Elston, Fernandez, Johnson, Johnson, Zaback, & Barrick, 2012). Research has further found that less than 25 percent of first-time, full-time community college students complete their degrees--a figure far less than students who attend competitive colleges and universities (Bers & Schuetz, 2014). Leaders in community colleges should consider ways to assist students with degree completion goals and develop ways to mitigate degree completion challenges.

**Research Question**

While research findings vary as to the exact number of students requiring remediation, it is estimated that between 62 percent and 66 percent of students who attend community college are required to take remedial courses (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; ESCC, 2015; Jones, et.al, 2012). Of these students who test into remediation, many do not progress through their studies to degree completion (Bers & Schuetz, 2014). The following research question guided this qualitative study: For incoming- community college students who earned average to above average high school grade point averages (GPA) and graduated high school with a New York State Regents diploma, what was the impact on their perception of personal academic self-efficacy when informed they test into remedial reading or English courses?
Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to determine if student placement in remedial reading and/or English courses impacted their perceptions of academic self-efficacy. Once the effect was understood, an evidence-based intrusive intervention was developed. This intervention is explained in Chapter Five.

Overview of Methodology

This phenomenological, qualitative study aimed to understand the meaning students associated with testing into academic remedial reading or English courses. Thirteen full-time, first-semester, academically average high school students, who earned high school Regents diplomas, required no special education or English as Second Language services in high school, and who tested into reading and/or English remedial courses were interviewed regarding what influence testing into remediation had on their self-perception of personal academic self-efficacy. One-on-one interviews were facilitated to enable a delving into students’ meaning-making, feelings, and perceptions of academic self-efficacy after being informed they must take remedial reading or English courses.

Definition of Relevant Terms

The terms listed below were used operationally in this study.

*Academic ability:* The ability for a college student to read and comprehend post-secondary level text and express thought through written language at a post-secondary level.

*Academically average:* For purposes of this study, students who performed in high school with an overall grade point average of 77 through 84, graduated with a New
York State Regents diploma, and who received no special education services or English as a second language services are determined to have performed in an academically average range.

*First-time college students:* A student who has no prior postsecondary experience. Using this definition would disqualify students enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the first time prior to the summer term and students who entered with college or post-secondary credits earned before entering community college and where said credits were earned outside of the high school environment.

*Grade point average (GPA):* An indication of a student’s academic achievement calculated as the total number of grade points received over a given period divided by the total number of credits awarded by the school.

*High school:* High school is considered the ninth through twelfth grades within the US compulsory education system.

*Placement testing:* A standardized, often computerized, assessment exam used to determine competence in academic skills including reading comprehension, written language competency, and mathematical and algebraic calculation.

*Regents Diploma:* A New York State designation for a particular type of high school degree inclusive of a prescribed number of credits in specific subjects, satisfactory completion of specific courses, and satisfactory performance on specifically designed examinations.

*Remediation:* Stand-alone courses which address pre-college academic content in reading comprehension, English, and mathematical skills.

*Remedial course work:* Stand-alone, prerequisite, non-college credit bearing
courses taught at colleges and universities which intend to improve student skill in English composition, reading comprehension, or mathematical and algebraic computation.

_Self-Efficacy:_ The belief one holds in their personal ability to succeed in specific situations or tasks. One's sense of self-efficacy can play a major role in how one approaches goals, tasks, and challenges (Bandura, 1977).

_Student Success:_ For purposes of this research study, student success includes positive academic achievement, competence with social interactions, strong life management skills, and academic engagement (Jennings, Lovett, Cuba, Swingle, & Lindkvist, 2013).

_Non-traditional student:_ A college student who has one or more of seven defining characteristics: delayed enrollment into postsecondary education; attends college part-time; works full-time; is financially independent as determined by financial aid eligibility; has dependents other than a spouse; is a single parent; or does not have a high school diploma.

_Traditional aged students:_ 17 years to 24 years of age.

_Traditionally underserved students:_ Low-income and minority students.

**Limitations, Delimitations, and Personal Bias**

**Limitations**

Community colleges were established to democratize access to higher education. Coley (2000) posits that students who attend community college trend older than 24 years of age, are more racially and ethnically diverse, and exhibit a “range of characteristics that place them at risk of not meeting their educational goals” (p. 3). Given the sample
size at the institution where the research was conducted, the age of students trends younger, possibly creating a less generalizable result. The researcher possessed an intimate knowledge of the college, campus, placement guidelines, and enrollment process. This high level of familiarity mandated the researcher to prioritize recognition of and address bias whenever possible. The researcher also had a visible position within the campus structure, which mandated extra precautionary steps to ensure participant anonymity was protected.

**Delimitations**

A limitation of this study is the geographic location. This study included students from a predominantly affluent, suburban area on the east coast of the US. Many students have access to personal luxuries (i.e. personal cell phones, personal vehicles for transportation, and money for personal spending). A majority of students report that they worked at least part-time in service and retail industries and they balance their work/study schedules with commutes to and from campus often not exceeding more than 30 minutes in total (Eastern Seaboard Community College (ESCC), 2015).

The study was facilitated during the fall 2018 enrollment period and students met with a variety of counselors and advisors to discuss the results of their entrance placement tests. The variety of counselors that interfaced with students could not be controlled and did not allow for assessment of message delivery. Students that were invited to participate in this study may have attended at least one of fifteen different high schools.

**Personal Bias**

Over the last decade, the degree by which remedial education is determined
effective - its effectiveness in improving student retention and assisting students with
degree completion goals - has been under examination within national, regional, and local
educational settings. Questions regarding remedial education effectiveness exist at the
national level and at the community college where the researcher is employed. The
conversation of student access, equity in accessing higher education, levels of service
delivery, individual student performance and persistence, student completion rates, and
curriculum development considerations are all topics under examination within the
national political sector and college and university settings.

The researcher has worked both as an advisor, counselor, and administrator of the
new student enrollment process. Inclusive in this enrollment process is the evaluation of
students’ academic readiness using standardized testing assessments and advising
students in their course selections. The researcher is currently responsible for
coordinating the enrollment process for 4,000 students annually. The researcher
observed confusion and frustration expressed by students and families regarding the
value of remedial education and has an invested interest in improving the student
enrollment experiences, their retention, and the overall academic success of students.

The Role of Leadership in this Study

Given the community college mission and its successful efforts to democratize
access to higher education, examination of both intentional and unintentional barriers
within higher educational institutions remain of critical importance. Mere access to
higher education does not bear the benefit as that of a degree earned. Research
establishes that completion of college improves an individual’s lifelong earning potential.
Therefore, colleges must strategize as to how they can assist students in their ability to
celebrate the benefits of degree attainment.

There is a growing assertion that postsecondary institutions have remained passive agents in the systematic reproduction of White racial privilege. Carnevale and Strohl (2013) suggest that higher educational settings have reinforced intergenerational, White racial privilege and should feel compelled to examine where structural and systematic biases may cause traditionally, underserved students lack of access or higher than average dropout rates. Examination of bias within institutional constructs involves a high level of analytical and critical reflection and a true commitment to view the work requires individuals to assume the role of Servant Leader (SL).

Yet, the level of systematic alteration that will be required to address newly discovered biased institutional practices may call for transformational leadership (TFL), not SL. Leaders who possess TFL qualities create changes within organizations because of their ability to encourage others beyond expectations, emphasize collective values and needs over individual interests (Yukl, 1999), and can remain focused on the required changes and innovations that are needed (Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, Windt, & Alkema, 2012). TFLs provide the inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation necessary to introduce process changes to long established practices at the institution (Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, Windt, & Alkema, 2012). Strategizing ways to assist traditionally underserved students is viewed with heightened importance, especially when measured against the critical perspective of colleges and universities installation of barriers to degree completion for traditionally underserved populations as presented by Carnevale and Strohl (2013).

Sipe and Frick (2015) define the SL as someone who is a person of character who
puts others first, is a skilled communicator, a compassionate collaborator with foresight, is a systems thinker, and who leads with moral authority. For these reasons, it is the committed SL who will pursue understanding the experience of traditionally underserved students and how might these experiences impact students’ abilities to persist toward academic goal attainment. Yet, it is the TFL who will focus on the change and innovation required to assist students in their academic pursuits while inspiring others to amend processes in an effort to address students’ access and success in new ways. It was this study’s contention that these types of leadership styles are the prerequisite skills necessary to lead this type of inquiry regarding student academic goal attainment.

**Significance of the Study**

The community college has expanded its broad-access mission as a public institution and enrolls tens of thousands of students annually (US Department of Education, 2017; Jenkins & Rodriguez, 2013), and degree attainment is deemed an important element to personal economic advancement and stability. Yet, not all who enter community college with the goal of an academic degree complete their academic degree. This Dissertation in Practice approached the research with an understanding of the justice implications it holds for students attending community colleges. Considering the large numbers of traditionally underrepresented students who attend community colleges, along with the research that finds larger numbers of community college students test into remediation as compared to those who attend four-year colleges, and the fact that those who enter post-secondary education in need of academic remediation demonstrate significant challenges with degree completion, this research is important as it may serve as a mechanism to support traditionally underrepresented students attain their academic
degrees in greater numbers.

The research may assist college administrators to consider their approach to both remedial education and communication with incoming community college students. The findings may contribute to literature regarding student retention initiatives and may assist colleges as they consider removing student barriers to degree completion. The aim of the study was to understand if students’ meaning-making associated with placing into remedial English and/or reading, impacted their perception of academic self-efficacy. As meaning-making is understood, the removal of unintentional barriers to degree completion may be addressed.

**Summary**

Considering that an individual's economic, political, and societal gain is often realized only after college degree completion, this research aimed to investigate what reasons might exist that limit a community college student’s accomplishment in their degree completion goals. The research focused on understanding the phenomenon of students’ meaning-making associated with being told they were in need of English or reading remediation. If a greater understanding of students’ meaning-making pertaining to this enrollment conversation was achieved, perhaps colleges and universities could use this information to strategize and prioritize how they support and encourage student success during enrollment. In addition, students from underrepresented populations, who in greater proportion begin their college studies in remedial courses, form an argument that colleges and universities possess a moral obligation to consider what intentional and unintentional barriers it has within its enrollment framework. Given the mission of community college, it could be argued that there exists an even greater institutional
imperative to assist all their students complete their educational goals of degree attainment.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The ability to earn a college degree has historically been a mechanism for improving individual and societal conditions. Individuals who earn a college degree often improve their lifetime potential for financial earning and contribute to the stability within the family system and communities. As individuals provide for themselves, they demonstrate stronger work patterns, better overall health patterns, and a propensity to contribute to their communities through civic engagement (Matherly, Amin, & Al Nahyan, 2017). While colleges have often demonstrated their ability to play the role of stabilizing forces in communities, not all community members have been able to benefit from access alone (Ferraro, Schafer, & Wilkinson, 2016).

History of Community Colleges in America

Origins

The origins of community colleges highlight the peculiarities of this uniquely American higher educational institution. The college’s historical framework is built upon the nation’s own evolutionary condition that reflects traditions and customs but possesses a natural inclination toward aspiration and pursuit to actualize personal potential. Community colleges are institutions that evolved from stakeholder and community interests in gaining greater access to educational opportunities, a desire for greater individual economic security, and personal aspirations for individual elevation of societal status (Ferraro, et al., 2016). Synnott (1987) explains the introduction of community colleges evolved in response to secondary education’s general academic weakness, four-year colleges and universities facing institutional financial challenges, and the elitist
attitude and practices held by many four-year colleges and universities. Cole (2014) suggests community colleges were the vehicle by which democratization entered higher education as they provided a responsive mechanism to the masses’ interests in accessing educational opportunities.

Community colleges provided an answer for the four-year elite institutions’ complaint that secondary and elementary institutions were not preparing students for entry to collegiate study. The community college provided the academic community’s response to underprepared students interested in pursuing the rigors of four-year study or, as an alternative, a direct pathway to the work force. Cole (2014) suggests that community colleges, while more integrated into the higher educational landscape, are still considered a work in progress. The community college mission, while confounding and muddled, continues to be deeply embedded in the most earnest yearnings of our democracy: open, accessible, and a place of opportunity to overcome a variety of student origins (Cole, 2014).

During the nation’s first hundred years of formation, three colleges applied to England for charter and received approval. These institutions were founded by “Churches of the Reformation” and their missions were relative to ministerial preparation. The first institutions to establish themselves in the colonies were Harvard, the College of William and Mary, and Yale College. Harvard, recognized as the earliest established and longest standing institution of higher education in America, was established by Puritans and began offering courses in 1636 (Geiger, 2016). The College of William and Mary followed in 1729 (“William and Mary, Chronology 1700-1799,” 2017) by the Church of England, and Yale College, the only one to attempt to preserve
and cultivate the sectarian zeal of the Reformation era (Geiger, 2016), began instruction in 1718 (“Yale, Traditions and History,” 2017). These three colleges established the parameters of education in America: educate the sons of elite residents who were interested and able to pursue higher education for the purpose of cultural enlightenment with an education in the classics. These institutions educated a minute percentage of the population and rarely sustained students through to graduation.

The original institutions dedicated their curriculum to the religious denominations of origin. They were indebted to the support they received from England and were recognized as schools of the Reformation. The colleges’ curricula, while dedicated to training leaders for ministry within churches, incorporated liberal, classical studies and allowed only White, affluent young men from middle- to upper-income families to attend (Brock, 2010). Yet, with selective enrollment, colleges struggled with student completion rates and the graduates on record were few (Geiger, 2016). During the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, each institution’s primary mission to develop ministers began to erode and other types students gained access to colleges as long as they understood they would be “piously educated in good Letters and Manners” and would be educated for public employment in both the “Church and Civil State” (Geiger, 2016, p 5). As Meier (2013) summarizes, the original outcome of attaining a college education was two-fold: to create a more highly trained graduate who could serve the inhabitants of a new country and to create social mobility and esteem for its select graduates.

Throughout higher education’s evolution, a core value of educating students, not just for content and material, but also for discipline and character pervaded the curriculum. Institutions harnessed within curricula a value to develop discipline in
student thinking and character as accomplished through study of language, thought, and action. From the institutions’ original intention of developing ministers to today’s goal of developing citizenry that positively contributes to society, the shaping forces that exert pressure on institutions have both been long observable and continue to exist.

