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Institutional Adoption and Implementation of a Mandated Community College First Year Experience Course

Carmen Varney Purpus

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INSTITUTIONAL ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A MANDATED
COMMUNITY COLLEGE FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE COURSE

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program
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Doctor of Education

By
Carmen Purpus

August 2019
INSTITUTIONAL ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A MANDATED COMMUNITY COLLEGE FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE COURSE

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"Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of the conditions of men - the balance wheel of the social machinery."

Horace Mann, a pioneering American educator, 1848

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Jimmie and Wanda Varney, who told me time and time again that education was my way out of poverty, and for that, I am forever grateful. Also, I dedicate this work to my husband, Greg Purpus. Greg, without your support, patience, and love, this would not have been possible; and to my children, Rochelle, Cecil, and Haylee. I pray that you never stop believing in the power of education and of a mother’s love.
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The purpose of the research study is two-fold. The first aim is to establish strategies that can guide community colleges interested in the implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course as well as to identify barriers community colleges may encounter to help them move from desiring a mandated student success course to acting to create one. It is widely believed that student success course helps students learn to be successful, but it is not a widely accepted practice to mandate it for all students.

The second objective is to add to the limited body of research. A non-experimental descriptive design approach was utilized as the researcher was seeking to describe a variable which was the stakeholder perceptions of the implementation of a mandated community college First Year Experience course. The current findings add to a growing body of literature on community college research, and the research findings have practical applications. Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers some insight into institutional stakeholder perceptions on the implementation and mandating of a First Year Experience course as well as content they believe should be included in the course. The research identified stakeholder perceived barriers to the implementation of the FYE course as well as the barriers discussed in the literature.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"Access without support is not opportunity." Vincent Tinto

Statement of the Problem

A college education lays the foundation for success in all areas of one’s life. Students are told this repeatedly throughout their lives, yet few learn how to be a successful student. Although it is a commonly held assumption that student success courses provide the opportunity and the tools necessary for students to learn how to become successful, it is not a widely accepted practice in the United States to mandate it for all students.

The Problem Defined

A community college’s mission is one of open access to postsecondary education. According to Mullin (2017), “All members of a community—not just a select few—are afforded a pathway to attain a college education, be it workforce training or through the pursuit of advanced degrees” (p. 1). Community colleges aim to meet students wherever they are socially and academically and to help them get to where they need to be so the students can move into the workforce or transfer a university. The open access mission is different from the traditional university’s mission of selectiveness in accepting students who are already at a certain academic level (as evidenced by the requirement of certain grade point averages (GPAs), college admission test scores, and other selective admissions requirements) and helping them to complete four-year or higher postsecondary degrees. According to Ma and Baum (2016), it is well-documented that the community colleges’ population copiously consists of non-traditional students, under-represented minorities, first-generation, and underachieving. Community colleges enroll
higher percentages of first-generation, low income, and minority students than any other institution of higher education (Baime & Baum, 2016). Many of these students work full-time and are more likely to have children. They are disproportionately non-traditional, the first in their families to go to college, low-income, have disadvantaged racial and ethnic backgrounds, and are less prepared for college (Attewell & Lavin, 2007; Baime & Baum, 2016; Ma & Baum, 2016). The community college’s mission of open access situates them in a unique position to admit significant numbers of students who otherwise could not obtain higher education. The mission serves to disrupt the cycle of intergenerational poverty, which provides benefits to both students and their communities (Mullin, 2017). Open access also creates a financial strain on the institutions to retain those students who are underprepared. According to a report by the American Institutes for Research which was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation,

There is an ongoing debate about why community colleges have such low success rates with their students. One part of the explanation for low success rates has to do with the difficulty of educating the many students who enroll in community colleges but might not be college-ready. Another part has to do with the lack of knowledge about what works for whom in remedial education as well as other education programs. Still, another part of the explanation has to do with the lack of support services that community colleges offer. (Schneider & Yin, 2011)

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), there are 1,051 community colleges in the United States, serving more than 12 million students which comprise nearly half of the undergraduate population (2019). Given the number of students who attend community colleges in the United States and those students’ social,
physical, and economic needs, colleges must invest many resources in providing courses, programs, and services to help students succeed. Community colleges administrators understand the need to implement strategies and provide resources to help students succeed. It is a commonly accepted practice for community colleges to offer a student success course to meet this need (Cho & Karp, 2012; Cho & Karp, 2013; Hatch, Mardock-Uman, Garcia, & Johnson, 2018; Hatch, Mardock-Uman, & Nelson, 2018; Hope, 2010; Karp, Raufman, Efthimiou, & Ritze, 2017; Sidle & McReynolds, 1999).

However, there is a lack of information in the literature on the components that make a student success course “successful” for community college students. Zeidenberg, Jenkins, and Calcagno (2007) indicated the following:

Community Colleges across the nation face the challenge of serving students who are not prepared to succeed in college. Many of these students have poor academic skills, and community colleges offer developmental courses, tutoring, and other academic supports to help students overcome these deficiencies. However, students also frequently arrive on campus with other deficits, including poorly formed goals for education and career, a lack of good study habits, and little awareness of how to succeed in higher education settings. They are also unfamiliar with resources available on campus to help them succeed. (p. 5)

Much of the limited research conducted on student success has focused on the outcomes and the efficacy of student success courses (Crisp & Taggart, 2013; Zeidenberg et al., 2007), but not on the elements of the course that stakeholders believe are essential to include in the course which impacts the success of the course. There is a lack of research regarding implementation procedures, stakeholder perceptions, and the barriers
to mandating a community college success course. Recent research has focused on the impact student success courses have had on student success, but not regarding the elements of the course that make it successful or the measures that are taken to implement a college-wide course. Current literature indicates a gap in the research for mandated student success courses at community colleges as well (Hearn, 2006). Hope (2010) asserts there is a “pervasive and intuitive sense that such courses are an absolute good” (p. 2). When studies have been conducted on the impact success courses have on student success, the studies have been “comprised of general observations often involving small unique populations or anecdotes about affective impact” (Hope, 2010, p. 2). Although a consistent course or implementation strategy has not been supported in the literature and the effects for community college students have not been widely researched, the support for instituting a student success course is evident in the literature (Hope, 2010). Therein lies the problem.

**Purpose of the Study**

This purpose of this study is two-fold. The first aims to establish strategies that can guide Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) colleges, and other community colleges, interested in the implementation of a mandated First Year Experience (FYE) course as well as to identify barriers community colleges may encounter to help them move from desiring a mandated student success course to acting to create one. Without evidence of how to implement a mandatory policy such as a mandated First Year Experience course, colleges in the KCTCS system will have to research best-practices and use trial and error in implementing their programs which takes time and requires an additional investment of resources. Thus, using
implementation strategies based on data obtained from a sister college could be of great value for the other colleges in the system who are beginning the process. The second objective is to add to the limited body of research concerning student success courses, especially concerning institutional adoption, implementation procedures, and community colleges practices.

**Rationale**

Student success is a topic of considerable discussion in higher education. Institutions of higher education are becoming increasingly interested in the adoption of a student success course elective in response to a demand for higher college completion rates (Clark, 2012; Hatch, Mardock-Uman, García, et al., 2018; Karp et al., 2017). According to the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), community colleges across the country are creating innovative courses, which due to their limited scope are generating “pockets of success” rather than resulting in a widespread movement (2012). Kentucky is one of the states in the U.S. that has seen this phenomenon occur. Only a few of the state’s sixteen community and technical colleges have implemented a college-wide mandated student success course, and there is no consistency in how the course is mandated. A few colleges make it mandatory for all incoming freshmen to take, and some mandate it for students who test into developmental courses. Other colleges in the system offer some variation of the student success course as an elective for students to take which provides access to the course but do not emphasize its importance nor does it create the institutional buy-in and support that a mandate would likely do. Engstrom and Tinto (2008) stated, “Too often our conversations about access ignore the fact that without support many students, especially
those who are poor or academically underprepared, are unlikely to succeed” (p. 50). The colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System are considering incorporating a mandated student success course into their system-wide curriculum to help the students successfully transition to college and improve their quality of life (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perna & Thomas, 2008). Although the initiative has been introduced and is likely to be passed, there is little research available on how to implement the course (Hearn, 2006).

Most of the relatively little current research on student success courses highlights outcomes related to the courses with relatively little focus on institutional adoption and implementation of a mandated student success course and even less examine community college practices (Hearn, 2006). Additional research is necessary to guide community colleges in the strategic adoption and implementation of a mandated student success course. According to Hearn (2006), it is important to understand that student success initiatives require investment and that the challenges to effectively implement student success initiatives are so numerous that they can be overwhelming.

The purpose of this quantitative study is to evaluate faculty, staff, and administration’s attitudes toward mandating the first-year experience success course and the components they believe is necessary for the course to be successful; to establish strategies that can guide KCTCS colleges interested in this endeavor; and to identify barriers colleges may encounter to help them move from desiring a mandated student success course to acting and instituting one.

**Research Questions**

This study examines the following research question.
How can stakeholders’ perceptions be used to help two-year community colleges achieve institutional adoption and implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course? The following are sub-questions to address the research question:

1. Are there relationships between selected variables (e.g., position, age, gender, ethnicity, and experience) and faculty, staff, and administration’s attitudes toward implementing a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky community college?

2. What are faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes regarding academically underprepared students, the college’s responsibility for those students, and the mandating of the FYE course at a select Kentucky community college?

3. According to faculty, staff, and administration’s attitudes, what are the most important factors that facilitate implementing a mandated First Year Experience course at the select Kentucky community college?

4. What principles and skills taught in the First Year Experience course are most critical to student success as identified by the faculty, staff, and administration?

5. According to faculty, staff, and administration, what are the barriers that limit the implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course at the select Kentucky community college?

**Assumptions**

The following assumptions apply to this study.
1. The researcher assumes the participants answering the questionnaire will respond with candor and to the best of their ability.

2. The researcher assumes that community colleges are interested in finding ways to improve students’ success, and the student success course is one initiative that has garnered interest.

3. The researcher assumes the community colleges in the KCTCS system are interested in mandating a student success course at their colleges.

4. The researcher assumes that data gathered from participant responses will be beneficial for two-year community colleges within the KCTCS system to follow when implementing a mandated student success course.

**Delimitations of the Study**

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2019), there are 1,051 community colleges in the United States. For this study, a purposeful sample is employed from one of the 1,051 potential community colleges. A non-random sample of participants was chosen to help the researcher obtain an in-depth understanding of the attitudes of stakeholders at one community college within a sixteen-community college system with the hope that information obtained may be useful for other like community colleges who are interested in implementing a mandated first-year experience course.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited in several ways. First, the study used a non-random, purposeful, convenience sample from one of the more than 1,000 community colleges in the United States. Second, the researcher was not able to pilot the study on a large scale. Third, participants understanding of the questions asked may depend on social and
cultural experiences; and lastly, the researcher’s relationship with the college in the study has the potential to create bias.

The study was conducted with a sample of selected participants from a single institution. The sample consisted of full-time faculty, staff, and administrators at a community college in Kentucky. The participants were selected based on their knowledge of the current FYE course. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of individuals to be chosen based on specific selection criteria relevant to a study (Merriam, 1998, 2009; Patton, 2002). Merriam, (1998) stated, “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight, and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61). Patton (1990, 2002, 2015) has provided a comprehensive discussion of purposeful sampling. According to Patton (2002, 2015), the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are cases where one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry. According to Patton (1990), “studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations” (p. 230). Participants in this study were gathered using non-random, purposeful sampling, which is “the process of selecting a small number of important participants - ones that are likely to yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge” (Patton, 2002, p. 236). Still, Patton (2002, 2015) stated this type of sampling could be considered a limitation. Using non-random, purposeful sampling for this quantitative study creates a limitation. Non-random, purposeful sampling is difficult to generalize to the entire population. Although this is
usually considered a limitation, for this study, it is not necessary for the finding to be
generalizable to the entire population. Although any community college with similar
demographics to the college in the study may find the information useful, the results may
only be generalized to the sixteen colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical
College System. Even though this type of sampling limited the study’s generalizability,
the sampling method addressed the research questions in this study. Given the study was
conducted with a small number of selected participants, the sample size is relatively small
for a quantitative study; therefore, size can be considered a limitation as well.

The researcher agrees that the sampling was small and purposefully selected, but
the relevance to this study is that the sample was chosen from a college in the KCTCS
system that is planning to implement a mandated student success course. The KCTCS
system is interested in mandating a college success course for all sixteen colleges;
therefore, information gained in this study can provide valuable information for the other
community colleges in the KCTCS system to follow. The information gained can be used
to guide other demographically similar institutions in the sixteen-college system but may
not be generalizable to any outside the state.

Due to the specific nature and constraints of the study, it was not possible to pilot
the study on a large scale. To minimize the limitation on the validity of the questionnaire
survey, the researcher piloted the survey on a smaller scale by surveying five non-random
participants. Participants were not affiliated with the research site but were from
institutions of higher education. Checking for misunderstandings and inconsistent
interpretations of the questions is essential (Collins, 2003).
Although the interpretation of data obtained from the sample does not rely on the researcher’s experience and knowledge, the responses participants give to survey questions depends on their unique understanding of what they are being asked. A participant’s understanding of questions asked may depend on upon their own social and cultural experiences. The interpretation, coupled with social and cultural factors, could result in bias. The potential for bias creates another limitation of the study in that results are not generalizable to larger institutions nor other two-year community colleges in different geographic areas outside of Kentucky. Various forms of survey designs can be utilized to obtain information-rich data (Creswell, 2009). For this study, the researcher created a standardized close-ended survey instrument that included few open-ended questions thus allowing the researcher to probe for more details and helps to ensure that participants are interpreting questions the way they were intended. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), this design reduces researcher bias within the study as a result of its use of structured questions. Employing this design will not fully alleviate misunderstanding or researcher bias, but it can reduce the incidences of both.