**Influencers within Higher Education**

Economic, political, and social influences on the US higher educational system remain much the same since its inception 380 years ago. There have been few other influences that have demonstrated the ability to mold, alter, and change institutions like the three mentioned above. Geiger (2016) examines the evolution of higher education through a generational lens (see Table 1). An overview of ten generations of higher education provide a snapshot from the first generation, established during the colonial US time period, through the tenth generation at which closed in 2010. Economic, political, and social agendas have long influenced curricular offerings, student enrollment patterns, attendee demographics, relationships among students, faculty, and administrators, and missions of the institutions themselves. Yet, despite the changes these forces affect, institutions of higher education remain a primary vehicle to develop communicators, thinkers, and leaders within communities.

**The Community College and its Emerging Mission**

It would be two hundred years after the first charter was received by an institution of higher education within the colonies that a community college, then called a junior college, would enter the postsecondary landscape. A myriad of reasons for the eventual establishment of community colleges, along with their continuing evolution within the US higher educational system, contributes to why community colleges struggle for
esteem within higher education. Since the community college’s introduction onto the US higher educational landscape in the early 1900’s, it has struggled with identity and acceptance, due in large part for its lack of a clear mission (Meier, 2013).

Early established goals for pursuing higher education included development of character, exposure to culture, and preparation of students in ministry, law, politics, and agricultural production. The first two hundred years of higher education remained highly exclusive, allowing only select White males to apply and attend. Geiger (2016) states that before 1820, the intention of attending college was to cultivate greater mental discipline, receive an education in higher culture, and formal genteel decorum training. All other forms of education, like practical training and remediation, were antithetical to the function of colleges and would become studies relegated to other kinds of institutions.

The purpose of higher education was much debated during the fourth and fifth generations of higher education (1800-1850) (Geiger, 2016). These debates emboldened existing four-year institutions to take a tight hold of their adopted, classical curricula, clearing the path for other types of educational institutions to develop. Meier (2013) argues that it was the relegation of “other forms of education” to “other institutions” which contributed to the ambiguity and confusion regarding the missions of junior colleges, later named community colleges. The community colleges’ original assumption to teach “the other forms of education” previously rejected by the elite institutions contributed to the lack of a respected, concretized mission. Lacking a common mission, the colleges struggled to define a set of evaluative criteria or a theoretical framework to guide and articulate the work into the future (Frye as cited by Meier, 2013). Beach
Table 1

*Geiger’s (2016) 10 Generations of Higher Education Evolution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Major Development</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Reformation Beginnings</td>
<td>Original “Schools of the Reformation” intended to develop ministers. Governing challenges between external and internal authorities. Financial support received from respective states. Provided exclusive access to a minute population of White, males for minister formation.</td>
<td>1636-1740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Colonial Colleges</td>
<td>Maintain strong denominational origins; curriculum becomes more secular. Deepening alliances within colony of origin. Faculty more educated in disciplines. Exclusive access to minute population of white, males only.</td>
<td>1745-1775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Republican Education</td>
<td>War of Independence slows growth of institutions; victory spurs development of new institutions. State officials serve as ex-officio trustees. New colleges/new states create financial instability. Denominational influence continues to weaken; selflessness, patriotism, citizenry, and Enlightenment grow within curriculum. Enrollment grows slightly; still exclusively middle- to upper-class, white males attend.</td>
<td>1776-1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Passing of Republican Education</td>
<td>Economics remain unstable. College’s lack common mission, governance structures, and curriculum. Student behavioral standards emerge. Independent professional schools (i.e. law, medical, clergy) emerge outside of established colleges. Enrollment unstable, varying enrollment standards develop, remains exclusive to a small population of male only students attend equaling .075 to 1 percent of overall population.</td>
<td>1800-1820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Classical Denominational Colleges</td>
<td>Philosophical debate on purpose of education debated; instill discipline and culture or practical and advanced learning? As country expands, so does the amount of public, private, and denominational colleges. New colleges establish with prioritized local outcomes. No longer only white, affluent males; enter female and African American students albeit at very few colleges.</td>
<td>1820-1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: New Departures</td>
<td>Acts of philanthropy buttresses college offerings; begin phenomenon of American University. Expansion into graduate education. Other than white males regularly enroll in college courses. <strong>Significant Policies:</strong> 1862: Morrill Land Grant Act develops new colleges</td>
<td>1850-1890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Generation 7: Growth and Standardization  
1890-World War I

Major Development: Expansion of colleges slows, but enrollment swells. Establish standardization of university offerings. Extracurricular, student organizations form. Influential, external Associations form (i.e. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Association of State Universities). Junior colleges enter the landscape. Female enrollment doubles at co-educational institutions.

Generation 8: Mass Higher Education and Differentiation  
1918-1945

between the Wars

Major Development: Expansion of colleges continue, enrollment increases, and debate on purpose triggers transition from elite enrollment to education of the masses. Depression in America causes consideration of mass retraining for job market. Junior, teacher, service-oriented, and urban universities develop. Begins the hierarchical differentiations of institutional order. Access opportunity begins to mirror the social biases of the workplace.

Generation 9: The Academic Revolution  
1945-1975

Major Development: Community college enrollment contributes to most expansive period in higher education. Institutions embrace standardization of curricular, faculty training, and administrative practices. Baby boomers go to college. Funding from federal and state governments increase. Expansion of science programs and funding. Idealism meets civil unrest at universities. Administrative position toward students changes from paternalism to permissiveness. Enrollment triples from 15 to 45 percent of total population. Significant Policies: 1944, Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (GI Bill); 1954, Brown v. Board of Education; 1964, Civil Rights Act.

Generation 10: Privatization and the Current Era  
1975-2010


(2011) asks about this conundrum in the form of a question, asking if an educational institution that was “born subordinate”, as a lower-level spot-holder for the university and the feeder for lower levels of the labor market, could overcome its own legacy and develop into an effective, meritocratic, and democratizing institution?

A variety of explanations have been offered to explain why community colleges became necessary in the postsecondary landscape, including the desire of four-year
institutions to remain selective, the interests of communities to focus on local needs and interests, and the community college’s ability to expand access to higher education for greater numbers of interested community members. Some suggest that the community college’s evolution was actually an inadequately realized outcome of a failed “institutionalization project” (DiMaggio, 1988 as cited in Meier, 2013), while others suggest it was the complementary social, economic, and technological advancements brought forward by the nation’s second industrial revolution (circa 1870-1930) (Meier, 2013). During the sixth generation, 1850-1890, the conditions were right for community colleges to meet the demands of a new type of economy (Geiger, 2016). The second industrial revolution largely altered the trajectory of US industries, economies, and citizens’ expectations for development and growth.

The nation’s second industrial revolution contributed to the country’s move from a largely agrarian, craft-based economy, to a more corporate, globalized economy. It became the community college’s charge to embrace this shifting landscape and economy, and meet the demands to develop a new workforce created by the seismic economic shift (Meier, 2013). The second industrial revolution contributed to the creation of a consumption-based society whose growing middle class demanded greater opportunities and personal financial security in the changing economic environment. Industry leaders realized the growing need for a working population that could be trained to operate the nation’s expanding new industries (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Community colleges demonstrated the ability to amend their constructs to both community and industry needs. The community college was grounding itself as an educational alternative to four-year institutions where community members could develop skills and
expertise in areas determined critical by new industries.

During the sixth generation, 1850-1890, college attendance became more accessible and enrollment in college settings increased (Geiger, 2016). Enrollment growth, paired with the expansion of colleges to states, made possible by US policies like the Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890, focused academic program development in professional and science-based curricula (Geiger, 2016; Cohen et al., 2014). Community colleges continued to respond to local needs and developed curricula according to local community interests and needs. Meier (2013) stated, “it was not unusual for community colleges to ignore their publicly expressed missions,” (p 4) but rather invest efforts to address local needs, pursue enticing revenue streams, and respond to larger social economic changes. The citizenry’s interest in greater accessibility to higher education further encouraged community colleges to adapt curricula, for which, four-year institutions were uninterested. Workforce needs influenced the development of curricula in community colleges and garnered these institutions the advantages they needed to establish a strong foothold and grow within the country’s higher educational landscape.

The growth of public, two-year colleges demonstrates the prioritization of the democratization of higher education in the US. The configuration of community colleges ranged from extensions of high school programs, independent programs, preparatory schools, and auxiliary colleges to four-year institutions. The first concretized community college was established in 1901 in Joliet, Illinois (Cohen et al., 2014). By 1909, there were 20 community colleges, and by 1919, there were a reported 170 institutions. By 1922, 37 of the 48 states had junior colleges on record (Cohen et al., 2014) and by 1930
there were 440. Table 2 shows the yearly progression of colleges on record, both private
and public and enrollment in community colleges was a notable feature in its progression.
In 1960, enrollment in community colleges was just over five hundred thousand. In
1970, there were two million students enrolled and by 1980, four million students were
attending community colleges. In 2010, there were over seven and a half million people
attending community colleges (Cohen et al., 2014). This enrollment growth was
attributable to both the changing concept of the college-bound student and the political
sector’s development and application of policies which promoted access to higher
education.

Returning veterans from World War II and the swell in size of the generation of
baby-boomers capitalized on President Truman’s philosophy of higher educational access
as documented in his 1947 Commission on Higher Education Report. The policy played
an important role in opening up community colleges as viable options for mass education.
President Truman’s Commission on Higher Education articulated the value of US
citizenry enrolling in at least two years of postsecondary study. Recommendations
mandated institutional pathways for as much of the general population as possible, a
concept previously unconsidered. The Commission’s Report had lasting implications on
the higher educational arena as the changing workforce necessitated the quick transition
from an agrarian-based economy to a more urban, manufacturing society. The great
numbers of post-depression, returning veterans who were seeking avenues to move into
the new economy needed to be trained and educated.

Yet, despite the gains community colleges made in becoming viable, respected
educational option for students, they continued to struggle for respect and esteem within
Table 2

*Number of Public and Private Nonprofit Two-Year Colleges, 1915-2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Public Nonprofit</th>
<th>Private Nonprofit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-1916</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>19 26</td>
<td>55 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-1926</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>136 42</td>
<td>189 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-1934</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>219 42</td>
<td>302 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-1948</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>328 50</td>
<td>322 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-1957</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>377 58</td>
<td>275 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-1969</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>739 74</td>
<td>254 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-1977</td>
<td>1093</td>
<td>905 83</td>
<td>188 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-1989</td>
<td>1164</td>
<td>984 85</td>
<td>180 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>1233</td>
<td>1069 87</td>
<td>164 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>1065</td>
<td>978 92</td>
<td>87 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


the higher educational landscape of the US (Beach, 2011). Originally known as junior colleges, community colleges demonstrated an ability to absorb students otherwise deemed underprepared for the academic rigors of university and they possessed an ability to adapt curricula offerings according to community and industry needs. Both of these original mission-centric purposes also laid the foundation for their “less-than” status among college and university peers. Harkening back to its inception over one hundred years ago, the community college continues to struggle with its ongoing identity issue and the lack of agreement among practitioners, policy-makers, and university scholars regarding its mission perpetuates the perception of an unremarkable standing for community colleges (Meier, 2013).
Influencers of the Community College

Institutions of higher education are social institutions embedded in the wider society and are, therefore, subject to society’s constraining forces. The economic, political, and social priorities of the early twentieth century directly influenced the newly forming mission of the community college, the types of academic programs they would offer, and the types of students they would enroll (Bastedo, Altbach, & Gumport, 2016). Most concretely this is seen through an examination of the enrollment trends at community colleges and their correlation to social and political influences.

Before 1965, American colleges were predominantly attended by White males from middle- or upper-middle income families (Brock, 2010). While minority students gradually entered the ranks (Geiger, 2016), it was political and social movements that aided their significant increase as attendees. Before 1964, exclusion of non-White students was legal and was perpetuated by discriminatory laws and legalized segregation throughout America (Brock, 2010). The GI Bill, which covered college costs for tens of thousands of veterans after World War II, often proved fruitless for returning minority veterans. The GI Bill is believed to have aided Whites far more than African Americans interested in attending college (Brock, 2010), and it wasn’t until the mid- to late-1960s, that social and political agendas created the shift in America’s segregated culture.

Around this same time, the federal government had invested in capital programs at colleges and universities that enabled them to increase enrollment goals and create greater numbers of academic programs that addressed new economies and enrollment interests. In 1963, the federal government shifted its investment and focus onto institutions that served underrepresented students, specifically community colleges and
historically Black colleges (Brock, 2010). The government’s prioritization of investing in higher education mirrored the growing social-cultural demand for equity for all people in America and brought forth the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Women’s Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Act outlawed the long practice of enrollment discrimination based on race in schools, public places, and employment, and mandated equal opportunity for all, regardless of gender or race. The establishment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made institutional exclusionary enrollment practices illegal and led to the adjustment of eligibility criteria for minority persons nationwide. The Women’s Rights Movement, based largely in the United States during the 1960’s and 1970’s, was a social movement that sought equal rights and opportunities for women. Since the 1970s, the male-female ratio attending college and university had been moving steadily toward female majority and female enrollment now surpasses male enrollment (Borzelleca, 2012).

As access barriers were minimized, the challenge of paying for education was realized. The federal government responded with the Higher Education Act of 1965, where a need-based federal financial assistance program for the national population interested in attending college was established. The combination of changes in federal policy regarding enrollment standards and support, the general public’s attitudes toward desegregation and equity, and local communities’ expectations of access ushered in the City of New York’s (CUNY’s) 1970 ground-breaking decision allowing all who graduated high school to be eligible to attend college within the CUNY system, regardless of students’ previous academic performance. Shortly thereafter, other colleges followed suit and established what is now referred to as the “open-enrollment” standard.
(Ritze, 2005). No type of college or university adopted this practice more rigorously than community colleges.

**The Value of an Associate Degree**

Community colleges typically enroll more nontraditional students, inclusive of female, Black, and Hispanic students (Brock, 2010), than many four-year institutions. However, access alone is not the answer to attendee success. Over the course a student’s lifetime, an adult who earns a bachelor’s degree will earn approximately one-third more than an adult who starts but does not complete college (Brock, 2006). While access to college is the first step, completion of the degree is what often brings the greatest return on investment.

The return on investment for those who attain an associate degree is greater than those who pursue no degree, particularly in the health science fields (Zeidenberg, et al., 2015). In addition to increased earning potential, those who attend college and earn degrees are more likely to report excellent to very good health, strong relationships, and higher rates of civic engagement (Brock, 2006). A college education is described as a conduit to meaningful employment, and when a credential is earned, progression beyond low-paying jobs (Perin, 2013). The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) (2017) reports that median earnings for a high school degree recipient, who works full-time, is $36,000 annually. That same employee, who holds an associate degree, earns roughly 15.34 percent more, or approximately $42,600 annually. Belfield and Bailey (2011) report that the average earnings for a person with an associate degree compared to those with a high school diploma are 13 percent higher for men and 21 percent higher for women.
Given the benefit of an associate degree, open enrollment practices at community colleges have enabled academically underprepared, traditionally underserved students to enroll in college more readily. Community colleges have assumed the responsibility of assisting students with their entry and completion of two-years of college. Yet in doing so, community colleges have had to invest significant resources in developmental, or remedial, education (Perin, 2006). As community college is often referred to as a gateway to higher education (Perin, 2006), it is an institution that faces the challenge of retaining and graduating attendees in ways different than those facing four-year, competitive colleges (Roman, 2007). Attewell, Lavin, Domina, and Levey (2006), found a highly significant difference in the likelihood that community college attendees would be placed into remedial coursework, as compared against four-year college entrants, who were otherwise equivalent in terms of academic history, race, and family background. They found that on average, two-year college entrants has an 11 percent higher probability of being placed in remediation than an equivalent four-year college entrant (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, &Levey (2006).

The rising numbers of students determined to have deficient academic skills when entering the community college has led to an increase in remedial offerings. These remedial courses serve as pre-requisite courses that students must take before they may take college credit bearing courses. These courses are reported to cause delay in students’ academic program progression into and through their programs of study and have been suggested to delay or halt college degree attainment (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016).

Remedial Education in Higher Education

Enrolling Academically Underprepared Students
Postsecondary education’s expansion in America is well documented and community colleges are credited for altering the demographics of student attendees. Schudde and Goldrick-Rab (2016) suggest that today’s undergraduates resemble the “average” American, rather than the highly elite group of the past. Since 1995, 72 percent of new Hispanic and 68 percent of new African American enrollees have gone to two- and four-year open-access schools (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). It is the open access, two- and four-year institutions that have largely enabled the more diverse populations of students, including minority and low-income students, to participate in higher education (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Yet, as stated earlier, access alone is not the answer to attaining the benefits of a college degree; rather, it is degree and credential completion. Yet, minority and low-income students, who arrive underprepared for college, demonstrate a significant challenge in completing their degrees or credentials (Jaggars & Stacy, 2014).

Community colleges now enroll 59 percent of the country’s undergraduates (AACC, 2017), many of which arrive being determined to be underprepared for the rigors of college-level academic work, as determined by the assessment process at community colleges. Bettinger, Boatman, and Long (2013) report that 32 percent of students leave high school having minimal preparation for college-level work. It is estimated that three-quarters of graduating twelfth graders possess low reading skills (Perin, 2013). Jaggers and Stacey (2014) inform that 68 percent of community college students are in need of developmental education. Community colleges face the challenge of assisting academically underprepared students with degree completion and credential attainment. However, only 49 percent of those who attend community college ever actually earn a
degree or credential (Carnevale and Strohl, 2013). Recognizing that a student must possess foundational academic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, a lack of readiness constitutes a primary obstacle for underprepared students (Perin, 2013).

Academic achievement of incoming freshman shows to be in a state of gradual decline since the 1970s. Cohen et al. (2014) suggest that academic achievement of college students improved from 1900 through the mid-1950s and was followed by a period of significant improvement between the mid-1950s and 1960s. Yet, since that time, more students are being referred for remedial courses. Table 3 shows student SAT scores dating back to 1975 and demonstrates the gradual decline in reading and writing aptitude with some minor fluctuation in mathematical performance.

**Table 3**

*SAT Scores for College-Bound Seniors, 1975-2015*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Critical Reading</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>497*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Score from 2006, the first year of the writing portion.
Source: College Board, 2015

For purposes of this research, Table 4 highlights the number of students placed in
developmental courses (DEV CRS) for first-time, full-time students from ESCC. Table 4 accounts for those placed in the academic disciplines of English (ENG) and reading (RDG).

**Table 4**

*Developmental Placement for ESCC First Time, Full Time Students in Fall Admission*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>ENROLLMENT</th>
<th>PLACED IN DEV CRS</th>
<th>TOT %</th>
<th>ENG %</th>
<th>RDG %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>4,691</td>
<td>2,913</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>4,573</td>
<td>2,813</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>4,521</td>
<td>2,725</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ESCC Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (2016)

While there is no conclusive factor for the decline in student academic preparedness, Cohen et al. (2014) suggest it is a confluence of events that has led to an academically underprepared student. Contributing factors to why students may be more underprepared than in the past are varied and may have multiple contributors. A list of a few contributors might include the introduction of television into homes in mainstream America, a societal breakdown in respect for authority, a lack of a desire for individual mental and behavioral discipline, an alteration in the traditional family system, an elevation of personal social promotion, a growing number of two-parent working households, a heightened interest in individuality rather than a community interests, and/or a growing perception that the written word is less important than it once was.

While not exhaustive, perhaps other influencers include the approach to equal access to mainstream instruction in elementary and secondary educational systems. Others have suggested it was elementary and secondary educations’ absorption of the “other-than-academic” expectations into school curricular. Still others suggest it was the increase in student enrollees whose native language is other than English that caused the decline in
student achievement. Whatever the reason for the decline in academic readiness, the public community college bears a significant responsibility in assisting those determined to be poorly prepared students of the twentieth century reach degree attainment (Cohen et al., 2014).

Mitigating the Need for Academic Remediation at Community Colleges

Defining college readiness.

Historically, colleges have set their own standard definition of college readiness and operate their own remedial education programs (Cohen et al., 2014). This has allowed a wide variety of definitions and equally wide variety in type and quality of colleges. This perpetuates the difficulty in developing and applying a uniform admission standard or definition of college readiness (Cohen et al., 2014). The challenge in defining college readiness may stem from the wide range of expectations as developed by each institution. In an early glossary, developed by the College of Reading and Learning Association, remedial education was defined as instruction designed to remove student academic deficiencies in basic entry or exit level skills in order to make him/her competitive with their academic peers (Rubin as cited in ASHE, 2010).

Conley (2008) posits that particular academic skills contribute to students’ abilities to be successful in college: cognitive strategies, content capability, academic behaviors, and contextual awareness. For definition purposes, cognitive strategies are students’ abilities to formulate questions, analyze information, and conduct research. Content capability is competency in reading, writing, and mathematics. Academic behaviors describe students’ abilities to regulate learning and transfer new learning from familiar topics. Contextual awareness is a students’ ability to navigate colleges’ physical
and procedural environments. Many agree that students enter with varying degrees of competency in these four areas, but others suggest remedial education best assists academically unprepared students strengthen their cognitive strategies, academic behaviors, and contextual awareness by educating for content in academic disciplines (Perin, 2016). This approach to and philosophy regarding remedial education has been widely adopted in public two-year colleges (Cohen et al., 2014).

**Assessing for college readiness.**

In order for community colleges to balance their collective mission of access with high academic standards (Perin, 2006), students entering community colleges are often assessed for academic readiness. When students are deemed in need of remediation, they are advised to enroll in remedial courses before taking specific college-credit bearing courses (Cohen et al., 2014; Perin, 2006). However, as previously referenced, there is no national standard that defines college academic readiness. Stakeholders in this discussion include the federal and state government, individual colleges and universities, accrediting bodies, and testing companies, and these stakeholders have all contributed to the formulation of varying standards relative to college readiness (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013; Bettinger & Long, 2009; Chen, 2016; Perin, 2016). An additional challenge to confident determination of student academic readiness is that assessment instruments are often perceived to be inaccurate, misused, and lack predictive validity (Scott-Clayton, 2012).

With a lack of a common definition of academic readiness or how to assess for it, Bailey and Jaggars (2016) suggest that standardized exams do a poor job of predicting students’ successes in college coursework. Critics contend that in the absence of a
common definition of academic readiness or a means to accurately predict academic success there inevitably are a substantial number of students referred to remediation unnecessarily which further delays these students from college credit accumulation, a proven indicator for college completion (Bailey & Cho, 2010; Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013; Chen, 2016; Jaggars & Hodara, 2011; Shaw, 2014). Of the over sixty percent of community college students who test into at least one remedial education course (CCSSE, 2016), 65 to 70 percent of them believe their placement in remediation is appropriate (Jaggars & Stacey, 2014). Yet, only 28 percent of those who take remedial education courses go on to earn a degree within eight years (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). Community colleges are compelled to consider how they assist students with their degree completion goals.

Chen (2016) reports a positive association between remedial completion for weakly prepared students, but not among moderately or strongly prepared students, who are misadvised into remedial studies. Chen (2016) finds that those who enrolled but failed to complete their remedial course(s), experienced worse outcomes than their counterparts who had similar backgrounds but did not take remedial courses. The findings regarding the value of using standardized academic assessment tools to accurately assess student academic ability is tempered against the strong call by academics that academic standards be adhered to at open enrollment institutions. Research by Bailey and Jaggars (2016) conclude that placement tests do a poor job of predicting students’ chances of being successful in college-level coursework. To effectively manage misidentifying students with deficit academic skills using standardized scores, Boylan and Saxon (2006) identify that high performing institutions
use several assessment measures to supplement the placement decision process. A number of states and college systems agree that mandatory assessment and placement into appropriate courses supports academic standards and college and student success goals (Saxon & Morrante, 2014), but unless colleges intentionally aim to mitigate the shortcomings of the use of one standardized placement test, students may bear the challenge of delayed academic credit progression, stagnation, and frustration.

Gerlaugh, Thompson, Boylan, and Davis (2007) report that 97 percent of two-year colleges used either the COMPASS or ACCUPLACER exams for college readiness assessment. These exams render simple numeric scores for each academic skill area assessed and are measured against a college’s self-determined cut score. Given the significance that one test score, taken at a specific period of time, can have on student placement, many researchers have suggested multiple variables should be considered when determining academic skill competency (Saxon & Morrante, 2014). Other variables to consider include past academic performance data, noncognitive background information, such as years since high school instruction and past employment (Saxon & Morrante, 2014), student motivation, self-regulation, and assertiveness, which all contribute to student success (Zientek, Ozel, Fong, & Griffin, 2013). Using test scores and these multiple variables often assists in more accurately assessing students’ academic abilities to perform in college endeavors.

**Defining remedial education.**

Remedial education is known by many names: developmental, foundational, transitional, guided, and basic skills education. While the Center for Community College Student Engagement (2016) reports that remedial education started in the 1960s and was
designed to serve students who were perceived to be underprepared for college-level instruction, others recognize that remedial education dates as far back as 1895. Cohen et al. (2014) explain that during this time, students who entered college from preparatory programs were recognized as recipients of remedial education. In 1895, there were no formal secondary or elementary educational systems in America so all who entered were in need of remediation. This inclusivity left recipients stigma free for participation in remediation because all were in need of it.

Perin (2006) defines remedial education as a class or activity intended to meet the needs of students who do not have the skills, experience, or orientation necessary to perform at a level that institutional instructors recognize as “regular” for students. Remedial education is a designated course, or collection of courses, in reading, writing, math, and sometimes English as second language courses, which must be taken in sequence and completed successfully before college credit-bearing courses may be taken. The credits connected to these courses have not generally been accepted toward degree requirements, as they are designed to teach, or re-teach, basic academic competencies determined essential for success in college-level courses (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2016; Chen, 2016; Cohen et al., 2014; Perin, 2006).

Today, students’ academic skills are assessed upon entry to college and university either through transcript evaluation and/or performance on a standardized test. When a student’s academic record suggests a deficit academic skill, the student is advised to enroll in the remedial course(s). However, a primary challenge in discussing remediation, and how it is applied at college, is the lack of standardization (Perin, 2006). In summary, there is no national standard for: 1) defining college readiness; 2) accurately assessing for
History of remedial education.

Lacking a comprehensive, nationally representative study of learning assistance for students (Perin, 2016), an overview of the history of remediation will provide a guide for discussion on best practices. Remediation dates back to the beginning of colleges and universities themselves. From the beginning, tutorial programs were pervasive in colleges addressing both the goal of selective admission and skill readiness. Skill readiness was recognized as a necessity for all college attendees (Geiger, 2016). Early on, the American education movement began as a top down effort introducing colleges and universities before a comprehensive, compulsory elementary and secondary school system was established (ASHE, 2010). The lack of a standardized, formal elementary or secondary system often left college attendees in need of significant academic skill development (ASHE, 2010). Given the universal need and student participation in remedial-tutorial education, there was no apparent stigmatization of either the offerings or a student’s participation in them.

Colleges and universities offered preparatory, or remedial, courses and tutoring as a means to address students’ lack of academic skills. Colleges also supported the desire for increased academic rigor within the university (ASHE, 2010). This ability to accept and develop underprepared students led to the establishment of academic departments dedicated to supporting underprepared students. From the late 1800s through the mid-1940s, tutoring and remedial education targeted specific skill deficits and developed and employed new educational pedagogies to encourage learning (ASHE, 2010). The approach to remedial education was described through an analogy describing a traditional
medical model: assess, treat, and cure (ASHE, 2010). Student skills were assessed, treated through enrollment in prerequisite courses, and as they learned the material, they were cured.

From the 1940s into the 70s, remedial efforts and offerings expanded exponentially. As previously discussed, college and university enrollment swelled, given the federal government’s interest in democratizing higher education and mitigating social inequality in America, and colleges and universities recognized the need they had to remediate entering students. The introduction of learning centers along with remedial coursework, rather than remedial coursework alone, became more common practice on college campuses. Remedial coursework expanded its focus from academic skill only to matters pertaining to academic literacy (i.e. academic language acquisition, time management, study skill development, financial literacy), and these types of topics were deemed necessary to successful completion of college (ASHE, 2010; White & Ali-Khan, 2013).

According to the Association for Study of Higher Education 2010 report, by the mid-1970s, nearly 80 percent of all postsecondary institutions were providing academic enrichment and support programs in universities and colleges. These support programs were more comprehensive, extensive, and coordinated. However, some attendees of college were also arriving more academically prepared and in less need for remediation, so those who were participating in remediation began to garner a “less-than” status and stratification began to institutionalize itself. As elementary and secondary education systems matured, more prepared second-generation students entered the college ranks. Some students arrived more prepared than the generation before them, but also met the
new, first-generation attendees whose skills presented with greater deficit.

Participation in tutoring and remediation, which had previously been widespread among students, was becoming less necessary for second-generation attendees, otherwise recognized as the more prepared students. Remediation and tutoring classes were utilized in larger numbers by students from first generational cohorts and underrepresented populations (ASHE, 2010). First generation and lower socioeconomic students were taking advantage of the opportunity to attend college and, like those before them, were finding themselves in need of remediation. The more academically prepared students, typically from more affluent backgrounds, were entering college with stronger academic skills and were assessed as more prepared to assume the academic rigor within the college classrooms without remediation.