**Definition of Terms**

Many of the terms used throughout this study have vague or implicit definitions. Therefore, the terms, as used in this study, are listed here for clarity.

*Academic Integration:* Student “integration that can be measured in terms of both grade performance and intellectual development during the college years” (Tinto, 1975, p. 104).

*Attrition:* Failure of students to enroll from one semester to the next. (Summers, 2003).
*Best Practices:* refers to “a procedure that has been shown to by research and experience to produce optimal results, and that is established or produced as a standard suitable for widespread adoption” (Merriam-Webster.com, n.d.).

*Closed-ended Question:* A question that is structured in a way that respondents must choose from available responses, thus reducing the chance of researcher bias (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

*Community Colleges:* Also known as Junior Colleges, City Colleges, County Colleges, Technical Colleges, and public two-year colleges are two-year postsecondary schools that offer affordable education, developmental courses, adult education, workforce development, and college transfer programs to all members of a community through their *open access* admissions process.

*Community College Student:* “A community college student is someone seeking a professional certificate or an associate degree” (“EducationUSA – What is a U.S. Community College Student,” para. 1, 2019). For this study, a community college student is one who is attending a community college to seek a credential, professional certificate, or degree without regard to the demographics that more extensively defines them.

*High-Impact Practices:* Practices that have shown to be most effective.

*Holistic:* According to Koch & Gardner (2006), a holistic approach addresses the academic and non-academic needs of the student (as cited in Keup, 2014). A holistic approach to First Year Experience is one that integrates reflection with the learning of both soft and academic skills (Karp et al., 2015).
Implementation: The process of putting a plan into action. For this study, it is used to refer to the execution of a mandated first-year experience course or program.

Mandated: Officially required with few exceptions. For this study, mandated refers to the student success course that is required for all incoming students with less than 30 credit hours.

Open Access: Also known as open door. “All members of a community are afforded a pathway to attain a college education, be it workforce training or through the pursuit of advanced degrees” (Mullin, 2017). For this study, open access refers to the community colleges’ mission of accepting all students regardless of the student’s academic ability, test scores, or economic and social needs.

Open-ended Question: A question that cannot be answered with a provided response which allows respondents to provide a detailed and thoughtful response in their own words. (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). For this study, open-ended questions were used to gain an in-depth understanding of the barriers to the implementation of a mandated FYE course and stakeholder perceptions of what should be taught in the course.

Persistence: The percentage of students who return to college at any institution for their second year (NSCRC Snapshot Report 28, 2017).

Postsecondary Education: Education beyond high school.

Purposeful Sampling, also known in the literature as a Purposive Sample: A non-probability sample. For this study, the sample consisted of participants who were selected based on characteristics of the population (full-time employment status and knowledge of the current FYE course) to help achieve the objective of the study which is
to obtain information-rich, in-depth information. The researcher follows Patton’s preference for the use of the term purposeful (Patton, 2015, p. 265).

Retention: The percentage of students who return to college at the same institution for their second year (NSCRC Snapshot Report 28, 2017).

Stakeholder: According to Merriam-Webster.com, stakeholder refers to “one who is involved in or affected by a course of action” (n.d.). For this study, the stakeholders are the full-time faculty, staff, and administrators who work at the college where the survey was deployed.

Student Success: There is little consensus across educational institutions concerning the definition and measurement of student success (York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015). To measure student success, some institutions of higher learning use data on retention, attrition, or degrees awarded to measure their students’ success. Most agree that students who earn a degree before leaving college have reached success. “Students persisting to completion of their educational goals is a key gauge of student success” (Guilbault, 2016, p. 134). For this study, student success is a student’s ability to achieve the desired outcome as evidenced by their persistence through college, which also improves their quality of life (Kuh et al., 2006; Perna & Thomas, 2008).

Student Success Course: A course designed to increase student success. They are often called first-year experience courses, academic success courses, college success courses, orientation courses, Student Life Skills, College 101, Introduction to College, and first-year and freshman seminars. First Year Experience (FYE) is the name of the student success course explored in the proposed study.
TRiO Program: “A set of federally-funded college opportunity programs that motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds in their pursuit of a college degree” (Galligan, 2014, p. 27).

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter I included a brief discussion of the impact college success courses have on students’ collegiate success as well as an introduction to research on the implementation and mandating of the FYE course at community colleges. The statement of the problem and purpose of the study, rationale, research questions, assumptions, limitations, and definitions of terms used in this study are presented as well. Chapter II contains a review of the literature and research related to students’ collegiate success and the need for a mandated student success course at two-year community colleges. The methodology and procedures used to gather data for the study are explained in Chapter III. Chapter IV contains the research findings and analyses. Chapter V presents a summary of the findings and implications of this study, as well as recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The primary purpose of this literature review is to present previous research that will frame and support the study described in the previous chapter, for which the main emphasis is on the institutional adoption and implementation of a mandated student success course. Another purpose of this study is to add to the limited body of research concerning institutional adoption, implementation procedures, and community colleges practices regarding a mandated student success course. There has been much research conducted on student success courses, but little research has been done on the implementation of the course, particularly at community colleges. The bulk of the research has been conducted on four-year college students in student success courses. According to Pascarella et al. (1995), it is incorrect to generalize the findings from research on four-year colleges to community college students. Educational scholars and administrators agree that student success courses are valuable, and most agree they positively affect student success, but there is little consensus on what should constitute the course, who should take the course, who should teach the course, how to administer the course, and whether the course should be mandated (Cho & Karp, 2012; Crisp & Taggart, 2013; Edenfield, 2018; Grunder & Hellmich, 1996; Hatch, Mardock-Uman, Garcia, et al., 2018; Hatch, Mardock-Uman, Nelson, et al., 2018; Hope, 2010; Karp, et al. 2017; Kimbark, Peters, & Richardson, 2017; Roark, 2013; York, et al. 2015; Zeidenberg et al., 2007). It is important to note that one of the reasons little research has been conducted on student success courses may be correlated with the fact that student success
courses, as they are taught today, have only been a part of college curriculum since the 1970s (Alamuddin & Bender, 2018).

The researcher has divided this review of the literature into four areas of research. In the first area of research, student success which is also known as academic success is defined and primary theoretical definitions are examined as well as researcher and student identified outcomes that define success, concluding with the identification of factors that affect student success. The next area discusses the historical and cultural considerations of American community colleges with a discussion of the colleges within the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and concludes with a discussion of the future of community colleges. Cultural considerations are essential to consider when studying community college students’ success and the implementation of courses or programs that are meant to aid in their success (Kuh et al., 2006). Literature indicates there are considerable differences between the traditional student at a university and the non-traditional student population found at most community colleges; therefore, a definition of community college students is explored in the third area. The fourth area identifies and defines different types of student success courses, as well as explores the history, efficacy, and best practices and goals for the course. The implementation of a course or program is explored with an emphasis on barriers and recommendations.

**Definition of Student Success**

Academic or student success is a central theme in the literature reviewed for this study. Before reviewing other literature relevant to the dissertation topic, the researcher reviewed literature related to student success and identified a definition of student success to reference for this study. Student success is defined by a student's ability to persist to
program or degree completion, which also improves their quality of life (Kuh et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perna & Thomas, 2008).

The term success, particularly academic or student success, is one of the most used and widely defined concepts in higher education. To validate this claim, the researcher conducted a Google Scholar search using the words “define student success.” In 0.09 seconds, 2,930,000 articles and books were obtained. When the researcher used the words “student success,” 4,340,000 results were shown in 0.07 seconds. Searching the word “success” resulted in 5,590,000 articles and books in 0.03 seconds, and the terms “success and higher education” netted 5,100,000 results in 0.07 seconds.

There is little consensus across the literature concerning a definition or measurement of student success. York et al. (2015) stated, “It is not surprising researchers hesitate to define what constitutes success. The term has been applied as a catchall phrase encompassing numerous student outcomes” (p. 1).

Efforts by policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to improve student success are hampered by the absence of a clear, consistent, and comprehensive definition of such success. Numerous books, reports, and journal articles examine various aspects of what might be considered student success. (Perna & Thomas, 2008, p. 2)

This section of the literature review will include: a theoretical definition to guide this study, a review of other theoretical definitions, researcher identified outcomes used to define student success, student identified outcomes that measure student success, and institutional and student factors that contribute to student success.
Guiding Theoretical Definition

While reviewing literature that defines student success, the researcher found it difficult to discern between definitions, outcomes, and methods employed to create success; therefore, the necessity to find a definition for student success as it relates to the current study emerged. York et al. (2015) suggested a need for a “theoretically grounded definition of academic success that is made up of six components: academic achievement, satisfaction, acquisition of skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of learning objectives, and career success” (p. 9). Cuseo postulates that student success is defined by holistic measures that take into account a student’s personal development and goal (2010). Achieving the Dream expands on Cueso’s definition when stating, “Student success means so much more than a personal goal secured—It means improved skills, better employability, and economic growth for families, communities and our nation as a whole” (About Us, para. 2, 2019).

One work by Perna and Thomas (2008), sought to add clarity and to provide a framework whereby “student success” can be defined by discipline-specific, psychological, and institutional perspectives and would be useful to policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and any other stakeholders (p. 4). The researchers were responding to a “need” that was identified by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in 2005. The SSRC noted the need “for a more conceptual and reflective approach to the notions of access, retention, success, and opportunity that…acknowledges the variability of how these terms are defined by different consumers, communities, and policymakers” (as cited in Perna & Thomas, 2008, p. 3). The researchers proposed a conceptual model which focuses on four disciplines:
economics, sociology, psychology, and education where research indicated “high levels of scholarly attention to indicators of student success” (Perna & Thomas, 2008, pp. 4-5). Perna and Thomas (2008) operationalized student success as “completion or effective exercise of one of ten indicators of educational attainment during four key transitions (p. 5). According to Perna and Thomas (2008), the ten indicators of educational attainment include educational aspirations, academic preparation, college access, college choice, academic performance, transfer, persistence to completion, post-BA enrollment, income, and education attainment. The researchers identified the four key transitions as:

1. becoming college ready as measured by educational aspirations or expectations and academic preparation for college;
2. enrollment in college as measured by college access and choice;
3. college achievement as measured by academic performance, transfer among institutions, and persistence to program or degree completion; and
4. post college attainment as measured by enrollment in graduate and professional schools, income, and educational attainment (p. 5).

For this study, Perna and Thomas’s third postulate will be used to help define community college student success as a student’s ability to achieve the desired outcome as evidenced by their persistence through college, which also improves their quality of life (Kuh et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perna & Thomas, 2008).

Most theoretical definitions have focused on outcomes, particularly those of persistence and retention. Two key theorists in student academic success, Alexander Astin and Vincent Tinto, have slightly different views of what contributes to student
success, but both look at persistence and retention as a measure of success. Much of the literature reviewed for this study referenced Astin and Tinto.

**Review of Theoretical Definitions**

Although Tinto and Pusser (2006) state that the definition of student success is “open and implies only successful learning in the classroom” (p. 8), most theoretical definitions focus on outcomes, particularly those the institution can affect, with the majority agreeing that students who earn a degree before leaving college have reached success (Edenfield, 2018; Guilbault, 2016; Kuh et al., 2006; Mann, 2018; Nelson, 2018; Tighe, 2008; Voight & Hundrieser, 2008; Zeidenberg et al., 2007). Student success is “traditionally defined by institutions as completion or graduation” (Edenfield, 2018, p. 15). According to the Kansas Board of Regents, graduation is a commonly used measure of college success (as cited in Mann, 2018, p. 56). Nelson (2018) suggests that a community college student’s success is dependent upon the student’s ability to persist to degree or credential completion or to transfer to a four-year institution. As supported in the literature, the researcher has chosen an outcome-based definition to interpret community college student success as a student’s ability to achieve a goal to transfer or to persist to program or degree completion, which also improves their quality of life (Kuh et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perna & Thomas, 2008). Hearn (2006) reviewed and presented the findings of five reports that had been commissioned by the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC). All five of the reports were aimed at “reviewing and synthesizing the diverse research literature on student success and articulating a persuasive, inclusive theory-based perspective on success” (Hearn, 2006, p. iii). The author concluded that although graduating with a degree is an appropriate
measure of student success; defining student success is a topic that warrants more attention (Hearn, 2006).

**Researcher Identified Outcomes**

*Student success,* as supported in the literature, is measured by extrinsic factors. To better understand the term “student success” as it is portrayed in the literature and to give it the attention Hearn (2016) suggested it is warranted, the researcher reviewed literature as it relates to measurable outcomes. Much of the current literature on student success pays attention to outcomes with two main areas of focus: the institution and the student. Grades and GPA, which indicate the ability to persist to degree completion, are two of the most commonly used outcomes in the measurement of academic success by both the institution and the student (York et al., 2015). Some institutions of higher education use data on retention, attrition, persistence, degrees awarded, or transfer to a four-year college to measure their students’ success. “Students persisting to completion of their educational goals is a key gauge of student success” (Guilbault, 2016, p. 134). Zeidenberg et al.’s (2007) identified credential completion, persistence, and transfer to a four-year university as student success indicators. According to Voight and Hundrieser (2008), “the two most frequently cited statistics used to measure success are the freshman-to-sophomore retention rates and the cohort graduation rate (p. 1). Barefoot (2000) stated, “Although most programs can potentially achieve multiple positive outcomes for students and institutions, the most commonly used measure of effectiveness is improved student retention” (p. 13).