Henry and Stahl (2017) suggest the greater the number of remedial classes required of a student, “the greater the likelihood an individual will leave college before completion” (p. 612). Given the challenge students face in moving from remediation to completion, many of the remedial endeavors of the past have been deemed ineffective (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; Henry & Stahl, 2017; Zalaznick, 2016). As instructional pedagogy has matured, newer remedial efforts on college campuses have been introduced in an effort to keep students enrolled and moving toward their greater academic success.

**Alternative options to remedial courses.**

Institutions of higher education have tried to amend their efforts of student academic remediation given research of best practices to enhance student success and degree completion. The following is a list of some amendments colleges and institutions have made to improve academic readiness in new students: 1) upgraded admission
processes to ensure incoming students are appropriately placed in first semester courses; 2) instituted bridge programs to assist incoming students build academic skills before entering their first semester; 3) developed co-requisite courses enabling students to enroll in complement courses, which pair remedial and college credit bearing courses enabling students to progress in credit attainment while simultaneously strengthening important academic skills; and 4) developed modular courses where students can brush up on specific skills, rather than taking entire semesters of remedial course work (Zalaznick, 2016). Henry and Stahl (2017) state that “the failed basic-skills step-ladder model of remedial education are being abandoned in favor of programming that reduces time to degree” (p. 612). Examination of completion rates of students, paired with student demographics, is adding to the moral imperative to address success rates for attendees at community colleges.

Educating Remedial Students

Characteristics of remedial students.

Learning is a complex process influenced by a host of cognitive, emotional, cultural, and socio-economic factors (Perin, 2016). When education is discussed, including remedial education, it is important to recognize that this phenomenon of learning happens within the constructs of other influences. Like other courses, remedial courses attempt to address a variety of academic abilities and confidence levels among student attendees. Variables such as demographics, linguistic abilities, emotional memories associated with learning, and preconceptions of ability permeate any population’s perception of the ability to learn (Dweck, 2016; Mega, Ronconi, & De Beni, 2014), but some argue even more so within the college remedial classroom.
According to the AACC (2017), demographics of community college attendees are a median age of 24 years old; 56 percent are women; 23 percent are Hispanic, 13 percent are Black, 48 percent are White; 36 percent are first generation attendees; 17 percent come from single parent households; 63 percent work full-time jobs, inclusive of full-time and part-time enrollment status; 12 percent identify as a person with a disability; and 62 percent attend classes part-time. Community colleges report 59 percent of their attendees are pursuing college-credit course work, with 41 percent attending non-credit courses, including English as a second language offerings (AACC, 2017). Larger numbers of students with non-English primary language skills often present as fluent in informal language skills, but not academic English (Smith, 2010). The data also reports significant differences in completion rates of college across demographic groups. Students who are economically disadvantaged and have been historically underserved are completing their degrees with less frequency than other demographic groups (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013).

A complex combination of challenges are present for students from marginalized and lower, socio-economic communities who aim to complete a college degree. There exists disparity between non-minority, high-income (annual earnings of $108,650) students that earn their college degrees, and minority, low-income (annual earnings of $34,169 or less) students that earn their degrees. It is established that statistically, minority, low-income students are more often required to take remedial courses than high-income, non-minority students (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013), and students who are required to take remedial courses often drop-out more than those who are not required to take remedial courses (Attewell et al., 2006; Henry & Stahl,
2017). Using these data points, it is reasonable to assume that low-income, minority students struggle to complete their academic goal of earning a college degree. This logic is confirmed by research that showed between 1970 and 2012, the proportion of students graduating from high school from low-income families increased ten percent, from 62 percent to 72 percent. Over those same years, the proportion of minority, low-income, 24-year-olds with bachelor’s degrees rose only two percent, from six percent to slightly over eight percent. During this same period of time, upper-income, non-minority 24-year-olds with bachelor's degrees increased in degree attainment by over 30 percent, from 40 percent of the total population to 73 percent (Blumenstyk, 2015). Even though greater numbers of low-income, minority students were graduating from high school, smaller numbers of these same students were proportionally completing their college degrees.

Beyond the demographic and linguistic variables, the academic motivation of students is complex to understand. Motivation is influenced by many factors, both internal and external to a student’s loci of control. These influences may have impact on students’ desire, confidence, and persistence (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007) as they pursue academic success. Variables that contribute to success, including personal goal setting, curiosity, confidence, and persistence, all take root in the discipline of psychology. The study of human psychology investigated not only what type of innate human ability existed and how abilities were formed, but also when all conditions appeared equal, how and why did some people appear to be more able to tap their fullest human potential? As the discipline of psychology has made gains in defining and measuring intelligence and mental capabilities, it has broadened to include research that aims to understand human predictors of personal success, individual ability to persist
through adversity, and the “why and how” some people overcome adversity while others succumb negatively to it (Duckworth et al., 2007; Dweck, 2016). Mega, et al., (2014) explore positive emotions and their effects in academic settings as a “multiple-component process that comprises specific affective, cognitive, psychological and behavioral elements” (p. 121) and summarize that, in order to be academically successful, students must manage a multitude of variables.

At any given time, there are a broad-range of interdependent internal and external variables contributing to students’ perceived ability to be successful. These factors are long in development and have deep personal connection to individuals, their perception of themselves, and the way in which they view the world. These factors include confidence levels, a personal commitment to goal setting, real and perceived cognitive abilities (i.e. self-efficacy), belief in the long term value of and engagement with academic material, personal preference for challenge and competition, personal need for recognition and affirmation, avoidance tendencies, an academic identity, psychological conditions like anxiety and depression, interactions among peer groups and support systems, mentors, instructor’s positive expectation and feedback on performance, and perceived societal biases (Aditomo, 2015; Davis & Palmer, 2010; Duckworth, et al., 2007; Harper, 2013; Mega, et al., 2014; Perin, 2016; Sheu & Lent, 2009; White & Ali-Khan, 2013).

**Student perception of academic self-efficacy and effect on persistence.**

The way a person approaches adversity may offer insight on how a student will persist in life, including successful degree completion in higher education. While Ivcevic and Brackett (2014) suggest that intellectual ability often aids in academic achievement,
they also believe it is less clear what other psychological attributes contribute to academic success. Dweck (2016) suggests that by approaching the complex act of learning, with a mindset that considers the intellect as a developing condition, rather than a fixed one, students might approach the practice of learning differently. Building upon the early twentieth century theory of intelligence development, understood as an incremental and constant endeavor, rather than a static condition, Dweck (2016) suggests that the way students perceive their ability to learn new material may have a direct impact on their ability to manage, and respond to, setback and negative feedback.

If people demonstrate a proclivity to positively approach setbacks and critical feedback with interest and curiosity, they will more than likely possess attitudes and habits that propel them to persist in the face of adversity (Dweck, 2016; Duckworth et al., 2007; Mega et al., 2014). Pekrun, Elliot, and Maier (2009) support the concept of incremental intellectual development. Their findings suggest when students possess positive emotions regarding their ability to learn, they demonstrate greater control over their learning and express a heightened level of motivation to understand new material. The more positively students perceive their own ability to learn, the greater the impact on their self-regulated learning and academic achievement (Pekrun, et al., 2009). Dweck (2016) concurs that an individual’s belief in that individual’s ability to learn plays an important role in personal achievement and has considerable impact in the academic domain.

**Summary**

Research continues to evolve theories on why some demonstrate success in the face of adversity while others appear more challenged. Ivcevic and Brackett (2014)
review research on conscientiousness, Duckworth et al. (2007) explore the concept of grit, and Yeager and Dweck (2012) examine resiliency. These topics contribute to the body of research exploring personal perceptions of ability, how they are managed, how they play a role in overcoming adversity, and how they can be accentuated. Exploring a students’ abilities, or proclivity, to positively respond to challenges proves to be a crucial element in student success (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Dweck (2016) states that it is the students’ mindset that determines their ability to respond positively in the face of adversity and has defined a growth mindset, or personal approach to adversity as:

A belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others. Although people may differ in every which way—in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments—everyone can change and grow through application and experience (p. 7).
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study for Dissertation in Practice was to gain understanding of the meaning students attributed to testing into remedial reading or English courses and to what degree that understanding impacted their perception of their academic self-efficacy. According to Tinto (1990), students’ enter college with pre-entry attributes that contribute to the development of their personal educational goals. Accepting that no two students enter college with the same combination of pre-entry attributes, nor a full understanding of how these attributes fully impact students individual approaches to academic success, the need for research must be continuous and inclusive of student experiences. Approaching the research through a phenomenological lens allowed the researcher to explore what meaning students associated to a particular phenomenon, in this case, testing into remedial courses. As cited in Babbie (2017), phenomenology argues that reality is socially constructed and people describe the world not as it is, but rather, as the sense they make of it. This research aimed to understand how students associated negatively or positively to testing into remedial reading or English courses and how this meaning impacted their perceptions of academic self-efficacy.

Community colleges enroll greater numbers of first-generation and traditionally underserved students than competitively enrolled colleges and universities. Additional research has found that less than 34 percent of first time, full-time community college students complete their degrees six years after entry, a figure far less than students who attend competitively enrolled colleges and universities (Bers & Schuetz, 2014). Leaders
in community colleges should consider how to assist students with their degree completion goals and consider ways to mitigate degree completion challenges.

**Research Question**

Research finds that over 60 percent of all students who attend community college are required to take remedial courses (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; Jones, et al., 2012). Of these students who test into remediation, many do not progress through their studies to degree completion (Bers & Schuetz, 2014). The following research question guided this qualitative study: For incoming-community college students who earned average to above average high school grade point averages (GPA) and who graduated from high school with New York State Regents diplomas, what was the impact on their perception of personal academic self-efficacy when informed they test into remedial reading or English courses?

**Research Design**

Phenomenological, qualitative research allows researchers to explore the lived experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2014) and requires a researcher to gather descriptions of experiences with an aim to articulate the essence of a shared experience. This flexible, reflective research process ensured enough data was accumulated so that depth and rationality were established (Babbie, 2017). Incorporating a systematic coding process assisted in achieving validity and reliability within the analysis (Babbie, 2017). The researcher interviewed, until saturation of data was achieved, a cohort of 13 first-semester, academically average performing high school graduates, who earned Regents diplomas from high school, required no special education or English as Second Language services in high school, and who tested into reading and/or English remedial courses.
The researcher explored the independent variable, or the meaning associated to being placed in reading or English remedial course(s), and the impact this had on the dependent variable, the students’ perceptions of academic self-efficacy.

Approaching the phenomenon of testing into remediation, the researcher aimed to understand students’ points-of-view and meaning-making through the use of semi-structured interviews. Information gathering took place by talking directly with students, garnering both historical and contextual information (Creswell, 2014). The interview questions explored students’ past experiences and pertinent details in an effort to understand what impact post-high school, college-placement standardized testing had on students’ perception of academic self-efficacy. The discussion between researcher and student allowed students to express their experience through their own lens and perspective (Ankeny & Lehmann, 2011).

However, the researcher had to ensure that researcher bias was omitted as much as possible and that inquiry was relative to the research at hand. Reflective listening techniques enabled probing questions to emerge and were, at times, unique, dependent upon the students’ responses to a set of standard questions. Answers were interpreted through the lens of information gathered and additional questions were posed only with an aim to clarify earlier answers or enable deeper reflection (Babbie, 2017). Creswell (2014) explains that using this type of narrative research enables researchers and subjects to explore intentionality, mental states, consciousness, and meaning making.

In seeking to understand students’ meaning-making of testing into remedial course(s) at a community college, this research aimed to generate an understanding of the phenomenon. Understanding student experiences, and the meaning-making associated
with the experience, may be helpful to high school guidance counselors, college
counseling staff, first-year classroom faculty, and may support and aid in a reorientation
of students’ self-perception of academic self-efficacy, ultimately heightening students’
potential for academic success.

Participants/Data Sources and Recruitment

Semi-structured interviews were facilitated with student participants who tested
into reading and/or English remedial courses at Eastern Seaboard Community College
(ESCC). These students were first-semester, academically average high school
performing students, who earned Regents diplomas from high school, required no special
education or English as Second Language services in high school, and who tested into
reading and/or English remedial courses The semi-structured interviews took place at
ESCC, an east coast, publicly funded, community college where in fall 2015, 3,870
students out of a total enrollment of 6,590 (ESCC, Achieving the Dream Report, 2017)
were placed in remedial reading and/or English courses.

The process for accessing student volunteer participants was pre-approved
through Creighton University and ESCC’s Institutional Review Boards (IRB). In order
to ensure participant selection aligned with cohort specifics, approval was sought of both
institutions’ IRBs and access to student records was granted to allow for confirming
eligibility for study inclusion. Other documents reviewed included high school
transcripts, student requests for special services through the Office of Disability Services,
placement testing records, and general contact information.

Once approval was received, eligible student participants were invited to
participate in the study through an email invitation (see Appendix A) and a mailed
invitation (see Appendix B). Students who choose to participate were given an hour appointment with the researcher, at a mutually agreeable time and place on campus. All interviews were facilitated on an ESCC campus in a neutral, secure, confidential space. Student participants were informed that the interview was part of a doctoral degree research project, participation was voluntary, and all gathered information would remain confidential as determined by Creighton University and ESCC IRB guidelines.

**Data Collection Tools**

Qualitative research aims to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups apply to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). This research project consisted of interviews with 13 students, as determined by saturation of data. The aim was to understand students’ perception of their academic self-efficacy after receiving one-on-one information that they were required to take remedial coursework in either reading and/or English during their first semester at ESCC. By approaching this research through a constructivist worldview, the researcher assumed an inductive approach in an effort to understand the participants’ experiences, the meaning they attached to receiving information, and the impact this meaning had their perception of academic self-efficacy. The research relied on strong cohort development using data gathered from approved school records and documents, and findings were dependent upon strong reflective interviewing techniques during the one-on-one interviews. The interviews were guided by pre-determined open-ended questions (see Appendix C) and, while there was established interview protocol (see Appendix D), flexibility in questioning was maintained to ensure probing questions were included.