In a report commissioned for the National Symposium on Postsecondary Student Success, Kuh et al. (2006), found that the most common definition of success was
persistence to degree or credential completion. The researchers defined student success as using “traditional measures of academic achievements, such as scores on standardized college entry exams, college grades, and credit hours earned in consecutive terms, which represents progress toward a degree” (Kuh et al., 2006, p. 5). Other studies agree that completion of a degree or credential is the measure of student success. Chen (2016) suggested success is dependent upon the student completing a significant number of credit hours in their first year of college as that is a predictor of a student’s postsecondary credential completion. Cuseo (2010) identified five of the most frequently cited indicators of student success in higher education research: student persistence, educational attainment, academic achievement, student advancement, and holistic development.

Kuh et al. (2006) conducted a thorough review of the literature on student success and found that definitions are outcome based and concluded, “student success is defined using traditional measures of academic achievements, such as scores on standardized college entry exams, college grades, and credit hours earned in consecutive terms, which represent progress toward a degree (p. 5). For this study, the researcher chose to define student success by using part of Kuh et al.’s (2006) definition, “credit hours earned in consecutive terms, which represent progress toward a degree” (p. 5) and the third postulate of Perna and Thomas (2008), “college achievement as measured by academic performance, transfer among institutions, and persistence to program or degree completion” (p. 5). More specifically, student success is a student’s ability to persist to program or degree completion which also improves their quality of life (Kuh et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perna & Thomas, 2008).
Alexander Astin and Vincent Tinto, both student success researchers and theorists, look at persistence and retention as a measure of success but view these from a different lens. Astin’s (1999) Theory of Involvement and Tinto’s (1975) Interactionalist Theory provide the theoretical framework for this study. Astin (1999) asserts that student involvement is correlated with academic success. Astin’s Theory of Involvement emphasizes that a student’s involvement in the learning process leads to persistence, and therefore, success (1999). Tinto’s (1975) Interactionalist Theory focuses on the institution’s impact on student development and success.

Astin’s Theory of Involvement consisted of five core postulates. The first four “accentuate the students’ behavior; it is what the students do and how the students behave that defines and identifies involvement” (Theoretical Foundations, n.d.). The fifth postulate has implications for this study: “The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of the policy or practice to increase student behavior” (Astin, 1999, p. 519). Like Astin, Pike, and Kuh (2005) found that student involvement within the college had a positive correlation with retention and academic success.

According to Nora, Attinasi, & Matonak (1990), “Tinto’s theoretical model of persistence has driven much of the retention research” (p. 338). Tinto’s (1975) Interactionalist Theory focuses on the institution’s impact on student development and success. According to Tinto (1975), ensuring student success requires an institutional commitment to students and ensuring that interaction occurs between the student and the academic or social systems of the college they attend. The focus of these studies is on the measure of persistence and retention as a measure of success. Tinto (1975) concluded
that increased student involvement and increased learning leads to higher persistence and the persistence equates student success. This postulate helps provide the foundation for this study, which is focused on one strategy the organization can do to influence student success, which is implementing a student success course.

**Student Identified Outcomes**

Galligan (2014) surveyed first-generation students who were participants in a TRiO/Student Support Services program at a technical college in the Midwest. He found that beyond grades and GPA, students believed learning appropriate study skills, developing strong relationships, a sense of belonging and being involved, being able to apply what they learned, and achieving their goals were all essential aspects of achieving academic success. Students measured academic success by:

- Grades and cumulative GPA, attending classes, and being motivated to develop appropriate study skills and habits. Several of the survey participants also indicated that for them, part of achieving academic success was a conscious realization of how what they were achieving in the present had a...long-term effect on their ability to continue achieving higher levels of academic success. (p. 97)

According to Galligan’s (2014) study, students identified achieving goals as one of the most important measures of academic success. “Meeting goals was highly personalized, could be short-term and/or long term, and included things such as achieving their associate’s degree, graduating, transferring to a four-year institution, or finding career placement based on their program of study” (p. 125). Participants were asked to
identify how they defined educational success. The following data from the study were reported:

Earning an associate’s degree was chosen by 73.5 percent of participants; earning a bachelor’s degree was chosen by 77.6 percent; earning beyond a bachelor’s degree was chosen by 73.5 percent, and working in a career field was chosen by 83.7%. Working in their career field was the most selected option…this was the choice most likely to describe their perception of educational success. (p. 125)

Factors Contributing to Success

There is little consensus across educational institutions concerning the definition and measurement of student success (York et al., 2015). To measure student success, some institutions of higher learning use data on retention, attrition, or degrees awarded to measure their students’ success. Still, research indicates that some other factors contribute to student success. These contributing factors are often considered as part of the measures for student success. For this study, the researcher separates the factors from the measures.

Tinto & Pusser (2006) explored the definition of success as well as discussed conditions they believed contributed to a student’s success. The researchers believe “too much of the research on student success focuses on events, often external to the institution, that are not under the immediate ability of institutions to affect” (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). In their 2006 report, Tinto and Pusser laid out the five conditions which institutions can affect that promotes student success: institutional commitment, institutional expectations, support, feedback, and involvement or engagement (p. 6).
Kuh et al. (2006) suggested that institutions play an essential role in student success by ensuring a campus-wide culture of student success. According to Kuh et al. (2006), the institutional conditions associated with developing a campus-wide culture of student success include:

• A clear, focused institutional mission.
• High standards and expectations for student performance.
• Assessment and timely feedback.
• Student learning-centered culture.
• Peer support.
• Encouragement and support for students to explore human differences.
• Emphasis on the first college year.
• Respect for diverse ways of knowing.
• Integration of prior learning and experience.
• Academic support programs tailored to meet student needs.
• Ongoing application of learned skills.
• Active learning.
• Collaboration among student and academic affairs, and among students.
• Environment that emphasizes support for academic work, and
• Out-of-class contact with faculty. (pp. 73-74)

Research suggests that when K-12 and postsecondary education sectors collaborate, they are effective at removing barriers for student higher education attainment. According to Boswell (2000), “state and institutional leaders must think of education as a continuum and work toward removing barriers to student movement
between the sectors” (p. 14). There are initiatives which prove that the secondary and postsecondary sectors can work together to create student success. According to Boswell (2000), Ohio, Maryland, and Georgia created K-16 partnerships to focus on educational reform aimed at ensuring high school students are prepared to succeed academically. Positive institutional commitment, expectations, support, and communication can bridge the gap between educational sectors. According to Boswell (2000), “state and institutional leaders must think of education as a continuum and work toward removing barriers to student movement between the sectors” (p. 14).

Factors that are unique to each student may also determine a student’s success. These factors include (but are not limited to) academic ability, readiness, and integration; social integration; socioeconomic status; employment status; family support; resilience; and motivation. Crisp and Taggart (2013) recommended:

the work of Tinto (1997) and others be continued to examine the indirect and direct influence of programs within the context of the other factors (e.g., academic integration, financial concerns, family support) that have been shown to influence the persistence decisions of community college students. (p. 126)

Zeidenberg et al. (2007) suggested that student socioeconomic status and student motivation may be correlated with the student’s enrollment in a student success course, and as a result, be successful. Other factors include the student’s ability to engage in social activities actively, enrollment status - whether students are enrolled part-time or full-time, employment status, and whether they have opportunities to interact with faculty and peers (Crisp & Taggart, 2013). Factors such as academic integration, socioeconomic status, family support, resilience, and motivation are more challenging to control for in
research and can have either positive or negative effects on student success (Crisp & Taggart, 2013; Zeidenberg et al., 2017).

**History and Culture of Community Colleges**

To understand the barriers that community college students face in their pursuit of higher education and the role a student success course plays in reducing the barriers for students (hence aiding students’ success) one must understand the history and culture of community colleges. Community colleges, also known as junior colleges, technical colleges, city colleges, county colleges, and public two-year colleges, provide training, degrees, and other credentials for students who are looking to transfer to universities as well as those wanting to enter the workforce. Community colleges serve more low-income, non-traditional, first-generation, academically unprepared, and underrepresented students than four-year universities (AACC Fast Facts, 2019). Ma and Baum (2016) noted the community colleges’ *open door or open access* policy, coupled with low tuition and geographic proximity to home, make them an essential pathway to postsecondary education attainment (p. 1). Mullins (2017) asserted:

*Open access* means all members of a community - not just a select few - are afforded a pathway to attain a college education, be it workforce training or through the pursuit of advanced degrees. For some, this access to higher education serves to disrupt the cycle of intergenerational poverty and provide civic and fiscal benefits to both students and communities. (p. 1)

With their *open access* policies, community colleges have a defined place in higher education and play a crucial role in student postsecondary education attainment. It has long been recognized that students who have lower socioeconomic statuses and decreased
academic abilities are less likely to be accepted into four-year colleges and less likely to graduate (Sewell & Shah, 1967; Smith, Beaulieu, & Seraphine, 1995). According to Baker & Velez (1996), socioeconomic status (SES) and academic ability are the two primary factors that influence a student’s access to postsecondary education. Community college students are less likely to be academically prepared and more likely to need at least one developmental course compared to students who are accepted into four-year colleges (Wirt, Choy, Rooney, Provasnik, Sen, & Tobin, 2004). Community colleges are fundamental to helping students, who may not otherwise have access, obtain postsecondary education.

**History of American Community Colleges**

The history of community colleges in the United States can be traced back to the Morrill Act of 1862 (the Land Grant Act), which provided grants of land to states to aid in the development of institutions of higher education in an attempt to provide access to citizens who would not otherwise have access (Drury, 2003). The second Morrill Act (1990) provided access to minorities when it disallowed colleges to use race as an admission criterion and allowed the creation of separate land-grant colleges for minorities (Drury, 2003). The passing of the Act paved the way for the creation of public two-year community colleges in the United States. In 1892, the University of Chicago’s president, William Harper separated the university into a ‘junior college’ and a ‘senior college.’ Harper envisioned these classes would be taught in high schools as he introduced the associate degree for those students who graduated from the junior college to show completion of their first two years of college education (Drury, 2003).
Although the *junior college* movement was slow to grow into the twentieth century, growth was spurred in the early twentieth century due to a myriad of factors which were “political, social, and economic in nature coupled with an elitist mentality of university administrators and a growing belief of community residents that a college education should be available to all” (Drury, 2003, p. 2). In 1920, the American Association of Junior Colleges (AAJC), which is now known as the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), was founded (Drury, 2003). During the 1930s, the leaders of the AACC paved the way for vocational education. Drury (2003) noted it was also during that time the term ‘community college’ was coined as ‘junior college’ and the colleges became more oriented toward other groups of students in the community such as veterans and seeking community involvement such as industry. As a result of President Truman’s Commission on Higher Education’s recommendation that postsecondary education be made available to all citizens, *junior colleges* began their open-door policies to admit students with little regard for the preparedness of the student. The Truman Commission envisioned a national system of two-year institutions that would make college more accessible (Cohen et al., 2014).

Community colleges saw continued growth and legitimacy with the advancement of both vocational education, for those students wishing to enter the workplace, and associate degrees for those students who wanted to transfer to the four-year universities (Cohen et al., 2014; Drury, 2003). States began “moving governance of two-year college systems from state boards of education to post-secondary coordinating and governing boards in the 1960s” (Boswell, 2000, p. 4). Community colleges saw significant growth and change during the past decade and begun to emphasize technical skills and workforce
development once again. This renewed focus is in large part due to the economic recession of 2007-2009 and the Obama’s administration’s support for community colleges as demonstrated by the initiative he announced on July 14, 2009. When speaking at Macomb Community College in Michigan, President Obama’s speech emphasized the role that community colleges can play in turning around the economy and promised to promote and help make community colleges stronger (Brandon, 2009). As a result of this focus and the economic recession, community colleges have become an integral part of the higher education landscape in the United States (Evans, Kearney, Perry, Brendan, & Sullivan, 2017). Growth continued until the community colleges of today emerged with their community education; remedial education; specialized occupational training, diplomas, and degrees; transferable associate degrees; and an increased focus on student success. Despite having open-door admissions, “community colleges over the years have become more like four-year colleges...adopting much of the academic culture traditionally associated with universities” (Boswell, 2000, p. 4). Adopting a four-year college culture can create a culture of competition among community colleges and universities. Boswell (2000) concluded that state leaders in education and policy should create incentives that will encourage cooperation rather than competition among educational institutions and to promote more student transfer and accelerated completion of degrees.

History of Kentucky Community Colleges

According to the University of Kentucky’s Libraries Special Collections Research Center’s UK Chronology, Governor Bert Combs signed a bill which mandated the creation of the Community College System in Kentucky by combining five existing
postsecondary education centers in Kentucky: Ashland, Covington, Cumberland, Fort Knox, and Henderson. The bill authorized a new center in Elizabethtown and placed all centers under the University of Kentucky’s jurisdiction, thus creating a community college system (UK Chronology, n.d.). This system grew and added colleges until the Kentucky Community, and Technical College System (KCTCS) was created in 1997, under the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act, House Bill 1, signed by former Governor Paul E. Patton. The system combined the University of Kentucky’s system of 14 community colleges and the Kentucky Workforce Development cabinet’s 15 technical schools to comprise the 16 colleges that are now a part of KCTCS, the system that now has jurisdiction over the colleges (KCTCS System, n.d.). The 16 community colleges are spread throughout the state (See Appendix K). Each of the 16 colleges operates as an independently accredited institution that work collaboratively under the leadership of KCTCS.

The Future of Community Colleges

Forty-one percent of all undergraduate students attend community colleges in America (AACC Fast Facts, 2019). According to the 2012 report from the 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, the future of community colleges depends on their ability to ‘reimagine’ themselves. In 2011, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) launched a new 21st-Century Initiative: educate an additional 5 million students with degrees, certificates, or other credentials by 2020. A commission was formed and given the following charge:

to safeguard the fundamental mission of the community college - ensuring that millions of diverse and often underserved students attain a high-quality college
education - and to challenge community colleges to imagine a new future for themselves, to ensure the success of the students, the institutions, and the nation.