The interviews aimed to encourage individual reflection on the experience of
being told of the necessity for academic remediation in reading and/or English at a community college. Information sought from interviewees were relative to student reactions to being informed they needed remediation, the meaning associated with this information, and the impact this information had on their perception of self-efficacy. The researcher understood that interviewee reflections would be filtered through individual lenses and would have to be actively accounted for to avoid personal bias within the research. In an effort to establish accountability, the researcher engaged in peer debriefing (Creswell, 2014), note taking, communication with dissertation advisors, and bracketing so as to establish validity.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher assumed an active, reflective stance during all interviews so that sense-making could occur. Latent analysis of data enabled winnowing and refinement of data and documentation of emergent themes assisted in articulating the essence of the experience of students. Interviews were taped, transcribed, and coded using open, axial, and selective coding strategies (Babbie, 2017). Organizing the data was essential to enable interpretation of data and was guided by Tesch’s Eight Steps (as cited in Creswell, 2014). The following steps were taken:

1. Listen to taped interviews, memo observations, transcribe tapes, and incorporate memos.
2. Use one interview, read in entirety, thinking not about substance but rather meaning, notate insights in margins. Continue reading and incorporating memos, key words, and main concepts as data onto transcripts.
3. Continue in the same fashion with all transcripts.
   a. List all data as topics.
   b. Analyze like topics and formed clusters.
c. Determine descriptive code words for cluster.
d. Organize topics/code into column headings determining major, unique, and leftover data.

4. Remain aware of, and document, new emerging topics, clusters, and descriptive codes.

5. Determine descriptive words for codes and convert into categories.
   a. Attempt to reduce the number of categories by grouping related codes and provide display of interrelationships among topics and codes.

6. Assemble data in each category and perform analysis considering:
   a. Social, political, historical references.
   b. Disconfirm evidence or discrepancies.
   c. Allow for different perspectives.
   d. Alternate interpretation of data post-peer debriefing.
   e. Organize expected, surprising, and unusual findings.

Student participants were recruited through their response to an email outreach made through student email (see Appendix A) or in response to a mailing (see Appendix B) sent to the students’ official addresses on file. The study’s population included participants who were first semester, academically average high school students, who earned a Regents degree from high school, required no special education or English as Second Language services in high school, and who tested into reading and/or English remedial courses.

**Ethical Considerations**

Given the researcher’s intimate knowledge of the institution, process of enrollment, student population, teaching environment, and student support services, great effort was taken to minimize personal bias interference and researcher bias was mitigated whenever possible. The following efforts were taken by the researcher to restrict
researcher bias:

1. Followed a protocol established for recruitment of participants. Emailed and mailed potential student participants from an address other than an ESCC addresses. Letters sent to students were given a PO Box as a return address.
2. Upon students’ confirmation of participation, informed consent forms signed and collected.
3. Interviews took place in neutral space on an ESCC campus away from the researcher’s area of business.
4. Participants were informed and fully briefed on the intention of research.
5. Anonymity and confidentiality of participants was protected and assigned; unidentifiable alias was applied.
6. The researcher committed not to engage with interviewed students until the research had concluded.
7. The researcher engaged in peer debriefing with others who had no supervisory relationship to ensure reliability during the coding process.
8. The researcher engaged in reflective and journaling practices before and after interviews, which enabled greater acknowledgement and control for personal bias.
9. The researcher ensured that no financial or budgetary issues impacted the collection of the data.

Reflections of the Researcher

Throughout the Creighton University doctoral program, this researcher found it difficult to hone in on a Dissertation in Practice topic. While each of the individual courses was, in itself interesting, there was no “A-ha” moment which might have moved the researcher toward a topic. It was not until the dissertation proposal course when ideas around equity within post-secondary education, examination of unintentionally imposed systemic barriers and obstacles, and the impact these two things might have on
traditionally underserved populations that demonstrate an interest in attaining an academic degree from a post-secondary institution. This interest slowly made its way into the light and became an articulated research focus.

As this topic was originally developed through the lens of the community college mission, the connection between Creighton University’s Jesuit teachings, especially the prioritization of justice in society became apparent. This research could provide a starting point for a longitudinal study to include subsets of other cohorts. This phenomenological study for a Dissertation in Practice might serve as a foundation for future investigations with populations including gender specific students of color, single parents returning to college, or older returning students in the community college setting.

Perhaps the research could be used to aid the discussion regarding the development of a common definition for college readiness. Or, to investigate the concepts of grit and persistence in the face of adversity. It is the researcher’s hope that like Creighton University’s sculpture dedicated in the spirit of St. Ignatius with its call to “Go Set the World on Fire,” this research will invigorate important dialogue regarding access, equity, and justice within the American higher educational system.

**Summary**

This qualitative research project was guided by the particular research question, “For incoming, community college students who earned average to above average high school grade point averages (GPA) and graduated high school with Regents diplomas, what was the impact on their perception of personal academic self-efficacy when they are informed they test into remedial reading or English courses?” Having used a phenomenological approach, interviews aimed to understand the meaning students attach
to being told they must take remedial course work and the impact this has on their academic self-efficacy. Thematic considerations and recommendations are offered to address the findings.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND THE EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTION

Introduction

As stated, the purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study for the Dissertation in Practice was to gain understanding of the meaning-making students attributed to testing into remedial reading and/or English courses, and then to what degree did this understanding impact their perception of personal academic self-efficacy. The study was guided by the research question: for incoming, community college students who earned average to above average high school GPAs and graduated from high school with Regents diplomas, what was the impact on their perception of personal academic self-efficacy when informed they had tested into remedial reading and/or English courses?

During the course of this study, 97 students were invited through email, postal mail, and through one-on-one invitation, to participate in one-on-one interviews regarding their placement testing and intake process to a mid-Atlantic community college, named for this study ESCC. Invitations were extended from March 2018 through August 2018. Of the 97 students who were invited to participate, 13 agreed to be interviewed to discuss their placement testing and intake process to the community college. The average duration of interviews was 22 minutes. The questions posed to students are listed in Appendix D and are outlined in Table 5.

Immediately following each interview, the researcher transcribed audio interviews and coded them. As the interviews and coding progressed, data were analyzed and organized around themes. The researcher’s predispositions were bracketed during the entirety of the analysis of the data.
Table 5

Summary of Nine Interview Questions and Related Prompts

1. Talk to me about your experience as a high school student.
   a. What did you enjoy about high school?
   b. What types of classes did you enjoy?
   c. As you think about high school, what type of student would you consider yourself?
   d. What would you classify as strengths in your performance in high school?

2. Can you tell me a few reasons why you were interested in coming and studying here at ESCC?

3. Please tell me about what you thought about, or felt about, your academic abilities to be academically successful in college classes, before you took your placement test.
   a. What strengths did you believe you were bringing to your studies?
   b. What weaknesses did you overcome in high school that led to your success as a student?

4. Please describe how ready or prepared you believed you were for the placement test?
   a. What left you feeling prepared or ready for the test?
   b. Can you provide any examples for why you believed you were ready?
   c. If the subject indicates they felt or believed they were unprepared for the test,
      i. What left you feeling unprepared for the test?
      ii. Can you provide any examples for why you believe you were unready?

5. Please describe for me your experience in taking the test.
   a. What happened during the test that has left an impression for you?
   b. What do you recall as important parts of the test and how did you feel about them?
   c. Can you share with me any memories you have from the test that caused you to feel secure in your progress through the test?
   d. Can you share with me any memories from the test that caused you to feel insecure in your progress through the test?
6. When you began going over your placement test results with the counselor/advisor, would you share with me what you were thinking and feeling as you heard the results?

7. Thinking about how you had perceived of your academic abilities before the placement test and thinking about how you perceived of your academic abilities after the placement test results, can you share with me anyway in which the perception of your abilities may have changed?
   a. How do you believe or feel about your ability to be successful in academic courses now that you have the results from your placement test?
   b. Is your perception of your academic ability the same? How is it the same? Or
   c. Has your perception has changed? How has it changed?

8. What three suggestions do you have for the college that might have assisted you in being more successful on the placement test?

9. What three suggestions do you have to make taking the placement test better for other students?

The demographics of the 13 students interviewed are noted in Table 6.

**Presentation of the Findings**

The following is an overview of the standard nine questions asked, with a summary of responses. Through an analysis of the responses, themes have been generated and are discussed in the analysis and synthesis section of this chapter.

**Question One: The General High School Experience of the Student**

Students were asked to share reflectively their experience and feelings about high school. Twelve of 13 students expressed that they had an interest in at least one academic subject in high school. Of the 13 students interviewed, seven, or 54 percent of the total, described themselves as average to higher than average high school academic
performers. Eight of the thirteen, or 62 percent, believed they possessed academic behaviors and attitudes that served them positively in high school and contributed to their positive academic performance. The positive behaviors and attitudes that students attributed to their academic success in high school were an expressed personal commitment to hard work, a focus on success, behaving responsibly, possessing motivation to succeed, practicing good study habits, such as being organized and meeting deadlines, and strong time management skill. One student indicated they liked “to learn a lot and be aware of everything,” and expressed belief that “if I put my mind to it, and I study, I can succeed in the course.”

However, not all indicated they had positive experiences in high school. Five of
the 13 students, or 38 percent, revealed academic behaviors and attitudes that may have inhibited their ability to perform more capably in high school. Some students described feeling either “scared” or “shy”, and “didn’t like to participate” in high school. Another professed to “being a slow learner,” while others commented they thought they procrastinated too much.

**Question Two: Student Responses for Attending ESCC**

Students were asked to share why they were interested in attending and studying at ESCC. The reason(s) students attributed to attending ESCC have been organized into three categories: Future Orientation, Practical, and Emotional. Future Orientation described reasons that focused on a future goal. Practical described reasons that reflected a student’s life-style preference(s) and or limitations. Emotional described reasons that focused on a student’s confidence in, and feelings about, attending ESCC. Table 7 organizes responses within the three categories and includes the numerical reference indicating the interviewee who made the comment.

Table 7

*Reasons Student(s) Choose to Attend ESCC*
Question Three: Student Perception of Academic Ability Before the Placement Test

Students were asked to consider their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs regarding their academic abilities before taking the placement test. Nine of the 13 students, or 69 percent, indicated they felt confident in their academic abilities before the placement process. Four students, or 31 percent, recalled feeling a lack of confidence before taking the placement test.

Question Four: Student Perception of Readiness for the Placement Test

Students were asked to describe if they felt ready for the placement test and how much preparation they had given to the placement exam. Seven of the 13 students, or 54 percent, indicated they felt prepared for the placement test. As one student put it, “I was good in the past, so I would be okay.” Ten students, 77 percent, admitted to not preparing at all for the placement process because as two students stated, “other students said, ‘Don’t worry about it.”

Three of the 13 students, 23 percent, indicated they had prepared for at least one portion of the placement exam. Two students, who earlier expressed a lack of confidence, stated that while they were nervous that they had forgotten the material being tested, they had not prepared for the placement test.

Of the ten who did not prepare, five students offered that they thought they would be able to get by on their past performance. Two of these ten students indicated they “weren’t interested in preparing.”

Questions Five: Student Experience of the Placement Test Process

Students were asked to reflectively recall their feelings, observations, and experience in engaging in the enrollment process and taking the placement test. In
response to this question, students described the things they liked and disliked about the placement testing day, the placement test itself, and provide their reflection on the overall experience. In Table 8, the responses have been summarized under the theme of either Positive Experiences or Negative Experiences. Students recalled both negative and positive experiences and all responses were captured in the data. Table 8 organizes responses according to the student recollections regarding the experience of the placement process and includes numerical reference to the interviewee who offered the comment.

**Question Six: Student Reactions after Hearing the Placement Test Results**

Students were asked to recall their reactions to receiving information pertaining to their performance on the placement test. Three students indicated that they “weren’t surprised by the results.” The remaining students, 77 percent, described their reactions using words associated with general negative reactions. Students described their reaction using terms like “ashamed,” “upset,” “shocked,” “confused,” “devastated,” “let down,” “insecure,” and “resentful.” One student remarked, “I don’t really get the results. I can read good so I was like, oh, I didn’t do good? It wasn’t my day. I’m really good at reading and writing; that’s why I’m just like, really?” Another student remarked that the student felt “too smart” for developmental classes. After hearing about the student’s performance on the placement test and the implications of being placed in a developmental course, a student reflected that the student felt the student was “smarter than this. You know what you’re doing,” and remembered feeling “frustrated” by being placed in remedial courses.

Of the 13 students interviewed, five students expressed confusion regarding their
previous academic performance in high school and were surprised the placement test scores indicated remediation was necessary. One student explained, “You come to college to take college courses. Not to take a course that you’re paying for, but what you could’ve received in high school. So it was just like, okay, was I really an average student in high school or was it just because they wanted me to pass?” Student descriptions regarding their reactions to hearing the results of the placement test have been organized as either Positive Reactions or Negative Reactions and are summarized in Table 9. Included in Table 9, along with the organized responses is included the numerical reference indicating the interviewee who made the comment.
Table 9

Terms Used to Describe Student Reaction after Hearing the Placement Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE REACTION</th>
<th>NEGATIVE REACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine by the Information</td>
<td>Upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt Supported</td>
<td>Ashamed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Surprised</td>
<td>Disappointed/Let Down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resentful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Felt Dumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regretted Not Preparing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Felt Insecure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question Seven: Student Perception of Academic Ability After the Placement Test

Results are Discussed

Students were asked to consider how hearing the placement test results impacted their confidence regarding their academic abilities, or academic self-efficacy. Seven of the 13 students, or 54 percent, remarked that they had the same positive belief in themselves after hearing the results of the placement test. One student expressed this by saying, “I don’t see the scores as predictions,” while another indicated, “I know I have the ability,” regardless of the placement test result. When a student was asked if the student’s perception regarding the choice to come to college had changed, the student responded, “No. Not at all. I just thought it was just a little bump in the road and I know
I could overcome it.”

In reflection, however, nine of the 13 students interviewed, or 69 percent, stated that their understanding regarding college expectations and academic consequences had changed. One student commented, “I was a little unmotivated, now I just want to do well and do the work I need to do.” Another student commented the thought the test scores revealed, “You need to study hard. And act quickly. You have to be aware of all this and what’s going to happen to you if you don’t study.” Another expressed a feeling of immediacy after hearing the results. They stated that while they “were a little unmotivated, now I just want to do well and do the work I need to do.” And still another indicated the results impressed the student in a way that the student would “have to do whatever I have to do. I gotta’ get going.”

Some students continue to express feelings of being “ashamed,” “disappointed,” and “frustrated”; others expressed feelings of being “excited by the challenge to improve” and “driven to the next level.” Nine of the 13, or 69 percent, of the students interviewed expressed the opinion that they realized, post-placement test discussion, that college was going to be different than high school and personal adjustments were going to have to be made to how they studied and how they would advocate for their learning.