(AACC 21st-Century Initiative, 2012, p. v)

The commission found that change is essential to the future of community colleges and the prosperity of the nation, and to remain relevant community colleges must ‘reimagine’ themselves to meet the ‘demands of the future’ by adopting the following framework for the necessary change:

- *From* a focus on student access *to* a focus on access and student success.
- *From* fragmented course-taking *to* clear, coherent educational pathways.
- *From* low rates of student success *to* high rates of student success.
- *From* tolerance of achievement gaps *to* commitment to eradicating achievement gaps.
- *From* a culture of anecdote *to* a culture of evidence.
- *From* individual faculty prerogative *to* collective responsibility for student success.
- *From* a culture of isolation *to* culture of collaboration.
- *From* emphasis on boutique programs *to* effective education at scale.
- *From* a focus on teaching *to* a focus on learning.
- *From* information infrastructure as management support *to* information infrastructure as learning analytics.
- *From* funding tied to enrollment *to* funding tied to enrollment, institutional performance, and student success.
Examples of Excellence for the Future

With state and federal funding for higher education decreasing and legislative demand for degree completion increasing, the development of innovative programs and the community college’s ability to build a reputation as institutes of excellence will determine the future of American community colleges. Partnerships with organizations such as Achieving the Dream and the Lumina Foundation whose work and mission are to promote student access and success is fundamental to achieving excellence. This literature review highlights the success that both Valencia College and Achieving the Dream have achieved and employs elements from both organizations’ work to illustrate beliefs that will guide the future of community colleges.

Valencia College. One community college in Florida known as Valencia College has developed a national reputation for student success as evidenced by their receiving the Aspen Prize for Community College excellence during the 2011-2012 academic year. Thus, Valencia College became known as the best community college in the nation. It is also one of the largest community colleges in America with their total enrollment of 60,000 during the 2017-2018 school year. Valencia has many innovative practices, but one of the Valencia College’s most important is what the college call their Big Ideas: Sustaining Authentic Organizational Change through Shared Purpose and Culture initiative which started as a result of their culture of shared responsibility and purpose and became college’s 2014 Quality Enhancement Program plan. The tenants of the Big Ideas initiative are 1. Anyone can learn anything under the right conditions; 2. Start Right; 3. Connection and Direction; 4. The College is how the students experience us, not
how we experience them; 5. The purpose of assessment is to improve learning; and 6. Collaboration (Shugart, S., Phelps, J., Puyana, A., Romano, J., & Walter, K., 2012).

**Achieving the Dream.** Achieving the Dream (ATD) is a national, nonprofit organization that refers to itself as a “national leader in championing evidence-based institutional improvement” whose mission is to foster student success (About Us, 2019). Achieving the Dream began as an initiative by the Lumina Foundation and its partners in 2014 and has grown to a network over 220 member colleges located in 44 states and the District of Columbia. According to Achieving the Dream, community colleges pave the way to the future of America by providing a path for millions of students to college attainment and high-level job skills. Achieving the Dream institutions join and make a three-year financial, ideological, and training commitment to student access and success. In return, institutional partners receive guidance, coaching, support, and training to implement college-wide initiatives based on evidence-based practices. Achieving the Dream provides a comprehensive approach (framework) for colleges who wish to create the “student-focused culture” that promotes student access and success and results in successful initiatives. The seven “essential capacities” of the framework are as follows: 1. Leadership and Vision, 2. Data & Technology, 3. Equity, 4. Teaching & Learning, 5. Engagement & Communication, 6. Strategy & Planning, and 7. Policies & Practice (About Us, 2019, para. 3-4, 2019). According to Achieving the Dream, colleges must be strong in each capacity in order to take on any large-scale initiative that promotes student success. It is through their mission, vision, data-driven initiatives, partnerships that Achieving the Dream is influencing the future of community colleges.
Defining the Community College Student

According to EducationUSA, which is a United States Department of State network of over 425 international advising centers in more than 175 countries, “a community college student is someone seeking a professional certificate or an associate degree” (EducationUSA – What is a U.S. Community College Student, para. 1, 2019). The definition is accurate, but one that does not discuss the diverse demographics of the students who attend these institutions. Most community colleges students are low-income, underrepresented minority, non-traditional, first-generation, and academically unprepared (Tinto & Pusser, 2006; AACC Fast Facts, 2019). ‘Underpreparation’ is typically viewed in terms of deficiencies in students’ basic academic skills (Do Student Success, n.d.; Zeidenberg et al., 2007). Furthermore, community college students are more likely to attend part-time than full-time. When students enroll in community college, they are required to take assessments that categorized them as “college ready,” meaning they can enroll in college-level courses, or “developmental” or “remedial,” meaning they are required to take courses to prepare them for college-level courses. Approximately 50% of all entering college students are required to take multiple pre-college level courses to help them become academically prepared for college-level work (Bailey & Cho, 2010; Chen, 2016). Wirt et al. (2014) concluded that community college students were more likely to be academically underprepared and to take longer than four-year college students to complete their curriculum and less likely to be academically prepared. Community college students face different challenges than that of traditional university students. It is in the challenges that the community college students face that they are more comprehensively defined.
While America’s four-year institutions have academic criteria that students must meet before being admitted, community colleges accept all regardless of their academic abilities, also known as an *open door or open access* (Ma and Baum, 2016; Mullins, 2017). According to a 2016 report prepared for National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 68 percent of those entering two-year public colleges took at least one remedial course during their enrollment between 2003 and 2009, compared to 40% of those entering four-year public colleges (as cited in Chen, 2016). Approximately 50 percent of two-year college students took two or more remedial courses, and on average, these students took three remedial courses contrasted with the 9 percent of four-year students who took two or more remedial classes. These statistics are evidence that community college students have different needs than those of their four-year college going counterparts (Chen, 2016).

According to Inside Higher Ed, EducationUSA conducted a survey in fall 2017 and fall 2018 titled the *Revealing Institutional Strengths and Challenges (RISC) Survey*. Students at ten community colleges were surveyed about the challenges they faced during their current term. Approximately 9,500 students responded, which represented 19% of the population (N=50,097). The survey results indicated that community college students face an array of challenges that affect their success, which include demands outside of college and challenges relating to their college experience. According to the survey results, the top three challenges to a community college student’s success is (a) work, (b) paying expenses, and (c) family and friends.
• 34% (n = 2,095) chose “Work” with 61% of those stating, “Work hours do not leave time for study and 49% stated, “Pay not enough to cover expenses while in school.”

• 34% (n = 2,055) chose “Paying expenses” with 71% of those stated, “Living expenses,” and 58% stated, “Books, software, and other supplies.

• 30% (n = 1,844) chose “Family and friends” with 72% of those stating, “Difficulty balancing demands of family and college” and 35% stating, “Difficulty dealing with the health of family and friends.” It is significant to note that 240 students reported having difficulty finding childcare (Smith, 2019).

These findings indicate that community college students are defined by more than the degree they are seeking and the demographics that describe them. Community College students are also identified by the challenges they face to higher education attainment and are likely to be low-income, non-traditional, first-generation, academically unprepared, and underrepresented students. Achieving the Dream expands upon the term “underrepresented” students to identify the students to include, but are not limited to: students of color, marginalized gender and intersex orientations, second-language students, undocumented students, veterans, students with disabilities, students with children, foster care youth, and those who have been or currently are incarcerated (About Us, para. 4, 2019). According to the American Association of Community Colleges, 78% of students who attend the nations, 1,051 community colleges have special needs as demonstrated by the following demographics: classification, attendance status, race/ethnicities, and age:
Classification:

- 29% are first generation to attend college;
- 15% are single parents;
- 9% are non-U.S. citizens;
- 5% are veterans;
- 12% are students with disabilities; and
- 8% are students with prior bachelor’s degree. (Fast Facts, 2019).

Attendance status:

- 37% are full-time; and
- 63% are part-time. (Fast Facts, 2019).

Race/ethnicities:

- 25% are Hispanic;
- 13% are Black;
- 46% are White;
- 6% are Asian/Pacific Islander;
- 1% are Native American;
- 3% are 2 or more races;
- 4% are other/unknown; and
- 2% are nonresident alien. (Fast Facts, 2019).

Age:

- Average age is 28 years old;
- 54% are less than 22 years old;
- 38% are 22-39 years old; and
• 9% are 40 years of age and older (Fast Facts, 2019).

**Student Success Courses**

Over the past two decades, America’s postsecondary institutions have increasingly become more interested in ways to enhance the students’ first-year experience. Most offer some type of course, program, or initiative that focuses on orienting students to campus and helping the student transition to higher education. Initiatives are numerous, ranging from two-hour seminars to full semester first-year experience courses, but few have a ‘total campus’ approach to the first-year experience (Barefoot, 2000, 2004). For this research study, First Year Experience is the name of the student success course being explored. Research and development of first-year courses, programs, and initiatives have increased, but the rate of students who drop out between their first and second years of college remains high. According to Barefoot (2000), the U.S. higher education system has an opportunity to capitalize on the range of initiatives that have been developed during the past two decades to “go beyond a single best practice program to a broader characterization of a campus’s total approach to the first year” (Barefoot, 2004, p. 5).

As discussed in chapter one of this study, a student success course is a course which is designed to increase persistence, retention, and help students succeed in college. The course credit hours may range from 0 to 3 credit hours. The course may be mandatory or elective. The course may be paired with a remedial/development course or another discipline-specific course. Student success courses are known by a variety of names which include: *first-year experience courses, academic success courses, college success courses, orientations, College 101, Introduction to College, and first-year and*
freshman seminars. First Year Experience (FYE) is the name of the student success course explored in this study.

“One approach to improving success for community college students is to have them take a student success course” (Karp & Bork, 2012). The student success course is meant to familiarize students with the college and give them the tools they need to be successful in college as evidenced by earning a college credential (Karp, Raufman, Efthimiou, & Ritze, 2017). The National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina uses Koch and Gardner’s (2006) definition to define the first-year experience (as cited in Keup, 2014). According to Koch and Gardner (as cited in Keup, 2014),

The first-year experience is not a single program or initiative but is instead a combination of intentional efforts that combine the academic and co-curricular.

First Year Experience courses are holistic as they address the academic and non-academic needs of the student. (2016)

Student success courses include strategies that help the student be successful in the classroom, but it is also crucial that student success courses help students learn behavioral strategies and gain college culture awareness so that students can be successful both in and out of the classroom (Karp & Bork, 2012).

History of the FYE Course

First-year experience courses have evolved from their original form as non-credit bearing orientations to college as they were initially designed and used in the 1800s to the more holistic courses used today. In 1888, Boston College in Massachusetts was the first to offer the course as an extended seminar. Reed College in Portland, Oregon began
offering it for credit as part of the students’ curriculum, and it became acceptable to offer it as a credit-bearing course rather than a non-credit bearing orientation or seminar to help ‘underprepared’ students succeed. Through the early 1900s, the course continued to grow and evolve. By 1930, more than one-third of all institutions began offering first-year orientation seminars as part of their curriculum. By the 1960s, universities began moving away from the first-year seminar courses, and the courses became almost non-existent until the 1970s (Gahagan, 2002).

First Year Experience (FYE) courses, as they have become known, have their origins rooted in campus antiwar protest and violence (Tobolowsky & Associates, 2008). As a result of the unease and protests on his campus, the University of South Carolina’s President Thomas Jones promised to create a course that would unite students and create a sense of belonging on campus to ease the unrest (Keup, 2014). In 1972, the first semester-long orientation course for first-year students, College 101, was created and offered as a course that would help improve the first-year experience of students (Tobolowsky & Associates, 2008). The University of South Carolina became known as the pioneer of the FYE course. Today, the University is home to the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition which according to the University, “serves as the trusted expert internationally recognized leader, and clearinghouse for scholarship, policy, and best practice for all postsecondary student transitions” (National Resource Center, n.d.). Student success courses have become commonplace in postsecondary education, and it is accepted practice for student success courses to address issues such as retention, academic skills and experience, campus
connection, interpersonal skills, personal development, civic engagement, and career exploration (Keup, 2014).

**Efficacy of the FYE Course**

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2006), a question which is commonly asked about student success courses is, “Do student success courses help students succeed?” Zeidenberg et al. (2007) addressed this question with the researchers’ report titled: *Do Student Success Courses Actually Help Community College Students Succeed?* The effectiveness of student success courses is the focus of the Zeidenberg et al. (2007) report. The researchers were provided funding for their study by the Lumina Foundation for Education through Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count initiative. Despite the recent popularity of success courses being taught at community colleges, little research has been conducted on their effectiveness (Zeidenberg et al. 2007). The study attempted to discover whether success courses result in a student’s success by synthesizing a research study conducted in 2006 by the Division of Community Colleges within the Florida Department of Education. The study looked at the efficacy of the student success course, called *Student Life Skills*, taught in Florida’s 28 community colleges. Zeidenberg et al. (2007) concluded, that although further research is needed to identify the aspects of student success courses that show the greatest effect on student success, enrollment in the *Student Life Skills* course was correlated with student success.

Crisp and Taggart (2013) conducted a narrative review that synthesized and critiqued three student success best practices: learning communities, student success courses, and supplemental instruction. The researchers’ study included 15 articles
Twelve of the 15 studies focused on student success courses investigated the impact of the course on some measure of student retention/persistence. Of these, all but one quantitative study found success courses to be positively related to student retention...In contrast, findings regarding the impact of student success courses on students’ grades or GPA were mixed (p. 123).

Crisp and Taggart (2013) concluded they found evidence to suggest that each of the 15 student success courses in their study was related to student success but had “less empirical evidence that demonstrates best practices or how to effectively implement student success programs on a community college campus (p. 124).

Other studies have concluded that student success courses have a positive impact, as well. Hulbert (2014) found that enrollment in a student success course in the first semester was positively correlated with student credit attainment and persistence to the second year. Karp, Raufman, Efthimiou, & Ritze (2015) found that student success courses have a positive influence on early student outcomes such as credit attainment and semester to semester persistence. Mann (2018) found that students who complete an academic success course were more likely to persist from their first semester to their next.

Despite the wealth of research contending student success courses improve academic performance, lead to increased student retention, and promote persistence to graduation, 45% of students beginning at the community college leave within two years before completing a degree or certificate program (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). Although
students who take an FYE course in their first semester are more likely to persist to the next semester (Karp et al., 2015; Mann, 2018), it is not common practice to mandate the course; and even when they are some community colleges still have a problem with students persisting to completion or transfer. Student success programs (courses, orientations, seminars) must be intentionally designed and become part of the campus culture to affect students’ success in college and beyond as they are intended. Kuh et al. (2006), maintained:

Simply offering such programs does not guarantee that they will have the intended effects on student success. Institutional programs and practices must be of high quality, carefully designed to meet the needs of students they are intended to reach, and firmly rooted in a student success-oriented campus culture. (p. 58)

**Best Practices and Goals of the FYE Course**

Although research indicates there is a positive correlation between first-year experience courses and student success, there has been little research on how to effectively implement the course or the best practices that make the course most effective. According to Merriam-Webster.com, best practices refers to “a procedure that has been shown to by research and experience to produce optimal results, and that is established or produced as a standard suitable for widespread adoption” (n.d.). Best practices for a successful First Year Experience course are still being debated as the course is still relatively new in education. Although Crisp and Taggart (2013) concluded that they had “less empirical evidence that demonstrates best practices or how to effectively implement student success programs on a community college campus, there
are other studies, most less rigorous, that make recommendations for best practices” (p. 124).

Hughes (2017) conducted a qualitative study to examine the perceptions of students, administrators, and faculty on factors that facilitate college success as identified by degree completion. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with ten faculty and administrators and five students. After coding and analyzing the data, Hughes (2017) found the following to be essential when creating a student success course that promotes student success:

The curriculum was shown to be important. Two areas of concern where found: duration of the course as alignment with credit hours earn (16 weeks for one credit hour course) and curriculum alignment. It is important to include soft skills as well as college transfer information. (p. 162-163)

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005) found that students who interact with their peers are more likely to persistence to degree completion and that peer interaction is one of the most pervasive and powerful forces in student persistence. Interaction and engagement with faculty and staff at the college is a significant factor in student success as well. Faculty accessibility to students, coupled with a peer environment that emphasizes community, persistence, and degree completion encourages persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Karp et al. (2015), while conducting research commissioned by the Community College Research Center (CCRC), found that restructuring student success courses “to focus on student-centered pedagogy and integrated course content has the potential to make them more impactful” (p. 2). The researchers also determined, “the use of
contextualized, thematic instruction coupled with a course structure that encourages opportunities for student practice appears to encourage student success” (p. 33). It is important to teach students “new ways of thinking so they can develop reflective and metacognitive skills...providing students with opportunities to practice reflecting on their educational progress and problem-solving...is critical in preparing them for the role of the community college student” (Karp & Bork, 2012, p. 37).

First-year experience courses are more effective when housed in a centralized area around a ‘common’ course curriculum and offered across disciplines (Astin, 1993). Studdert (2013) found that “comprehensive and centralized FYE programs have proven to be more effective than those that are decentralized and fractured” (p. 58). Studdert (2013) suggested faculty members must be involved in all aspects of a student’s preparation and stated, “Faculty members must be more than just teachers...They must be prepared with the knowledge and skills and the motivation to enact the important changes that can result in increased student success and retention” (p. 162).

Implementing a Course or Program

Implementing a course or a program requires examining potential barriers and recommendation for implementation.

Barriers. In her dissertation, Clark (2012) discussed concerns that can be considered barriers to the successful creation, development, and implementation of a first-year experience course. Among those were insufficient buy-in from the stakeholders, weak leadership, lack of resources, stigmatization regarding whom takes the course, having enough resources including an allocated budget, limited research in the literature on best practices for community college FYE courses, and the broad nature of
the FYE course curriculum. Clark’s recommendations for overcoming most of these barriers are listed in the recommendation section of this literature review.

In his dissertation, Studdert (2013) concluded that faculty’s lack of knowledge and skills related to the FYE course along with a lack of motivation and organizational culture which supports support programs for students were gaps or barriers to the development of a comprehensive first-year experience course. Lack of awareness of the program is a barrier. A study by Studdert (2013) found that although there was strong campus support for a program to orientate incoming students, there was a lack of awareness of what orientation entailed.

A recent national survey of 172 public two-year institutions in the U.S., conducted by Alumuddin and Bender (2018), found that all institutions participating in the survey offer some type of FYE program, but the programs that are offered most often follow a four-year programming structure and are not tailored to the needs of the community college student. The majority of the 172 institutions identified insufficient financial resources and resistance to change among faculty or staff as the two barriers most likely to block them from expanding their FYE programs. They further concluded institutions were concerned with the tension that FYE programs cause to existing infrastructure and resources.

Mann (2018) found that there is limited research available that explains how taking a student success course is related to academic success for community colleges. Most of the research has been on best practices for four-year university students. The limited research on best practices for community college first-year experiences courses is another barrier to the implementation of a mandated first-year experience course.
Recommendations. Little formal research has been conducted on implementing or mandating a student success course (Hearn, 2006). Although recommendations for how to implement a mandated course or program are scarce in the literature, the literature does provide recommendations for future research, considerations for implementing a course or program, and for what to include in a course or program when implementing one. Crisp and Taggart (2013) offered several recommendations for further research. According to Crisp and Taggart (2013), future research should “move beyond the use of small, narrow samples and examine the extent to which findings are externally valid and can be generalized to broad student populations” (p. 127). The researchers also find there is a need for connecting existing research with current practice, but found that it is difficult as to do because a large number of studies on student success program effectiveness conducted at community colleges are not published, available online, or easily accessible (Crisp & Taggart, 2013). Lastly, the researchers suggested, “collaboration among researchers and practitioners in order to (a) understand the unique characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors that are related to academic success and, (b) effectively apply this knowledge to the development and implementation of student success programs/interventions” (Crisp & Taggart, 2013, p. 127). The researchers encouraged collaboration among community college districts, researchers, and practitioners (Crisp & Taggart, 2013).

Tinto & Pusser (2006), make several recommendations for consideration when developing/implementing policies that affect student success. These include:

1. Those who formulate policy should place a high priority on achieving consensus on goals and strategies for student success policies. Consensus
should be obtained on how policies should be implemented, who will implement the policies, and what other actors will be affected by the implementation of the policies.

2. Vast differences in demographics, history, culture, and resources need to be considered when creating these policies.

3. Policies should be viable ones that can be implemented with the resources at hand.

4. Policies need the support of broad coalitions of institutional stakeholders across multiple sectors of the educational system as well as the support of students, families, and communities.

5. Political accountability ‘accountability to the citizens’ is key to long term policy viability and to the generation of new policies that build upon and extend the efficacy of existing policies (p. 32-33).

Engstrom and Tinto (2008), concluded that institutions must invest in the creation of structured and carefully aligned activities geared toward helping students succeed, and stated, it is not a matter of adding more basic skills, the basic skills that are already offered have to be restructured to help student succeed (p. 50). The researchers advocate for learning communities as part of the student success initiative and are convinced that learning communities, when implemented correctly, serve as a powerful tool in student success, particularly for the under-prepared students. However, they warned,

Effective learning communities require more than simple co-registration in the courses. To be effective, learning communities require that faculty and staff
change the way they work and, in some cases, think. They have to collaborate to construct coherent places of learning. (p. 50)

Learning communities are supported in the literature as a practice that enhances student success and encourages student retention by building a sense of community and helping students more comfortably engage in intellectual activities (Bailey & Cho, 2010; Engstrom & Tinto, 2008; Kim, 2018; Rocconi, 2011; Tinto, 1997; Tinto, 2006; Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Tinto (2006), cautions “It is one thing to identify effective action; it is another to implement it in ways that significantly enhance student retention over time” (p. 8). Tinto (2006) finds it remarkable that institutions of higher education are increasingly considering student success courses as vital, yet they are using adjunct and less experienced faculty to teach these courses even though:

- research shows that the first year is the critical year in which decisions to stay or leave are most often made, where the foundations for effective learning are or are not established and where, by extension, the potential returns to institutional investment in student retention and learning are likely to be greatest. (p. 8)

Since the recession of the mid-2000s, several dissertation studies have examined the first-year experience course and its role in students’ higher education attainment. Clark (2012) examined the processes and procedures used in the creation, development, and implementation of a first-year experience course at a public community college. The implemented program was phased in with a five-year implementation plan. Several findings emerged that could serve as best practices for the creation, development, and implementation of a first-year experience course. Clark (2012) found that faculty
training about the course was essential, particularly for the advising and the registration processes. Faculty buy-in and support was considered necessary and was obtained through massive communications, website development, convocation activities, and group discussions. Strong leadership throughout the entire process was considered one of the most important aspects for creating success for course implementation. To further guarantee this buy-in and to create a culture of shared leadership, sub-committees were created, and each sub-committee had a specific role in the creation, development, and the implementation of the course. The sub-committees included the: FYE research sub-committee, textbook sub-committee, marketing sub-committee, and an orientation/advising/registration sub-committee. The buy-in and support of all organizational stakeholders (president, deans, chairs, coordinators, and staff) were essential and helped to create the culture of shared leadership. Clarke (2012) concluded that practitioners who wish to ‘successfully’ create, design, and implement a first-year experience course should consider the recommendations as following:

1. Create a strategic plan that involves the entire campus since FYE courses are considered college-wide, and not departmental, courses.

2. Create an organizational structure that supports the FYE course along with the resources and support staff before the implementation which includes senior leadership, a dean, faculty, and student support services who collaborate on all activities required within the course.

3. Create professional development training modules aligned with the FYE course curriculum and provide adequate time for faculty and staff to complete training before the implementation of the course.
4. Establish standardized college processes and procedure for registering and advising FYE students and conduct a training session for all who are involved in the advising and registration process before the implementation of the course (p. 90-92).

Studdert (2013) completed a dissertation examining the first-year experience at an American university. Like most research, this was conducted about four-year colleges but has some implications for community colleges, particularly on the role faculty play in the implementation of a student success course or program. The findings of his study indicated that faculty must be empowered to enact the changes necessary to support student success. Studdert (2013) stated that faculty need the support of leadership.

Summers (2012) discussed the National Resources Center for the First-Year Experience’s 2018 survey in her dissertation. Summers (2012) reviewed the survey’s findings, which indicates credit hours attached to the FYE course is related to the course’s effectiveness. Three credit hour courses were found to be more effective than one credit hour courses, and ‘small class’ size was an important aspect as well. The researcher also recommended full-time faculty who are more available and engaged with the students should teach FYE courses and concluded, “In this age of accountability in higher education, institutions must take more aggressive steps in trying to demonstrate student learning” (p. 28).

Kuh et al. (2006) recognized that there is a limit as to what postsecondary institutions can do to help students overcome the factors that put them at risk. Risk factors, according to the CCSSE, 2015 report include being academically underprepared, non-traditional, first-generation, financially independent, part-time student, and working
more than 30 hours per week (as cited in Kuh et al., 2006). The researchers also acknowledge there are strategies cited in the literature that institutions can employ when designing interventions such and courses and programs that will provide the most successful outcomes. Swail (2003) suggested the following principles for designing student success interventions such as courses and programs:

- Rely on proven research;
- suit needs of the campus;
- institutionalize the activity or service or program;
- involve a variety of groups on campus;
- be sensitive to the change issue and retrain staff;
- focus on students;
- plan for sustainability regarding funding;
- conduct assessment and institutional research;
- be patient; and
- target the neediest student populations (as cited in Kuh et al., 2006).

Chapter II provided a review of the literature related to student success, the history, and future of community colleges, first-year experience courses, and the implementation of FYE courses. Key theorist and theory related to student success discussed. Chapter III includes a review of the research questions, the research design, participant selection, protection of participants, pilot test, data collection and analysis, and potential for researcher bias.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is two-fold. The first aim is to establish strategies that can guide KCTCS colleges interested in the implementation of a mandated student success course as well as to identify barriers they may encounter as they move from desiring a mandated student success course to acting to create one. The second objective is to add to the limited body of research concerning student success courses, especially regarding faculty perceptions, institutional adoption, implementation procedures, and community colleges practices.

Research Questions

To compare stakeholder responses for similar types of questions, the researcher surveyed full-time faculty, staff, and administrators, who were 18 years of age or older, regarding their perceptions of the need for and implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course. The study examines the following research question:

How can stakeholders’ perceptions be used to help community colleges achieve institutional adoption and implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course?

The following are sub-questions to address the research question:

1. Are there relationships between selected variables (e.g., position, age, gender, ethnicity, and experience) and faculty, staff, and administration’s attitudes toward implementing a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky Community College?
2. What are faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes regarding academically underprepared students, the college’s responsibility for those students, and the mandating of the FYE course at a select Kentucky community college?

3. According to faculty, staff, and administration’s attitudes, what are the most important factors that facilitate implementing a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky Community College?

4. What principles and skills taught in the First Year Experience course are most critical to student success as identified by the faculty, staff, and administration?