**Question Eight: Three Suggestions Offered to the College that Would Have Assisted Students in Preparing for the Placement Test**

Eight of the 13 students indicated there was nothing they could suggest to the college and “everyone was really helpful, and should keep doing that.” Four students directly expressed the college should continue disseminating study aids to students before the test, and one student suggested adding that “more explanation and examples on how
to prepare for the placement test” might be helpful. One student suggested that when counselors review the test score results with students, counselors should explain what the scores mean as “it may help students understand why they have to take a developmental course.” Three students discussed mentoring interventions might be helpful. Two students suggested that professional persons be assigned to each new student enabling new students to have assistance with all the pieces of the process “from admissions, to scheduling a test and reviewing the results, to choosing classes, and answering questions,” and another thought peer mentors could reach out early and offer help “often.”

**Question Nine: Three Suggestions Offered to Other Students Taking the Placement Test**

All 13 students stated that new students should study and be prepared for the test. Three students elaborated on this topic by suggesting students should “take their time and realize the process matters.” Two students suggested that those engaged in taking the placement test should muster their confidence and “step confidently” into the process. While another suggested new students should not pretend that they “they have it all figured out” and “should accept the help being offered.”

**Analysis and Synthesis of Findings**

In analyzing the data, the student feedback provided rich detail information relative to their experience in the enrollment process. Of the 13 students interviewed, 62 percent were female, 38 percent male, 46 percent were Latinx, 23 percent African-America, and 31 percent Caucasian. The average age of interviewees was 19 years of age. Interviews were facilitated at the end of the spring 2018 term and during the
summer 2018 registration period. From the data, four themes emerged:

- **Theme 1**: Majority of students attend ESCC for practical reasons.
- **Theme 2**: Students recall feeling academically confident going into the placement test, but reflect negatively on the process.
- **Theme 3**: Students express negative reactions to hearing the results of placement test.
- **Theme 4**: Placement test results do not affect self-efficacy, but sense “wake up” dominates post-placement test reaction.

**Theme One: Majority of Students Attend ESCC for Practical Reasons**

When students were asked about their reasons for attending ESCC, 60 percent of the reasons were categorized as Practical Reasons. Twenty-six percent were emotional and 14 percent were Future Oriented. Top reasons for attending ESCC included location and affordability, and they had been encouraged to attend by someone they trusted. Of the 42 responses generated, Practical Reasons outweigh students’ decisions to attend over Emotional or Future Oriented combined.

Sixty-two percent of the students interviewed offered location as a primary reason for choosing ESCC for their attendance. One student stated the student chose to attend ESCC because “of my whole family situation, I had to become in charge of my two youngest sisters. It was convenient, not so far away from home.” Another student indicated, “I’d rather just stay at home for a year or two and keep my grades up and see how I do, and then maybe transfer or maybe just stay here for a second year.”

The second most frequent response for why students choose to attend ESCC was affordability. An interviewee explained they chose ESCC because, “I just love it because it was close, and a lot more affordable than the other colleges.” Fifty-four percent indicated that they perceived ESCC was, or had the reputation of being, a more
affordable option to attending college.

The third most frequent answer to why students chose to attend ESCC was because a trusted support person (i.e. a family member, a counselor, or teacher) suggested they attend ESCC. This answer was provided 38 percent of the time. During an interview, a student indicated:

I talked to my counselors and some of my favorite teachers that I look up to, and they say they recommend me to go to ESCC. It’s a better choice. And everyone that I’ve talked to, friends and family, also said that ESCC would help me, so I chose ESCC.

Some referenced a college media campaign, along with familiarly, for their attendance. A student said that their attendance was because “like you see in the commercials, ‘Get your start at ESCC.’ My sister started here, my father started at ESCC many moons ago, and I figured I might as well just start here too.”

On a different note, two interviewees offered reasons for attending ESCC that might be grounded in feelings of intimidation or inferiority. One student indicated they “always had a dream of just having a successful life. Not really so successful I guess, ‘cause aiming too high, but having a degree where it would just give me stability” was the goal. Another thought, “university is too big for me. That’s a lot of people and then if I need my mom I could just run to the house real quick.”

**Theme Two: Students Feel Academically Confident going into the Placement Test, but have Negative Reaction to the Process**

During the interviews, 11 out of 13, or 85 percent, indicated they were confident in their academic abilities and/or had strong academic habits from high school. Given
their high school performance and overall confidence, ten of the students interviewed, or 77 percent, believed they would do well on the placement test and did not prepare. Three students, or 23 percent, indicated they had prepared for the placement test by reviewing at least one of the sections of the placement test.

Despite the students overall feeling of academic confidence before the placement test, 67 percent of the students describe the overall experience using negative terms. Table 7 shows students’ recollections regarding the overall placement testing process and notes 28 responses of record. Of these 28, 20 are recorded as negative recollections.

**Theme Three: Students Express Negative Reactions to Hearing the Results of Their Placement Test**

Ten out of 13 students, or 77 percent, did no preparation for the placement test. Of the ten who did not prepare, only three were not surprised by the results. The other students described their reaction using negative words describing either their perception of themselves or their emotion. Students used words like “upset,” “ashamed,” “let down,” “dumb,” “devastated,” “insecure,” and “confused.” Table 8 organizes 23 student responses to the question regarding student reaction to hearing their placement test results. Eighty-three percent of the responses are categorized as negative reactions.

**Theme Four: Placement Test Results Do Not Affect Self-Efficacy, but a Sense of “Wake Up” Dominates Post-Placement Test Reaction**

Question seven served as a pinnacle question to this Dissertation in Practice. Of those interviewed, six students, or 46 percent, stated that their perception regarding their academic self-efficacy remained unchanged. One interviewee stated, “I know I have the ability” to be successful in classes, and another stated that placement scores were “just a
little bump in the road and I know I could overcome it.” One stated directly, “I don’t see the scores as predictions.” Even those who had negative self-perceptions before the test remained unchanged. One interviewee stated the “I was unconfident before and I’m the same now.” Another student stated, “I lacked confidence before applying and I’m still unconfident.”

All students commented on their regret that they had not done more to prepare. They agreed that the college should continue to tell students to prepare and that future students should actually do so before taking the test. The interviewees reflected on their shifted understanding regarding personal motivation and personal responsibility regarding their learning in college. Of the thirteen interviewees, ten students discussed an alteration in their academic attitude, particularly toward personal responsibility, academic motivation, and the importance of preparation. This is supported through one interviewee indicating, “College is going to be different than high school. I’m going to have to speak up,” while another stated that “I was a little unmotivated, now I just want to do well and do the work I need to do.” Another interviewee expressed a realization by stating, “I’m driven to the next level,” and another student reflected their performance on the test indicates “you need to study hard. And act quickly. You got to be aware of all this and what’s going to happen to you if you don’t study.”

**Summary of Findings**

Sixty percent of students interviewed indicated they were attending ESCC for Practical Reasons. These students expressed comfort in remaining close to home. And they valued the economic value of ESCC. The third most frequently mentioned reason for attending ESCC was that someone they trusted (i.e. a family member, a high school
counselor) had recommended they consider attending ESCC.

Most students, or 85 percent, admitted to not preparing for the placement test. This majority expressed confidence that their academic successes in high school would translate to readiness and success in demonstrating mastery of the content of ESCC’s placement test. The high level of confidence in their academic ability was shaken when students were informed of their performance on the placement test and is supported by the large number of negative reactions to being told they were in need of remediation. Students, in large part, responded negatively to both the process and the placement test results and expressed this using negatively, emotionally-laden words to describe their experience. Given the responses, most students expressed an internal locus of control, rather than projecting the unsatisfactory outcome onto an external locus of control. Still, while a few students commented that they questioned their academic strength in high school, no student offered criticism that challenged either the validity of the placement test or the college processes for their performance on the test.

Students’ reactions of “disappointment” and “embarrassment” after being informed of their need for remediation do not correlate to an alteration of a student’s perception regarding academic self-efficacy. Rather, the results indicate students felt a heightened sense of personal responsibility regarding their lack of preparation and their performance on the placement test. The variables of preparation and performance provided students with a re-orientation regarding academic expectations, consequences, and personal responsibility at the college-level. These findings suggest colleges and universities should seek ways to encourage students’ engagement in the college enrollment process and should consider how students can be more properly engaged in
onboarding exercises so that they understand the importance and consequence of being academically prepared and oriented to the content of the placement test. With higher levels of engagement, students might more completely understand the significance of the process, the importance of doing well, and the consequence for being academically prepared for the placement test. As ESCC dedicates substantial resources to orienting students post-registration, the College might consider ways to develop stronger pre-enrollment orientation and on-boarding experiences which enable new applicants to understand the importance of, and the proper preparation strategies for, the enrollment process.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Community colleges have long realized that simply providing access to higher education is not sufficient in ensuring student success, postsecondary degree attainment, or the benefits that come with it. As the literature has demonstrated, the full benefit of a college education is realized when a degree and/or a credential is attained (Klempin & Karp, 2015). Students who stop pursuing a college degree are found to have higher unemployment and loan default rates than those who complete degrees or credentials (Nguyen, 2012), and it is in the attainment of said degree that personal economic advancement is celebrated (Belfield & Bailey, 2011; Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013; Zeidenberg, Scott, & Belfield, 2015). Unfortunately, research confirms high numbers of community college students never achieve degree completion.

A possible cause for unmet academic degree attainment may the high number of students who apply and attend community college are required to begin their studies in academic remediation, in large part, because of their placement test results. Many of these same students drop-out before completing their studies (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; Jones et al., 2012; Klempin & Karp, 2015). A review of the literature revealed core questions regarding the effectiveness of remedial education and poses significant questions pertaining to the return on investment for both the students and the colleges themselves. Colleges and universities, including community colleges, are challenged to consider what else, aside from remediation, can be done to increase students’ success at the community college.

While community colleges have provided greater access to higher education for
traditionally underserved populations, these same students would benefit, arguably more so, from the economic return of earning a degree (Belfield & Bailey, 2011; Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013; Zeidenberg, Scott, & Belfield, 2015). Given the findings that students who are required to take remedial courses do not complete their degrees in equal or greater parts to those who do not take remedial courses and the students interviewed in this study confirmed they did not prepare for the placement test and believed they had the necessary academic skills to be successful in college, preparation of students engaged in the enrollment process at community colleges should be critically evaluated. Obstacles to academic degree completion should not include the enrollment process at community college. Students must be engaged in preparation for the placement test at community college. The current enrollment processes have inadequacies in successfully preparing students for their academic degree completion goals (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016). This conundrum poses a moral imperative to colleges that accept high numbers of traditionally, underserved students, and colleges should prioritize the reconsideration of their enrollment processes and internal support structures available to students.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative Dissertation in Practice was to gain understanding of the meaning that students attribute to testing into remedial reading and/or English courses, and to what degree this understanding impacted their perception of personal academic self-efficacy.

**Aim of the Study**

The aim of the study was to determine if students’ placement in remedial reading and/or English courses impacted their perceptions of academic self-efficacy. Once the
affect was understood, an evidence-based intrusive intervention was developed. The intrusive intervention is a mandatory, pre-placement enrollment program that mandates a heightened level of preparation for new students.

**Proposed Solution**

After analysis and synthesis of findings, and with a knowledge of the enrollment process that exists at ESCC, it is suggested that the current enrollment process be amended to allow for greater, mandated preparation for students as they apply and seek entry the college. Figure 1 describes the current enrollment process at ESCC. The amended enrollment proposal is outlined in Figure 2 and aims to strengthen students’ levels of engagement during the enrollment period. By mandating this online, mandatory, academic diagnostic, the college will not only be encouraging students to engage in the preparation for the placement test, but will also assist in managing a subsequent condition recognized as the “digital divide” (Kontos, Bennett, and Viswanath, 2007).

Previous research has found that comfort and use of technology is different for people from different socioeconomic standings (Brown, 2011 as cited in Brinkley-Etzkorn & Ishitani, 2016; Hargittai, 2002). While the Internet has been available for years, research has found that lower-income individuals tend to have less access to educational computer use, and therefore, less comfort with educational computer use (Arague, Maiden, Bravo, Estrada, Evans, Hubchick, Kirby, & Reddy, 2013). The lack of access to educational technology could lend itself to heightened computer anxiety, which Sivakumaran and Lux (2011) suggest could present a daunting proposition to those who are both trying to learn content and new technology skills simultaneously.
By strengthening the enrollment process, through the use of a mandatory online preparation academic assessment module, the college will enable students to more readily learn the importance of academic preparation, harness personal motivation and responsibility, heighten their ability to manage online learning, and celebrate personal success earlier in the academic process. The introduction of this mandatory online module aims to reduce the number of students being placed in remediation by requiring students to participate in mandatory preparation before they move forward in the enrollment placement process to force students to prepare for the actual placement test.

Through a consolidation of enrollment resources and the completion of the mandatory online academic diagnostic assessment, a larger number of students may demonstrate greater readiness and an earlier assumption of personal responsibility within the academic placement process. Consolidating enrollment resources, specific to preparation for the placement test, can be managed through webpage development and location within the college website. The college’s robust website has both internal- and external-facing webpages allowing for constituent communications and processing of college business. The external-facing pages are known by users as the college website. It is on the college website that public information is relayed to external and internal constituents relevant to the academic life of the college. All interested persons have access to information on the college website, and general enrollment preparation materials for the placement process may be placed on the college website for their access. When a student applies and is accepted to the college, the student is granted access to the internal-facing webpages, or the college portal. These pages are college identification number dependent and personal password protected. The internal website, or college
Figure 1

*Current Enrollment Process for General High School Graduate Applicants to ESCC*
Figure 2

Proposed Enrollment Process for General High School Graduate Applicants to ESCC

1. Student applies
2. Student submits all paperwork
3. Admissions evaluates application for any required placement testing
4. Student is accepted. Communications are sent with preparatory material, diagnostic preparatory testing requirement, and next enrollment step
5. Student information forwarded to Office of Testing and Advisement
6. Testing and Advisement manages all appointments with new student
7. Placement Test?
   - Yes: Student schedules appointment for test and advisement
     - Student takes test
     - Counselor evaluates placement test scores for course placement
     - Student meets with counselor to review test performance and advisement
     - Student chooses day and times for semester schedule
     - Student registers
     - Student pays bill
   - No: Student schedules appointment for advisement
     - Student meets with counselor for advisement
     - Student chooses day and times
     - Student registers
     - Student pays bill
8. Does student complete diagnostic section in student portal?
   - Yes: “Incompletes” Enrollment lists are generated and communicated to Office of Testing and Advisement
   - No: Testing and Advisement deploy communication plan to encourage student completion of process
portal, allows access-enabled individuals to manage student processes, do academic research, and access password protected documents. The suggestion to place an online, mandatory academic diagnostic within the college portal is due, in part, to the security of the portal website and the ability to align web-based resources to the student’s individual educational records in real time.

As students complete the mandatory online academic diagnostic, their academic records will be updated to indicate they have completed this element of the enrollment process. Automated communication plans will be established within the pertinent enrollment areas so that students will be enabled to continue in the enrollment process without time delay.