5. According to faculty, staff, and administration, what are the barriers that limit the implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky Community College?

**Research Design**

A goal of this study was to obtain information that addresses the central research question: “How can stakeholders’ perceptions be used to help community colleges achieve institutional adoption and implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course?” The information gained may be useful for other schools in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System as they implement a mandated student success. A quantitative survey design was employed for this study. A quantitative research approach is appropriate for the study of faculty, staff, and administrator perspectives as quantitative studies focus on description and explanation (Creswell, 2015). The survey design allowed the researcher to gain statistical data about the
subjects’ perspectives on both the mandating and implementation of the FYE course. Surveys allow researchers to measure perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of a population (Creswell, 2009).

Obtaining descriptive, detailed, and explanatory responses was necessary to provide the rich information that other similar colleges could follow. A non-experimental descriptive design approach was utilized as the researcher was seeking to describe a variable which was the stakeholder perceptions of the implementation of a mandated community college First Year Experience course. This approach allowed the researcher to explore the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions that are necessary to understand the operational information that needs to be tracked over time (Yin, 2009). The researcher employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants. Purposive sampling is a nonrandom technique where the researcher deliberately chooses participants due to the qualities they possess. The researcher decides what information needs to be known and then purposely chooses people who can and are willing to provide the information based on their knowledge of or experience with the topic being researched (Merriam, 1998). A survey which included both closed and open-ended questions was emailed to all full-time administrators, faculty, and staff at one of the colleges in Kentucky Community and Technical College System. All stakeholders who have knowledge of or experience with the First Year Experience course were asked to complete the survey.

**Population**

**Participant Selection**

For this study, participants were selected from a specific pool of faculty, staff, and administrators who have intimate knowledge of the mandated FYE course from the
chosen site. These individuals represented both the male and female genders and had varying demographic characteristics. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness assisted with the emailing of the survey to all 210 full-time employees at the chosen college.

The researcher used non-probability sampling in the form of purposeful sampling when choosing participants for this study. Purposeful sampling is appropriate for a study seeking to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. The purpose of the research should guide sampling methods. “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight, and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). A smaller representative group, known as a sample was chosen from the population (the larger group of individuals) who had intimate knowledge of both the college and the mandated First Year Experience course.

**Protection of Participants**

It is crucial to protect human subjects involved in any research project (Yin, 2009). The identity and privacy of each participant in the study were protected using multiple strategies. Each participant was required to sign an informed consent before they could begin the survey (See Appendix C). The informed consent made participants aware of the specifics of the study and their role within the study. Participants were also informed that the completion of the survey was voluntary, and their responses would be anonymous. The researcher was careful to avoid identifying questions when creating the survey. For instance, measures were taken to group several ‘like’ areas together for respondents to choose from when asked the department in which they worked.

Permission was received from the site college President (See Appendix B), and Western
Kentucky University’s IRB protocol for human subject research was followed. See Appendix A for the IRB approval.

**Procedures**

**Instrumentation**

Quantitative research was utilized with a non-experimental descriptive approach. The researcher created a 17-item survey with both open and close-ended questions to gain participants’ perspective of mandating the First Year Experience course. Surveys allow researchers to measure perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of a population (Creswell, 2009). A survey instrument was created to address the central research question: How can stakeholders’ perceptions be used to help community colleges achieve institutional adoption and implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course? The survey was organized into four sections: demographic data, knowledge of or experience with the FYE course, topics deemed necessary to add to the FYE curriculum, and potential barriers to the implementation of the course. A combination of multiple-choice, drop-down, and Matrix tables were used in the creation of the survey.

Four of the statements regarding barriers in question 16 of the survey were statements that were measured in a national survey copyrighted by Ithaka S+R and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (Alamuddin & Bender, 2018). Ithaka S+R is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that helps the academic community advance research. In particular, the following statements were replicated: resistance to change among college faculty and/or staff, inadequate physical or technological infrastructure, insufficient information about best practice for working with first-year students in two-year programs, and resistance to
change among college leadership. The researcher’s inclusion of these statements allowed for commonalities and differences to be compared between survey data and national data. The researcher did not seek written permission to use the statements because the license allows others to share (which includes copying and redistributing in any format) and adapt the material without written permission as long as the user, “gives appropriate credit, provides a link to the license, indicates if changes were made, and does not suggest the licensor endorses the user or the use of the material” (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/, para. 1).

**Pilot Test**

The survey was pre-tested with five individuals who are not associated with any of the 16 colleges in the system, but who are education professionals in varying positions: one administrator who had also been faculty, one faculty, two identified as staff, and one retired grant and research administrator. Although the pilot study sample was small, care was taken to choose participants who were representative of the broader population. The pilot is an essential step in the research project. It helps determine the feasibility of the research instrument, identifying flaws in the questionnaire such as biased or poorly written questions and weaknesses in the study. Checking for misunderstandings and inconsistent interpretations of the questions is essential (Collins, 2003).

Comments received from all five test participants indicated belief the instrument measured the intended outcomes. Two participants indicated that the survey questions were “clear” and easy to understand. Another stated the questions were “straightforward” and indicated there was no need to change any of the questions. One participant commented, “The light gray text is hard to read against the white background” and the
"agree" "disagree" and all the other options get hidden as one scrolls down through the questions, which makes it hard to remember which click circle in the row corresponds to "agree" or "disagree." The researcher addressed the issue mentioned before emailing the survey to the intended population.

Data Collection

Quantitative methods for administrating an online survey were followed. The researcher designed a survey to address all research questions specifically. Data were collected by an online survey that was constructed using the online survey software, Qualtrics. Approval to conduct the research was obtained from both Western Kentucky University’s Institutional Review Board and the chosen college’s President. Once all approvals were obtained, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness at the chosen site emailed the informed consent and the survey to all 210 qualified participants. The survey remained open for one week. A reminder email was sent two days before it closed.

Data Analysis

This study combined a descriptive survey with correlational analysis to examine the research question and the sub-questions. Responses were collected through Qualtrics. The software package provided reports using descriptive statistics showing the mean, standard deviation, variance, and frequency of response for each variable. Descriptive statistics were used to explain the data obtained from responses to questions which addressed course structure, stakeholder perceptions, implementation procedures, and potential barriers of the mandated student success course. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics so that responses could be compared across the subgroups: faculty, staff, and administrators to look for commonalities and differences. With the data
collected, frequencies were run on each variable and cross-tabulation was conducted with attitude toward a mandated FYE course and each of the variables: age, area of employment, education, ethnicity, gender, position, and years employed. The survey design allowed for open-ended questions to code the most common stated barriers that limit the implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course.

Pearson Correlation was used to determine if there was a relationship between the selected variables (gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, main area of employment, position at the College, length of employment at the College) and stakeholder attitudes toward implementing a mandatory First Year Experience course at the site college. According to Taylor (1990), the correlation coefficient is difficult to interpret, but generally, the following scale is used to interpret the associations:

- $\leq 0.35$ generally considered weak
- $0.36 - 0.67$ generally considered moderate
- $0.68 - 1.0$ generally considered strong

Values of ($r$) range from a minimum of -1.0 to a maximum of 1.0. Increasingly negative ($r$) values indicate a negative relationship, and variables are inversely related to one another - as one variable increases, the other variable decreases. Conversely, increasingly positive ($r$) values indicate a positive relationship and variables move in the same direction - as one variable increases, the other variable increases. The closer Pearson correlation coefficient is to 1.0 or -1.0, the stronger the association between the variables (Taylor, 1990). Descriptive statistics were used to address the remaining sub-questions. The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows software package to analyze the data.
Potential for Researcher Bias

Bias can potentially play a role in any research study. Merriam (2009) stated, “rather than trying to eliminate these biases it is important to identify them and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data” (p. 5). Identifying any connection the researcher has to the site studied, the program being studied, or participants is vital so that potential researcher bias can be monitored and kept from shaping the collection and interpretation of the data. Therefore, the researcher discloses the following: the researcher serves as a First Year Experience Coordinator, a member of a national organization's research committee that has been tasked with researching best practices and teaches First Year Experience classes at one of the sixteen community colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. However, the researcher does not have authority over any participant in the study.

Quantitative analysis was conducted using mostly closed-ended survey questions, leaving little room for researcher interpretation or bias potential.

Summary

Chapter III described the methodology used in this quantitative research study. The study engages survey methods and uses non-random, purposeful sampling. The sampling procedure and study participants were described. Participant selection and participant protection were discussed. Finally, procedures for data collection, data analysis, and potential for researcher bias were discussed. A discussion of the pre-pilot was included as well. Chapter IV will present the research findings and analyses.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

With decreased funding to community colleges, the increase in student financial aid default rates, and industry emphasizing the need for both technical and soft skills, the popularity of student success courses has increased (CCCSE, 2012; Hirschy, Bremer, & Castellano, 2011; Zeidenberg et al., 2007). Miller (2014) concluded that First Year Experience courses and programs are the future of community colleges. Although the literature is rich with evidence regarding the benefits of student success courses, there is a gap in the literature regarding institutional adoption, implementation, and the mandating of the course. The purpose of this study is to establish strategies that can guide colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System interested in the implementation of a mandated student success course as well as to identify barriers they may encounter as they move from desiring a mandated student success course to acting to create one. A survey was emailed to all 210 full-time faculty, staff, and administrators at one of the KCTCS schools. This chapter presents findings from the survey. The study examines the research question: How can stakeholders’ perceptions be used to help community colleges achieve institutional adoption and implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course?

The following are sub-questions to address the research question:

1. Are there relationships between select variables (e.g., position, age, gender, ethnicity, and experience) and faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes toward implementing a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky community college?
2. What are faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes regarding academically underprepared students, the college’s responsibility for those students, and the mandating of the FYE course at a select Kentucky community college?

3. According to faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes, what are the most important factors that facilitate implementing a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky community college?

4. What principles and skills taught in the First Year Experience course are most critical to student success as identified by the faculty, staff, and administrators?

5. According to faculty, staff, and administrators, what are the barriers that limit the implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky community college?

Data Collection

The online data collection software, Qualtrics, was used in the collection and analysis of the data. A nonexperimental study, also known as a descriptive study, is defined as a study in which observations are made without the administration of treatments (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2005). Because the purpose of the study was to measure stakeholder perceptions, a descriptive study format was followed. Descriptive statistics: mean, standard deviation, range, variance, and frequency of response for each variable were collected to analyze the data gained from responses to each of the sub-questions. The mean, range, and frequency were used to report data results. The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to presenting the results of the data analysis. The findings are presented as an analysis of each sub-question and are presented in the same order as the
sub-questions were listed. Results of each as they pertain to the primary research question are explained and discussed in the next chapter.

**Qualifying Data**

The survey was administered to 210 full-time employees of one of the colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System through email. Respondents were informed they could end the survey at any time without penalty. Three qualifying questions were used to determine whether respondents could complete the survey. First, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had read the informed consent. Out of the 210 possible respondents, 140 responded for an initial response rate of 67%. Out of the 140 who responded, 134 indicated they had read the informed consent and agreed to participate, and six indicated they had not. The six who had not read the informed consent were sent to the end of the survey.

The remaining respondents were then asked to record their age. One respondent chose not to answer and dropped out of the survey. Two respondents indicated they were under the age of 18. Those two were directed to the end of the survey. The distribution of ages for all 133 respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Frequency</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23.31</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38.35</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>70.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21.80</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>92.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.77</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>99.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 or older</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 133 respondents*
For the last qualifying question, respondents were asked whether they had knowledge of or experience with the First Year Experience (FYE) course. The final qualifying question was asked after all demographic data was obtained. The collecting of the demographic data before asking the last qualifying question allowed the researcher to identify areas within the college that may have little or no information concerning the FYE course. The information is significant because the site college will be able to use it when educating the stakeholders and will be able to more efficiently allocate resources when attempting to create institutional support for the mandated First Year Experience Course. Of the 133 respondents, 94 indicated they did have knowledge of or experience with the course, and 25 stated they did not have either. Fourteen respondents exited the survey when asked the second demographic question regarding ethnicity. The 25 who stated they did not have knowledge of or experience with the FYE course were directed to the end of the survey.

**Demographic Data**

**Age and Gender**

As noted in Table 1: *Distribution of Respondent Ages*, 133 of the 210 surveyed responded with their age. Of the 133 respondents, only 131 were qualified to complete the survey. Seven age categories were represented. The minimum age was 18, and the maximum age category was 70 or older. The mean respondent age was 40-49, with 51 respondents falling into this category.

Of the 133 respondents who answered the question regarding age, 132 answered the question of gender. There were two gender categories; 86 respondents identified as female, which was 65% of the total population, and 46 identified as male.
Ethnicity

Of the 133 respondents who answered the question regarding age, 119 continued the survey and answered the question regarding ethnicity. Six ethnicity categories were provided. Two respondents identified as American Indian or Alaska Native. Four respondents identified as Black or African American. Three respondents identified as Other, 110 identified as White, and no respondents identified as Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The mean ethnicity was White respondents, 92.4% of all respondents, identifying into this category.

Level of Education

Seven categories for educational level were provided. When asked their level of education, 119 of those surveyed responded. One participant acknowledged having less than a high school degree and 12 respondents indicating they had some college, ten respondents indicated they have a two-year degree, 11 have a four-year degree, and 13 of those who responded have a doctorate. The mean level of education was Master or another professional degree with 72 or 60.5% of all respondents identifying in this category.