Support for the Solution

From the 13 students interviewed, 11 of them, or 85 percent, indicated they wished they had prepared for the placement test. Many of the students believed their past academic performance would have been enough to enable them to be successful on the placement test. This finding was supported by the overwhelming expression of disappointment relative to their individual placement test results and their placement in remediation.

In response to the findings in the literature that suggest those who place into remedial courses demonstrate less success in completing their academic goals (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; Jones et al., 2012; Klempin & Karp, 2015), there appears to be no correlation between remedial course completion and college credit bearing course completion (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016; Henry & Stahl, 2017; Zalaznick, 2016). This finding, paired with the findings that successful completion of an academic degree is the
threshold for recognizing the economic benefits of college attendance (Belfield & Bailey, 2011; Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013; Zeidenberg, Scott, & Belfield, 2015), argues the point that this Dissertation in Practice’s proposed solution will engage students in the preparation for their placement test and may produce a stronger performance outcome on all individuals who take the placement test.

While eight of the 13 students interviewed suggested that the college should continue to inform students of the academic preparation resources it currently provides, one student suggested that the college should send “more examples of how they want things done.” The college should provide to students “a little bit more example and explanation of what to do.” The college’s decision to mandate the use of online resources may provide the necessary impetus to students. All students interviewed indicated the test preparation material would have been helpful if they had taken more, or any, advantage of it. By creating a mandatory, online academic preparation and diagnostic, it is expected that there will be improvement in student performance on the placement test with an aim to reduce the number of students placing into remedial courses.

Factors, Stakeholders, and Leadership Qualities Related to the Solution

Success of the implementation of the proposed solution will depend on a variety of stakeholders, specific enrollment process modifications, and technological upgrades. Without key stakeholder support and ownership of this proposal the solution will not be adopted. Burke (2014) reminds that organizational change is large in scale, and transformational in nature, and leadership must come from the top of the organization. The amended enrollment process must be developed and articulated by college leadership, thereby instilling a sense of ownership for the new process. The college will
need to prioritize the development of the necessary technological components to incorporate the recording of the completion of the diagnostic tool within the student record system.

Stakeholders.

This proposal has the potential to impact a central and critical priority of the college directly: Student Enrollment. College leadership should be oriented to view this mandatory, enrollment process as a pathway to greater student success and an element in achieving student attainment of academic goals. The proposal has the potential to be viewed as a barrier to new student registration rather than a mechanism to improve student retention. As the college’s budget process is heavily predicated on student enrollment, the introduction of any process that presents a possible negative impact on student enrollment might cause college administration to resist its implementation, regardless of the value it holds for student and college student success goals. During the critical introduction of the proposal, it is essential that this alteration to the enrollment process be discussed in terms of potential retention of students rather than in terms of recruitment. The potential for this proposal to strengthen the college’s retention efforts must be vetted, valued, and adopted as a priority by the college’s central and campus leadership. The college’s leadership that must be engaged consists of the President, the Board of Trustees, the President’s Cabinet, and campus-based personnel involved with the implementation of the enrollment process.

Warren Buffett is quoted in Rath and Conchie (2008) as saying “a leader is someone who can get things done through other people” (p. 79). The discussion relative to this process alteration will be best led by a transformational leader who is able to
facilitate followers meaning-making relative to the scenario being discussed, focus followers on the importance and significance of the process alteration, be able to engender trust from the followers, and maintain a high-level of self-awareness and self-regulation during the discussions and debate (Olson & Simerson, 2015). While the Board of Trustees, President, and central Cabinet members, including Vice Presidents of Academic, Student, Business Affairs, and Institutional Research, explore the potential implications of this process on enrollment, it is important that college and campus leadership are oriented to the positive impacts this process may have on student academic goal attainment and continuing student enrollment.

Figure 3 details the impact this amended enrollment process may have on retention as explained through the Nadler-Tushman Congruence Model for Diagnosing Organization Behavior (Burke, 2014). In relation to this Dissertation in Practice’s proposal, the input is the amended enrollment process. This process aims to have a transformative effect on student readiness, student academic awareness, student motivation, and student assumption of personal responsibility. The intervention aims to produce the output of greater accuracy in student placement in courses for new students, which could have a positive impact on the college’s retention efforts of continuing students.

**Suggested enrollment process modification.**

The enrollment process modification, as presented in Figure 2, details the current and amended enrollment process for students requiring a placement test. This critical enrollment process should be deeply understood by those managing the process. As the managers and staff within enrollment offices, including admissions, testing and
Figure 3

Introduction of Diagnostic Academic Assessment in Enrollment Process

advisement, and registrar offices, are included in discussions relative to the new process, they will provide amendments to the more finely nuanced details which may support the success of this Dissertation in Practice solution. Staff and mid-level directors that manage this enrollment process should be engaged in informing the practice of enrolling, testing, advising, and registering students, and they should be encouraged to communicate any delays in student advisement or completion of registration processes. The most knowledgeable professionals of the process are those who work most intimately administering the process and tracking student outcomes. By engaging these individuals, a plethora of ideas to improve both the process and communications to students will improve the services rendered from both academic and student service departments.

While leadership is often an essential element of vision setting and strategic planning, leadership is exercised when people are mobilized and activated to follow. The type of process amendment being suggested has the potential to disrupt business and heighten stress for students and those who work within the enrollment and academic area.
It will require a leader who can incorporate the problem solvers and laggards alike. Capitalizing on Useem’s (2011) four principles of leadership will enable the process to be amended in ways that provide stability and success. Leadership must have an ability to honor those within the room, motivate those who will work within a process (i.e. “the troops”), embrace the frustrations and questions from those integrating the process into action (i.e. “support the front lines”), and build leadership in others in order for an endeavor to prove successful and long lasting (Useem, 2011).

A critical outcome of this amended process is not only the students’ performances on the academic assessment used in course placement at college, but also students’ heightened levels of engagement within the academic assessment preparation process. The positive effects of guided testing on knowledge retention are robust and well-replicated (Lloyd, Walter, Metz, and Diekman, 2018) and, while students may choose not to prepare any further following the mandatory, online academic assessment diagnostic, the practical rehearsal of taking the test may provide students with learning and awareness, enabling them to perform at higher levels during the actual test.

**Suggested technological modification.**

As much of what is suggested is new to the college enrollment system, so too are the technological elements. These new features will need to be created by the college’s information technology professionals. These technological elements are considered critical to the successful implementation of the online academic diagnostic assessment process and will provide a seamless and timely capture of students’ completion of the online, diagnostic assessment. The completion of the diagnostic should be captured automatically and is recommended to seamlessly interface with the college’s repository.
of student academic records. By automating the capture of information and updating students’ records, the process will continue to operate with expediency and accuracy.

All student processes will remain the same for students’ applications and acceptances to the college. Students will submit the necessary pre-requisite documents for acceptance to the college. The Office of Admissions will continue to review all submitted materials and make determination regarding whether a student should be required to take a placement test before their first semester’s course registration. If a student is determined to be in need of a placement test before registration, the student’s progression through the registration process will be placed on hold until the student completes the mandatory online, academic assessment diagnostic.

Once a student completes the online, diagnostic academic assessment, several automated processes are recommended:

1. Direction on next steps of enrollment and academic practice materials will be forwarded to the student’s college email account.

2. Simultaneously, student records will be updated indicating they have completed the online, academic assessment diagnostic and the student hold will be released from the student record allowing them to move forward in the enrollment process.

3. Automated lists will be forwarded to respective enrollment departments, in either daily, weekly, or monthly distributions and will indicate those students who have completed the mandatory, online academic diagnostic. This list will contain pertinent student information, inclusive of campus, academic program, and contact information, which enables enrollment
departments to follow up with students and manage the continuance of the enrollment process.

**Evaluation and Timeline for Implementation and Assessment**

Upon defense of the Dissertation in Practice, the data, findings, and recommendations will be presented to the Vice President of Student Affairs and Vice President of Academic Affairs at ESCC. This presentation will include the review of the literature, data collected, suggested process alteration, and rationale for consideration. Once the information is reviewed, the vice presidents should organize a meeting with the previously suggested stakeholders which may include central admissions, central registrar, campus admissions, campus registrar, and campus testing, and advising offices. Concluding this preliminary review of the findings and discussion of previously unconsidered obstacles, this proposal will be presented to the President and his/her Cabinet for consideration. If granted approval to proceed, a discussion should be coordinated with ESCC’s computer center for consideration on technological amendments which may include automation functions within the enrollment process.

Following, the Vice President of Student Affairs and the Vice President of Academic Affairs may make a presentation to a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees, known as the Student Success Committee for their consideration and support. The Student Success Committee may choose to present the project to the larger Board of Trustees for their information and consideration.

Once the technological, automation functions are complete and full approval for implementation has been granted, the implementation schedule might be best managed by Central Enrollment aligning central and campus admissions, testing and advising offices,
and the registration processes college-wide. The process would be initiated at the start of the new student enrollment cycle. Central enrollment has maintained a college-wide approach to tracking timeline data points relative to the new student enrollment process. Central enrollment has encouraged that tracking of student enrollment benchmarks and this practice should continue. Tracking student applications, review, and acceptance data should continue within the campuses’ Office of Admissions and should be reported to Central Enrollment services.

Data pertinent to students’ referral to the Testing and Advising Office and the completion of the enrollment process should be managed by the Office of Testing and Advising and all pertinent data should be communicated to the Central Enrollment office for analysis. Important to understand will be the impact of the new communication structure relative to informing students of the new mandated online diagnostic, their completion of the diagnostic, and their on-campus enrollment for first semester courses. This data should be analyzed against previously collected benchmarks of student enrollment to ensure delays in enrollment are understood, evaluated, and managed in a timely manner. Additionally, the Office of Institutional Research can assist in tracking student success rates over time and compare these rates to historical data to see if the proposed intervention has had an effect on student rate of completion, successful completion of gateway course rates, and academic program completion.

**Implications**

**Practical Implications**

Students seeking academic degrees celebrate personal economic improvement and stability when an academic degree is earned. However, not all students celebrate degree
completion in equal parts. Students who attend community college, often students from traditionally underserved populations, also test more regularly into remedial courses, and complete their academic degree goals less often than those who study at four-year universities and colleges. This disparity in degree completion has a direct impact on community college students, including students who hail from traditionally underserved populations. This Dissertation in Practice contributes to improved practice by seeking in increase student preparation for the placement process thereby creating greater success for students at the outset of their college academic studies. Community colleges were once considered the great democratizer of higher education. However, students required to take remedial education often do not complete their degrees in equal or greater parts as compared to those who do not need to take remedial courses first. This raises the imperative that student success barriers, either those placed intentionally or unintentionally, be examined and removed from the higher educational system when possible.

The findings of this Dissertation in Practice will enhance the process that new students must satisfy before entry to the community college. By studying student meaning-making associated with testing into remedial English and or reading the results of this Dissertation in Practice suggest that while students did not view their academic self-efficacy too differently post-placement test result discussion then they originally understood their academic self-efficacy, they did generally express: 1) a negative memory of the placement process overall; 2) recollection of strong negative reactions to hearing about their performance on the English and/or reading placement test; 3) a heightened sense of personal responsibility regarding their lack of academic preparation
for the placement test moving forward; and 4) a heightened sense of priority toward their academic studies.

Recognizing these findings, colleges that manage a placement process with incoming students should consider ways to mitigate the general condition of unpreparedness as expressed by the students. It is possible that if students arrived more prepared for the placement test, greater numbers of students may have demonstrated stronger academic performance during the placement test and may have experienced less negative experiences overall. Colleges should continue to explore ways that encourage, or mandate, students arrive as prepared as possible for their college placement process.

**Implications for Future Research**

This qualitative Dissertation in Practice studied the experience of a small, group of diverse students attending one common college which may have produced results not generalizable to students in other areas of the country. Gemignani, Brinkmann, Benozzo, and Puebla (2014) state that “qualitative inquiries often result in complex and nuanced account of realities and experiences that, differently from dominant or hegemonic discourses or statistical significance, acknowledge both the center and the margins” (p 112). Exploring this Dissertation in Practice through a qualitative lens allowed the researcher to study a fuller experience of a common phenomenon experienced by a diverse group of students. Future researchers might consider disaggregating the data in an effort to highlight varying perceptions based upon gender identification, socioeconomic status, and other demographics such as race. An example might include a study of first generation, African-American women in an urban area between the ages of 18 and 21 years of age.
Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice

Research findings from this study provide researchers and college administrators with tools to explore and identify additional contributing factors to improve student success during the enrollment process at community colleges. While community colleges seek new ways to support student success, this type of alteration to an institutionalized enrollment process will require strategic implementation. Rogers (2003) presents a visual to explain the challenge organizations, and the individuals within, face when adopting new practices or ideas. A new idea, or innovation, is first adopted or introduced by the innovators of an organization. These people consist as only two and a half percent of the population whole. This two and a half percent begins the introduction, or adoption, and leads the way along a time-line meridian to include not only the innovators (2.5 percent) and the early adopters (13.5 percent of a population), but the early majority (34 percent), the late majority (34 percent), and finally the laggard adopters (16 percent) (Rogers, 2003).

To expedite an adoption process, there must be targeted communication plans which aim to address specific audiences regarding how this process will improve the lives of students (Rogers, 2003). While it is inspiring to recall that community colleges’ missions, it is equally important to recognize all colleges must manage new initiatives against financial feasibility. Preparing and enabling an organization to change its philosophy, or processes, will not happen without intentional effort.

It is advisable to manage an evaluation of the organization’s culture as this understanding will aid in the development of a targeted communication plan. Organizational culture refers to a system’s shared meaning held by members of the
organization (Robbins & Judge, 2016). Knowing the primary characteristics of the organizational culture will help when evaluating important strategies for implementing this enrollment process alteration (Robbins & Judge, 2016). Another important element to understand an organization’s ability to innovate. Understanding the ability of both the organization and the individuals within the organizations ability to embrace innovation will assist leaders develop a plan of action.

Recognizing that organizations and individuals can be change resistant, the leader can more adeptly manage resistance and the organization will have an easier time adopting the proposed changes. The use of data alone is often insufficient in altering individual and organizational resistance. Studies have found that even when members within organizations are shown data supporting a necessary change, members often latch onto other sets of data that suggest the status-quo is acceptable (Robbins & Judge, 2016). One way to manage resistance is to open up dialogue, debate, and discuss the challenges and opportunities present within the condition and allow members to understand the reason for the change. This type of open dialogue will require leadership that serves as an active change agent (Robbins & Judge, 2016).