Main Area of Employment

Ten categories were created to represent all department and divisions at the college (see Appendix D). Due to low numbers of employees in some areas, the researcher combined some areas into one category to aid with anonymity. Administrative offices were combined as well as student support offices. Offices that served to maintain and protect the college community and property such as Maintenance Operations, Security, and Hosting were combined. Every department and division within the college
was represented within those broader categories. The categories Library/TLC or Information Technology and Security, Maintenance Operations, or Hosting had the smallest number with five participants self-identifying as employees in those areas. The Division of Arts and Humanities had the most significant representation with 29 participants stating they worked in that division. There are 22 full-time employees listed in the college’s directory for the Division of Arts and Humanities, yet 29 participants identified as being employed within that department.

**Position at the College**

Position within the college was categorized by stakeholder identity. Three categories were used to determine the stakeholders’ positions at the community college. Each respondent was asked to choose the designation of Faculty, Staff, or Administrator. The titles of President, Provost, Vice President, Associate Vice President, Dean, Director, Registrar, or Manager were chosen by the researcher to define “Administrator” after a review of administrators’ titles at the site college. Of the 119 respondents, 65.6% were faculty. Six identified as administrators, 35 identified as staff, and 78 identified as faculty.

**Length of Employment**

Four broad categories were used to determine the stakeholders’ length of employment at the community college. The minimum length of employment the respondents could choose was “less than five years” and “20 years or more” was the maximum choice. The following distribution occurred: 119 participants responded with 46 respondents employed less than 5 years, which equaled 38.7% of the total; 44 respondents employed 5-10 years, which equaled 37% of the total; 21 respondents
employed 11-20 years, which equaled 17.6% of the total; and eight respondents employed 20 years or more which equaled 6.7% of the total.

**Analysis of Sub-question One**

Sub-question one explored the relationship between faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes toward implementing a mandated First Year Experience course and their age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, position at the college, area employed, and length of employment. Eighty-one ($N = 81$) of the 119 participants responded to the statement regarding the mandating of the FYE course. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement to the following statement: First Year Experience (FYE) course should be mandatory using the categories: *Agree*, *Neither agree nor disagree*, or *Disagree*. The researcher used cross tabulation analysis to explore the relationship between each demographic variable to their levels of agreement. When asked if the FYE course should be mandated, the following data were observed:

**Age and attitude:**

- 58% aged 18-29 ($n = 7$) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 55% aged 30-39 ($n = 20$) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 42% aged 40-49 ($n = 33$) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 33% aged 50-59 ($n = 18$) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 33% aged 50-59 and older ($n = 3$) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 44% of respondents ($N = 81$) agreed the course should be mandatory.

**Gender and attitude:**

- 31% of males ($n = 26$) agreed the course should be mandatory.
• 51% of females \((n = 55)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 44% of respondents \((N = 81)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.

Ethnicity and attitude:

• 43% of “White” respondents \((n = 76)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 75% of “non-White” respondents \((n = 5)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 44% of respondents \((N = 81)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.

Education and attitude:

• None of the respondents identified in the categories of high school graduate or less than a high school.

• 50% of respondents with some college \((n = 4)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 56% of respondents with a two-year degree \((n = 9)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 17% of respondents with a four-year degree \((n = 6)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 44% of respondents with a master’s or other professional degree \((n = 54)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 50% of respondents with a doctorate \((n = 8)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 44% of respondents \((N = 81)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.
Position and attitude:

- 100% of administrators \((n = 5)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 59% of staff \((n = 22)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 33% of faculty \((n = 54)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 44% of respondents \((N = 81)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.

Area of employment and attitude:

- 50% of respondents in the executive offices (Office of the President, Human Resources and Institutional Advancement, and Academic Affairs) \((n = 6)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 0% of the respondents in the Division of Advanced Manufacturing Technologies \((n = 6)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 40% of the respondents in the Division of Allied Health and Nursing \((n = 10)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 55% of the respondents in the Division of Arts and Humanities \((n = 22)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 11% of the respondents in the Division of Business \((n = 9)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 40% of the respondents in the Division of Math and Sciences \((n = 10)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.
- 75% of the respondents in the Library/TLC and Information Technology departments \((n = 4)\) agreed the course should be mandatory.
• 60% of the respondents in the Outreach and Community Development, Adult Education, and Office of Workforce Solutions departments (n = 5) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 67% of the respondents in the Student and Organizational Success, Office of Business Affairs, and Financial Aid departments (n = 9) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• None of the respondents reported working in the Security, Maintenance Operations, or Hosting departments.

• 44% of respondents (N = 81) agreed the course should be mandatory.

Length of employment and attitude:

• 52% of respondents employed at the college for less than five years (n = 25) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 47% of respondents employed at the college for five years - 10 years (n = 34) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 28% of respondents employed at the college for 11 years - 20 years (n = 18) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 50% of respondents employed at the college for 20 years or more (n = 4) agreed the course should be mandatory.

• 44% of respondents (N = 81) agreed the course should be mandatory.

Analysis of Sub-question Two

Sub-question two explored faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes regarding academically underprepared students, the college’s responsibility for those students, and the mandating of the FYE course at their community college. The seven statements used
to gauge the stakeholders’ attitudes were presented in a three-point scale Likert Matrix Table with the three answer choices: *Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, or Disagree.*

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement.

The following data was obtained from the participants’ responses \( N = 81 \):

- 96.3\% \( (n = 78) \) agreed that student learning and success is a campus-wide responsibility. None of the respondents disagreed. Three were neutral (they neither agreed nor disagreed).
- 93.8\% \( (n = 76) \) agreed that a student’s success during the first year lays a foundation for the future. One respondent disagreed, and four were neutral.
- 53.1\% \( (n = 43) \) agreed academically underprepared students can do as well as academically prepared students with the right support. Sixteen respondents disagreed, and 22 were neutral.
- 80\% \( (n = 65) \) agreed that the communities colleges have a responsibility to prepare first-year undergraduate students for college life. Five disagreed, and 11 were neutral.
- 80\% \( (n = 65) \) agreed that FYE courses prepare first-year undergraduate students for college life. Four disagreed, and 12 were neutral.
- 70.4\% \( (n = 57) \) agreed that FYE courses increase persistence and retention of first-year undergraduate students. Five disagreed, and 19 were neutral.
- 44.4\% \( (n = 36) \) agreed that FYE courses should be mandatory.
Analysis of Sub-question Three

Sub-question three explored faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes toward the important factors that facilitate implementing a mandated First Year Experience course. The survey instrument addressed sub-question three using two types of questioning. For the first series of statements, a three-point scale Likert Matrix Table with the three answer choices: Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, or Disagree (see Appendix E) and a series of six statements were used to measure the stakeholders’ buy-in. The first three statements were designed to gauge whether stakeholders believe the attitudes of faculty, staff, and administrators are essential in the facilitation of a mandated FYE course. The last three statements were included to gauge whom stakeholders feel should be allowed to teach the FYE course as well as how many of the stakeholders would like to teach the FYE course. The number of stakeholders interested in teaching the FYE course is an important factor to consider when implementing a mandated class where demand for instructors could be higher than the supply available. For the second series of statements, a multiple-choice type question was used. Respondents were presented with eight statements and were instructed to choose all they believed to be important factors that facilitate implementing a mandated FYE course. Eight-one participants responded (N=81) to both sets of statements.

Stakeholder Buy-in

For the first three statements, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement concerning the importance of stakeholders’ attitude toward the FYE course. For the first statement, 81.5% of respondents agreed that the administration’s attitude towards the FYE course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year
Experience course \((n = 66)\). For the second statement, 83.9% of respondents agreed that the faculty's attitude towards the FYE course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course \((n = 68)\). For the third statement, 64.2% of respondents agreed that the staff’s attitude towards the FYE course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course \((n = 52)\).

The fourth and fifth statements were included in the survey instrument to gauge stakeholders’ beliefs concerning whom should be allowed to teach the FYE course. For the fourth statement, 64.2% of respondents agreed that faculty from any discipline should be allowed to teach FYE course. \((n = 52)\). For the fifth statement, 86.4% of respondents agreed that staff who meet the required qualifications should be allowed to teach FYE course. \((n = 70)\). For the sixth statement, 39.5% of respondents indicated they were interested in teaching the FYE course. A minimum of two stakeholders from every department and division within the college, except for Security, Maintenance Operations, and Hosting, indicated interest in teaching the FYE course (See Appendix F). Of the respondents who indicated interest, two identified as Administrators (President, Provost, VP, Assoc. VP, Dean, Director, Registrar, or Manager), eight as staff, and 22 as faculty.

**Important Factors**

Respondents were presented with eight potential factors and were asked to choose all they believed to be most important to consider when implementing a mandatory FYE Course. The factors listed in their order of importance as identified by the respondents \((N = 81)\):

1. Professional development and training for FYE teachers was chosen by 65 respondents.
2. Campus-wide coordination and cooperation was chosen by 64 respondents.

3. Education of the campus community on the FYE Course was chosen by 63 respondents.

4. Providing first-year academic advising was chosen by 62 respondents.

5. Comprehensive curriculum that includes high impact practices was chosen by 55 respondents.

6. Having a first-year curriculum committee and combining FYE courses with other courses to create learning communities both were chosen by 33 respondents.

7. Having a common reading experience for all FYE courses was chosen by 30 respondents.

Analysis of Sub-question Four

Sub-question four explored stakeholders’ perceptions regarding the principles and skills they believed would have the most impact on student success and should be taught in the First Year Experience course. Two multiple-choice type questions were employed to gauge stakeholders’ perceptions. For the first question, respondents were presented with eighteen elements and were instructed to choose five they believed to be most important to include when implementing a mandated FYE course. For the second question, respondents were presented with eighteen elements and were instructed to choose five they believed to be least important to include when implementing a mandated FYE course. Eight-one participants responded (N=81) to both questions. The five most important and five least important elements to include when implementing the course are discussed in this study. None of the respondents chose, “other, please specify.” See
Appendix G for ranking the most important elements to include in an FYE course and Appendix H for ranking of least important elements to include the course.

**Most Important Elements to Include**

Respondents were presented with eighteen factors and were asked to choose five they believed to be most important to include in a mandated FYE Course. The five elements listed in their order of most selected by the respondents, \( N = 81 \):

1. Academic success strategies (e.g., study skills) was chosen by 70 respondents.
2. Knowledge of campus resources was chosen by 52 respondents.
3. Academic planning and major exploration was chosen by 43 respondents.
4. Financial aid literacy was chosen by 36 respondents.
5. Introduction to college-level class expectations was chosen by 33 respondents.

**Least Important Elements to Include**

Respondents were presented with eighteen factors and were asked to choose five they believed to be least important to include in a mandated FYE Course. The five elements listed in their order of most selected by the respondents, \( N = 81 \):

1. Health and wellness education was chosen by 46 respondents.
2. Service learning was chosen by 44 respondents.
3. Transfer information was chosen by 27 respondents.
4. Collaborative learning was chosen by 23 respondents.
5. Common first-year experience (e.g., learning communities or common reading) was chosen by 21 respondents.
Analysis of Sub-question Five

Sub-question five explored barriers that limit the implementation of a mandated First Year, the one Kentucky community college. To gauge the stakeholders’ attitudes, seven statements were presented in a three-point scale Likert Matrix Table with the three answer choices: Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, or Disagree. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement.

The following data was obtained from the participants’ responses (N = 81).

- 46.9% (n = 38) agreed that a lack of a systematic means of evaluating the effectiveness of a course would be a barrier to the FYE course implementation. Fourteen of the respondents disagreed. Twenty-nine were neutral (they neither agreed nor disagreed).

- 39.5% (n=32) agreed that a lack of financial resources available would be a barrier to course implementation. Eighteen of the respondents disagreed. Thirty-one neither agreed nor disagreed.

- 43.2% (n=35) agreed that a lack of institutional support would be a barrier to course implementation. Twenty-one of the respondents disagreed. Twenty-five neither agreed nor disagreed.

- 46.9% (n=38) agreed that a lack of knowledge about the FYE course would be a barrier to course implementation. Seventeen of the respondents disagreed. Twenty-six neither agreed nor disagreed.

- 19.8% (n=16) agreed that inadequate physical or technological infrastructure would be a barrier to course implementation. Thirty-
three of the respondents disagreed. Thirty-two neither agreed nor disagreed.

- 49.4% (n=40) agreed that resistance to change among college faculty and/or staff would be a barrier to course implementation. Seventeen of the respondents disagreed. Twenty-four neither agreed nor disagreed.

- 29.6% (n=24) agreed that resistance to change among college leadership would be a barrier to course implementation. Thirty-one of the respondents disagreed. Twenty-six neither agreed nor disagreed.

Respondents were also given a chance to list any barriers they felt might exist but were not identified in the seven-statement matrix question. The open-ended question yielded 22 perceived barriers from 17 respondents. From the responses, five thematic concerns emerged. Seven statements demonstrated concern over the impact or relevance of the course on the students’ programs. Four statements related to the curriculum of the course and how the course would be defined (which was coded with the curriculum as part of defining the course requires discussing the curriculum taught). Three statements related to the cost of adding another requirement. Two statements concerned communication regarding the course. One response was not applicable (n/a), and three were unique from the others. A table with all open-ended responses regarding the potential barriers which stakeholders believed may exist, but were not one of the available choices is included in Appendix I.
Summary

Chapter IV presented the data collected to address the research question: “How can stakeholders’ perceptions be used to help community colleges achieve institutional adoption and implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course?” A survey was emailed to full-time faculty, staff, and administrators at one of the sixteen colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The mean, range, and frequency were used to report data results. The mean was used to measure and report the central tendency while range and frequency were used to report responses for each variable. Open-ended responses were coded and sorted into six themes: curriculum, impact/relevance, necessity, communication, cost, and miscellaneous. The themes were used to identify additional barriers to the implementation of a mandated First Year Experience Course as perceived by the stakeholders.