The change agent will be well served by adopting the heart of a Servant Leader (SL) and the actions of a Transformational Leader (TFL). The SL often works to improve the lives of another, often without said individual being aware of the long-term benefit of the SLs efforts. SLs approach leadership with a lens that another may benefit from the SLs input, advocacy, and efforts, not because it serves the SL interests; but because it improves another person’s life. SLs lead not from a place of driving results from people, or in an effort to motivate people from outside of themselves, but rather they aim to
create motivation within others according to the followers’ needs. SLs strive to assist followers create change because of the value of the change itself. SLs approach leading as a way to develop the best and highest qualities of people and SLs are motivated to serve from within themselves (Greenleaf, 2002). By engaging individuals with an SL focus, members of the community will be encouraged to define their own best intentions and outcomes toward improving the organization and a shared vision will emerge with each person engaging, stretching, and reaching deeper within themselves for their unique vision and talents to be shared throughout the organization.

The SL’s approach is different from, but complemented by, the TFLs approach. The TFL does seek to motivate followers but does so by first attempting to understand the followers’ potential motives, satisfying followers’ higher needs, and then engaging the full person in an effort to influence (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011; Owens, 1991). Pulitzer-Prize winning scientist, James MacGregor Burns (1978) defined the principles of transformational leadership as working with followers, rather than merely satisfying their wants and needs in exchange for support. As Burns (1978) defined:

Leaders hold enhanced influence at the higher levels of the need and value hierarchies. They can appeal to the more widely and deeply held values, such as justice, liberty and brotherhood. They can expose followers to the broader values that contradict narrower ones or inconsistent behavior. They can define aspirations and gratifications to help followers see their stake in new, program-oriented social movements (p. 43).

It is the researcher’s position that the strength of the SL and the TFL will be necessary to manage this Dissertation in Practice’s proposed alteration to a long-
established enrollment process at a particular community college. While there are gains to be made in improving the overall placement process of students at community college, this Dissertation in Practice sets a course forward to improve both the individual student experience and the colleges’ retention goals. This planned, organizational change (Porras & Robertson, 1992) will take deliberate and intentional efforts to harness the value of the change and evaluate its effectiveness in improving student persistence through to college degree completion.

The challenges in achieving a college degree are complex. But the value of a college degree is clear. As students master academic content through the development of mental discipline and maturity, the ultimate value becomes the professional opportunities it affords once the student celebrates degree completion. It is often upon degree completion that financial security is realized by individuals and families, as earned credentials and degrees open professional opportunities for their recipients. From a justice perspective, these degree outcomes continue to be desired, needed, and deserved by communities where opportunities were not always offered or realized.

**Summary of the Study**

This phenomenological, qualitative study for the Dissertation in Practice involved interviews of 13 average-to-above-average academic performing high school students who had never received special education or English as a Second Language services in secondary schools in an effort to understand the meaning-making students attributed to testing into remedial reading and/or English courses at a local community college. The study aimed to understand what impact, if any, was made on students’ perception regarding their academic self-efficacy after being informed they tested into remedial
reading or English. The study found that while students did not express an alteration in their perception of their academic self-efficacy, they did reflect negative experiences on their experiences in taking the placement test, in learning how they had performed, and in realizing they had to take remedial courses. While students’ comments were generally negative regarding their recollections of the placement testing process and their performance on the placement test, they expressed an internal-locus of control relative to their performance, and believed their lack of preparation led to the results. Students overwhelmingly expressed a strong desire to reprioritize their academic commitment, believed they had the proper skills to be successful in college, and strongly encouraged future students to prepare for the placement process.

From these findings, an alteration of a current community college enrollment process is suggested. The inclusion of a mandatory, online, academic preparation program is recommended for all students who are in need of placement testing before advisement for first year courses. As students present as more prepared for their placement exam, it is the aim that students will perform better on the official placement test and be placed less frequently in remedial reading and/or English courses. This will enable students to begin their academic credit progress earlier in their academic careers and ultimately achieve success in their academic degree acquisition.
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Appendix A
Email Recruiting Student Participants

Dear Student,

This email is an invitation to participate in a doctoral dissertation in practice research study. As a student participant, you will agree to meet for one hour with a researcher to discuss your experience of the enrollment process at Eastern Seaboard Community College (ESCC); a pseudonym is being used to protect the anonymity of participants.

This project has been approved by Creighton University’s Internal Review Board and Eastern Seaboard Community College’s Internal Review Board and as such all information gathered will be kept confidential and secure for XXXXXXXX.

Interviews will be coordinated at a mutually convenient time and will take place on the ESCC campus. All information gathered will be confidential.

If you are available to participate, please express your interest to Mary Cavanaugh at Mmr48422@creighton.edu as soon as possible.

Your participation is much appreciated.
Appendix B
Letter Recruiting Student Participant

Dear Student,

This letter is an invitation to participate in a doctoral dissertation in practice research study. As a student volunteer, you will agree to meet for one hour with a researcher to discuss your experience of the enrollment process at Eastern Seaboard Community College.

This project has been approved by Creighton University’s Internal Review Board and Eastern Seaboard Community College’s Internal Review Board.

Interviews will be coordinated at a mutually convenient time and will take place on the Eastern campus. All information gathered will be confidential.

If you are available to participate, please express your interest to Mary Cavanaugh at Mmr48422@creighton.edu as soon as possible.

Your participation is much appreciated.
Appendix C

Phenomenological Interview Questions

1. Talk to me about your experience as a high school student.
   a. What did you enjoy about high school?
   b. What types of classes did you enjoy?
   c. As you think about high school, what type of student would you consider yourself?
   d. What would you classify as strengths in your performance in high school?

2. Can you tell me a few reasons why you were interested in coming and studying here at ESCC?

3. Please tell me about what you thought about, or felt about, your academic abilities to be academically successful in college classes, before you took your placement test.
   a. What strengths did you believe you were bringing to your studies?
   b. What weaknesses did you overcome in high school that led to your success as a student?

Remediation Impact Questions:

4. Please describe how ready or prepared you believed you were for the placement test?
   a. What left you feeling prepared or ready for the test?
   b. Can you provide any examples for why you believed you were ready?
   c. IF the subject indicates they felt or believed they were unprepared for the test,
      i. What left you feeling unprepared for the test?
      ii. Can you provide any examples for why you believe you were unready?

5. Please describe for me your experience in taking the test.
   a. What happened during the test that has left an impression for you?
   b. What do you recall as important parts of the test and how did you feel about them?
   c. Can you share with me any memories you have from the test that caused you to feel secure in your progress through the test?
   d. Can you share with me any memories from the test that caused you to feel insecure in your progress through the test?
6. When you began going over your placement test results with the counselor/advisor, would you share with me what you were thinking and feeling as you heard the results?

7. Thinking about how you had perceived of your academic abilities before the placement test and thinking about how you perceived of your academic abilities after the placement test results, can you share with me anyway in which the perception of your abilities may have changed?
   a. How do you believe or feel about your ability to be successful in academic courses now that you have the results from your placement test?
   b. Is your perception of your academic ability the same? How is it the same? Or
   c. Has your perception has changed? How has it changed?

Closing:

8. What three suggestions do you have for the college that might have assisted you in being more successful on the placement test?

9. What three suggestions do you have to make taking the placement test better for other students?
Appendix D
Interview Protocol

1. Secure an appropriate place for the interview for 90 minutes.

2. Bring tape recorder, electrical cord, back up batteries.


4. Set the Stage for the Session.

5. Welcome and introduce self.

6. Explain the Purpose of the Session:
   Script: Good morning/Good afternoon and thank you for being here. As I’ve explained, the purpose of this study is to explore the enrollment process at the college and your experience within the process. As a part of our conversation today, I’d like to ask you about your interpretation of the process, steps within the enrollment process, and the outcome of registering for your first semester. For my record keeping purposes, I’d like to record the interviews. You may ask to stop or pause the conversation at any time. This conversation is designed to take one hour. I will begin our conversation with a standard set of questions, but if I think I need clarification on something, I’ll be asking follow up questions. All information relative to your identities will be kept confidential and the records and transcripts will be used for my doctoral study at Creighton University, and will be preserved for three and half years as per the University IRB requirements. I would like to ask you to fill out this participant consent form, sign it, and return it to me before we begin.

7. Ensure Participants Comfort:
   Script: Are there any questions that I can answer before we begin? I have brought you some water. If the room gets too warm or cool, please let me know and I will open or close the window for us. Please feel free to ask me to stop recording at any time and there are rest rooms right down the hall if you need them. Once we are finished talking or at the 55 minute mark, I will bring our session to a close. Are you ready to begin?

8. Closing and Thank the interviewee:
   Script: Thank you very much for your time and patience. If at some time during my analysis of the data, I have a follow up question, would you mind if I reached out to you to seek clarification? Do you have any questions for me?
Appendix E
Participant Informed Consent Forms

This consent form was developed with guidance from the University of Michigan’s website from the Research Ethics and Compliance Office.

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Title of the Project: Remediation and Self-Efficacy
Principal Investigator: Mary Reese-Cavanaugh, Doctoral Candidate, Creighton University
Dissertation Committee Chair: Dr. Donnette Noble, Ph.D., Creighton University

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study
I invite you to be part of a research study about the impact of being advised to take remedial courses has on a student’s perception of their self-efficacy.

Description of Your Involvement
If you agree to be part of the research study, I will ask you to participate in an approximate hour long conversation regarding your experience with applying to and enrolling in a community college.

Benefits of Participation
You may directly benefit from being in this study because your experience and insight may assist future students going through the same process. You may also discover things about your experience that you had not considered in the past and these insights may provide you with motivation toward success.

Risks and Discomforts of Participation
There may be some risk or discomfort from your participation in this research as you will be asked to have a conversation regarding your experiences in enrolling at the community college. Your comments, statements, and opinions will be kept in strict confidence but will be used as a part of a dissertation project where the research will be presented to colleagues at other universities. Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality at your community college and at external college and university presentations.

Compensation for Participation
For your participation in this research project, you will receive zero compensation.

Confidentiality
It is my goal to publish the results of this study. I will not include any information that would identify you. Your privacy will be protected and your research records will be confidential. It is possible that other people may need to see the information you give me as part of the study, such as organizations responsible for making sure the research is done safely and properly like
Creighton University and Eastern Seaboard Community College (pseudonym used to protect the anonymity of participants) offices.

**Storage and Future Use of Data**
I will store your data in accordance with the guidance provided by Creighton University and Eastern Seaboard Community College. Your name and any other identifying information will be secured and stored separately from your research data. Only I, the Principal Investigator, will have access to your research files and data.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**
Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer a question you do not want to answer. Just tell me and I will go to the next question.

**Contact Information for the Study Team**
If you have questions about this research, including questions about scheduling or content of the study, you may contact Mary Reese-Cavanaugh at Mr48420@creighton.edu and Dr. Donnette Noble at DonnetteNoble@creighton.edu.

**Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant**
If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the: Creighton University’s Internal Review Board Social Behavioral Research Administrator Criss I, Room 134 Phone: 402-280-3364 Phone: 402-280-3364

**Consent**
By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. I will give you a copy of this document for your records. I will keep one copy with the study records. Be sure that I have answered any questions you have about the study and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

*I agree to participate in the study.*

_________________________________________________
Printed Name

_________________________________________________
Signature                                                     Date
I agree to be audio/video recorded.

YES_________NO_________

Signature

I agree that my data may be used in future research.

YES_________ NO_________

Signature

I agree to be contacted for participation in future research.

YES_________ NO_________

Signature
Appendix F
Creighton University IRB Approval Letter

Institutional Review Board
2500 California Plaza • Omaha, Nebraska 68178
phone: 402.280.2126 • fax: 402.280.4786 • email:
irb@creighton.edu

DATE: February 14, 2018
TO: Mary Reese-Cavanaugh
FROM: Creighton University IRB-02 Social Behavioral
PROJECT TITLE: [1186764-1] Placing into Remediation and its Effect on Students Perception of Academic Self-Efficacy
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: February 14, 2018
REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The following items were reviewed in this submission:

• Application Form - 402 Application for Determination of Exempt Status Observation, Survey, Interview_MReeseCavanaugh.doc (UPDATED: 02/2/2018)
• Consent Form - M_ReeseCavanaugh_Patient_Informed_Consent (UPDATED: 02/2/2018)
• Creighton - IRB Application Form - Creighton - IRB Application Form (UPDATED: 02/2/2018)
• Data Collection - M_ReeseCavanaugh_Phenomenological_Interview_Questions (UPDATED: 02/2/2018)
• Letter - SCCC IRB_Approval (UPDATED: 02/2/2018)
• Other - M_ReeseCavanaugh_Self_Developed_Initial_Reflection_Prompt (UPDATED: 02/2/2018)
• Other - M_ReeseCavanaugh_Patient_Invitation_Sample (UPDATED: 02/2/2018)
• Protocol - M_ReeseCavanaugh_ Interview Protocol (UPDATED: 02/2/2018)

This project has been determined to be exempt from Federal Policy for Protection of Human Subjects as per 45CFR46.101 (b) (2).

All protocol amendments and changes are to be submitted to the IRB and may not be implemented until approved by the IRB. Please use the modification form when submitting changes.

If you have any questions, please contact Christine Scheuring at 402-280-3364 or christinescheuring@creighton.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondance with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Creighton University IRB-02 Social Behavioral's records.
Appendix G
Suffolk County Community College IRB Approval Letter

To: Mary Reese-Cavanaugh
   Associate Dean of Student Services
   Suffolk County Community College
   reesm@sunysuffolk.edu

From: Dr. Courtney Brewer
   Associate Professor
   Co-chair, Institutional Review Board
   Suffolk County Community College

Re: Placing into Remediation and its Effect on Students Perception of Academic Self-Efficacy

Dear Dean Reese,

After a review of your protocol, it was the decision of the Board that the study meets the federally designated criteria for an IRB expedited review under category 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). Your proposal has been granted authorization following review. Please note the following information:

- IRB# 18-002
- Expiration Date: 2/8/2019

Please note that changes to the protocol must be reported to the IRB immediately and that such changes may warrant a new review. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact either myself or my Co-chairs, Dr. Ryan and Dr. Wittmann.

Sincerely,

Dr. Courtney Brewer
Associate Professor
Co-chair, Institutional Review Board
brewerc@sunysuffolk.edu 631-451-4986

Dr. Gregory Ryan
Associate Professor
Co-chair, Institutional Review Board
ryang@sunysuffolk.edu 631-851-6271

Dr. Helen Wittman
Assistant to the Vice President
Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
wittmah@sunysuffolk.edu
631-451-4828