Chapter V includes the researchers’ interpretations of the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research. The chapter contains a review of the problem statement, research questions, methodology, and a discussion of the findings as they relate to the problem. The chapter ends with implications and recommendations for future research as well as the researcher’s concluding thoughts.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to establish strategies that can guide KCTCS colleges interested in the implementation of a mandated First Year Experience (FYE) course as well as to identify barriers they may encounter to help them move from desiring a mandated student success course to acting to create one. This chapter presents a summary of the findings and implications of this study, as well as recommendations for future research. More specifically, the chapter contains a review of the problem statement, research questions, and methodology, as well as a discussion of the findings as they relate to the research questions. The chapter ends with limitations of the student, implications of the study, and recommendations for future research. The researcher then offers a few concluding thoughts.

Problem Statement

A community college’s mission of open access to postsecondary education creates a unique problem where the colleges are seeing the growth of underprepared and economically disadvantaged students. Community colleges are facing the challenges of developing and implementing initiatives that will help the students achieve their goals of workforce development, credential or degree obtainment, or transfer to a university. These initiatives include but are not limited to, remedial education programs, student success courses, and programs, learning communities, and mentoring programs. The trend of offering a student success course such as the FYE courses discussed in this study has more stakeholder support than it has at any other time in history. Although, recent initiatives by organizations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Lumina
Foundation, Achieving the Dream, Ithaka S+R, South Carolina’s National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Student in Transition and other Centers for Postsecondary Research, have encouraged some research conducted on student success courses, the field of study is still new particularly for community colleges. Hope (2010) asserts there is a “pervasive and intuitive sense that such courses are an absolute good — so self-evidently efficacious that neither the need nor the effects have been widely studied.” Although there is not a consistent course or implementation strategy, the support for instituting and even mandating a student success course is evident in the literature.

This study examined implementation procedures, stakeholder perceptions, and barriers to implementing a mandated student success course, known as First Year Experience to the community college whose stakeholders participated in the study. A review of the literature indicates a gap in the research for mandated student success courses, particularly for those offered at community colleges (Hearn, 2006). As stated earlier in this study, a consistent course or implementation strategy has not emerged from the literature (Hope, 2010). When courses are discussed in the literature, they are overwhelming in the context of four-year institutions which has created a prevalent need for such a course to be created which can be generalizable to community colleges (Hope, 2010). One purpose of this study was to seek data which will help to address the research gaps and to aid other “like” community colleges who are planning to implement a mandated FYE course or program.
Research Questions and Methodology

The central question in this dissertation asks, “How can stakeholders’ perceptions be used to help two-year community colleges achieve institutional adoption and implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course?” This research sought to answer the central question by addressing five sub-questions:

1. Are there relationships between selected variables (e.g., position, age, gender, ethnicity, and experience) and faculty, staff, and administration’s attitudes toward implementing a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky community college?

2. What are faculty, staff, and administration’s attitudes towards implementing a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky community college?

3. According to faculty, staff, and administration’s attitudes, what are the most important factors that facilitate implementing a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky community college?

4. What principles and skills taught in the First Year Experience course are most critical to student success as identified by the faculty, staff, and administration?

5. According to faculty, staff, and administration, what are the barriers that limit the implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky community college?

Quantitative research was conducted using a non-experimental descriptive approach. A non-random, purposeful sampling of all full-time employees at once
community college in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System was employed with the qualifier being knowledge of the existing first-year experience course taught at the college. The study engaged survey methods with open and closed-ended questions to gain participants’ perspectives of the First Year Experience course, as well as the implementation and mandating of the course. As described by Creswell (2009, 2015), the survey instrument measured stakeholder perceptions, attitudes, and opinions regarding the course. A 17-item survey was emailed to 210 full-time employees after all approvals were obtained. An initial response rate of 67%, (n=140) was observed with six respondents indicating they had not read the informed consent; therefore, being disqualified from completing the survey. Age was another qualifier with an additional two respondents who were directed to the end of the survey. The final qualifier was knowledge of the First Year Experience course that was currently being taught at the respondents’ college of employment. Of the 133 respondents, 94 indicated they did know; the 25 who stated they did not know were sent to the end of the survey. An additional 13 respondents self-selected to withdraw from the survey before survey completion. The qualifier resulted in a 38.6% survey completion rate.

The survey was pre-tested to five individuals with postsecondary experience and knowledge of student success courses. Each of the three stakeholder types were represented in the pilot sample: one administrator/faculty, one administrator, one faculty, and two staff were surveyed. The sample participants reviewed and validated the instrument. Comments received from all five test participants indicated belief the instrument measured the intended outcomes. The researcher made revisions based on the participants’ comments.
Findings of the Study

Sub-question One

*Are there relationships between select variables (e.g., position, age, gender, ethnicity, and experience) and faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes toward implementing a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky community college?*

Eighty-one respondents indicated their level of agreement to the following statement: First Year Experience (FYE) course should be mandatory using the categories: *Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, or Disagree*. Forty-four percent of the 81 respondents agreed the course should be mandatory at the respondents’ college. Thirty-six percent neither agreed nor disagreed that the course should be mandatory at the respondents’ college. Twenty percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the course should be mandatory at the respondents’ college. The researcher used Pearson Correlation Coefficient, two-tailed, as the technique for data analysis to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the selected variables (age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, area of employment, position, length of employment at the college) and stakeholder attitudes toward implementing a mandatory First Year Experience course at the site college. The results are presented in Table 2. The variable, position at the college, had a moderately significant relationship with stakeholders’ attitude toward the mandating of the First Year Experience course. Position at the college is the only significant relationship found between the variables with a moderate correlation. The following scale was used to interpret the associations:

- \( \leq 0.35 \) generally considered weak
- \( 0.36 - 0.67 \) generally considered moderate
• 0.68 - 1.0 generally considered strong

Table 2

Correlation Between Selected Variables and Stakeholder Attitudes

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<th>Variables</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Length of Employment</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Correlation was significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The following data from cross-tabulation analysis were observed.

**Age and attitude.** The percentage of respondents in each group who agreed that the course should be mandatory is as follows: (a) 58% of the 7 respondents aged 18-29 agreed, (b) 55% of the 20 respondents aged 30-39 agreed, (c) 42% of the 33 respondents aged 40-49 agreed (d) 33% of the 18 respondents aged 50-59, and (e) 33% of the 3 respondents aged 60 and older. Pearson correlation was run to determine the relationship between the Age of respondents and their level of agreement toward the mandating of an FYE course. Age had a weak positive relationship with stakeholders’ attitude toward the mandating of the First Year Experience course. This finding had no significance to this study, but it is interesting to note that the younger respondents, the more they appeared to agree with the mandating of the FYE course.

**Gender and attitude.** Data obtained from the cross-tabulation analysis indicate 55 of the 81 respondents identified as female and 26 of 81 respondents identified as male. Fifty-one percent of females (26 of the 55 respondents) agreed the course should be mandatory at the respondents’ college, while 31% of the males (8 of the 31 respondents)
agreed. The results showed a small preference by females over males for the mandating of the course but are not significant to the study. Pearson correlation was run to determine the relationship between the Gender of respondents and their level of agreement toward the mandating of an FYE course. Gender had a weak negative relationship with stakeholders’ attitude toward the mandating of the First Year Experience course. This finding had no significance to this study.

**Ethnicity and attitude.** One hundred and nineteen responded to the question gauging respondents’ attitude towards mandating the FYE course. Of the 119 respondents, 110 identified as “White” while only nine of the respondents identified as “non-White.” Six identified as a minority. Forty-four percent of the 81 respondents who completed the survey agreed the course should be mandatory at the respondents’ college. Forty-three percent of “White” (33 of the 76 respondents) agreed the course should be mandatory at the respondents’ college. Seventy-five percent of the “non-White” (three of the four respondents) agreed the course should be mandatory. One responded who identified as “Other” neither agreed nor disagreed that the course should be mandated. The results showed a small preference by “non-White” over “White” for the mandating of the course but are not significant to the study due to the difference in population size. Pearson correlation was run to determine the relationship between the Ethnicity of respondents and their level of agreement toward the mandating of an FYE course. Ethnicity had a weak positive relationship with stakeholders’ attitude toward the mandating of the First Year Experience course. This finding had no significance to this study.
Education and attitude. None of the respondents in this study identified in the categories of high school graduate or less than a high school. All 81 respondents have some college attainment. The categories for education were (a) less than a high school, (b) a high school graduate, (c) some college, (d) a two-year degree, (e) a four-year degree, (f) a master’s or other professional degree, (g) a doctorate. Fifty-four of the 81 respondents have a master’s or other professional degree, and of those 54 respondents, 44% agreed that the course should be mandatory which is consistent with the mean of the population while only 17% of respondents with a four-year degree agreed the course should be mandatory. The percentage of respondents in each group who agreed the course should be mandatory is as follows: (a) 50% of the 4 respondents with some college, (b) 56% of the 9 respondents with a two-year degree, (c) 17% of the 6 respondents with a four-year degree, (d) 44% of the 54 respondents with a master’s or other professional degree, and (e) 50% of the 8 respondents with a doctorate. The results showed no correlation between Education and attitude about the FYE course being mandated.

Position and attitude. The percentage of respondents in each group who agreed the course should be mandatory is as follows: (a) 100% of the five administrators, (b) 59% of the 22 staff, and (c) 33% of the 54 faculty. Sixty-three percent of the 81 respondents (54 of the 81) identified as faculty. Faculty represented the most significant numbers of those who responded yet were least likely to agree with the FYE course being mandated. Pearson correlation was run to determine the relationship between the Position of respondents and their level of agreement toward the mandating of an FYE course. Position had a moderately significant relationship with stakeholders’ attitude
toward the mandating of the First Year Experience course. This is significant at the 0.01 level and is the only significant relationship found between the variables. This finding has significance to this study as it appears faculty are the least likely to support the mandatory FYE course.

**Area of employment and attitude.** The percentage of respondents in each group who agreed the course should be mandatory is as follows: (a) 50% of the 6 respondents in the executive offices (Office of the President, Human Resources and Institutional Advancement, and Academic Affairs), (b) 0% of the 6 respondents in the Division of Advanced Manufacturing Technologies, (c) 40% of the 10 respondents in the Division of Allied Health and Nursing, (d) 55% of the 22 respondents in the Division of Arts and Humanities, (e) 11% of the 9 respondents in the Division of Business, (f) 40% of the 10 respondents in the Division of Math and Sciences, (g) 75% of the 4 respondents in the Library/TLC and Information Technology, (h) 60% of the 5 respondents in the Outreach and Community Development, Adult Education, and Office of Workforce Solutions, (i) 67% of the 9 respondents in the Student and Organizational Success, Office of Business Affairs, and Financial Aid, and (j) none of the respondents reported working in the Security, Maintenance Operations, or Hosting departments. The areas that showed the most support for the mandating of the FYE course were the areas that are considered student support areas: 1. The Library/TLC and Information Technology departments; 2. The Outreach and Community Development, Adult Education, and Office of Workforce Solutions departments; and 3. The Student and Organizational Success, Office of Business Affairs, and Financial Aid departments. Pearson correlation was run to determine the relationship between the Area of Employment of respondents and their
level of agreement toward the mandating of an FYE course. Area of Employment had a weak negative relationship with stakeholders’ attitude toward the mandating of the First Year Experience course. Although the numbers of respondents in student support areas are small and the results to the question cannot be generalizable to a larger population, these findings are important to the study, particularly with stakeholder buy-in at the college where the study was conducted.

**Length of employment and attitude.** The percentage of respondents in each group who agreed that the course should be mandatory is as follows: (a) 52% of 25 respondents were employed at the college for less than five years; (b) 47% of 34 respondents were employed at the college for five years - 10 years; (c) 28% of the 18 respondents were employed at the college for 11 years - 20 years; and (d) 50% of the 4 respondents were employed at the college for 20 years or more. The results showed no correlation with length of employment and attitude about the course being mandated.

Sub-question one explored the relationship between faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes toward implementing a mandated First Year Experience course and their age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, position at the college, area employed, and length of employment. Eighty-one (N = 81) of the 119 participants responded to the statement regarding the mandating of the FYE course. Pearson correlation was run to determine the relationship between the Length of Employment of respondents and their level of agreement toward the mandating of an FYE course. Length of Employment had a weak positive relationship with stakeholders’ attitude toward the mandating of the First Year Experience course. This finding had no significance to this study.
Sub-question Two

What are faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes regarding academically underprepared students, the college’s responsibility for those students, and the mandating of the FYE course at a select Kentucky community college?

Sub-question two explored faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes regarding academically underprepared students, the college’s responsibility for those students, and the mandating of the FYE course at their community college. The seven statements used to gauge the stakeholders’ attitudes were presented in a three-point scale Likert Matrix Table with the three answer choices: Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, or Disagree. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement.

For statement number one: student learning and success is a campus-wide responsibility, 96.3% (n = 78) agreed that student learning and success is a campus-wide responsibility. None of the respondents disagreed. Three were neutral (they neither agreed nor disagreed). For statement number two: a student’s success during the first year lays a foundation for the future, 93.83% (n = 76) agreed that a student’s success during the first year lays a foundation for the future. One respondent disagreed, and four were neutral. For statement number three: academically underprepared students can do as well as academically prepared students with the right support, 53.1% (n = 43) agreed academically underprepared students can do as well as academically prepared students with the right support. Sixteen respondents disagreed, and 22 were neutral. For statement number four: the community colleges have a responsibility to prepare first-year undergraduate students for college life, 80% (n = 65) agreed that the community colleges have a responsibility to prepare first-year undergraduate students for college life. Five
disagreed, and 11 were neutral. For statement number five: FYE courses prepare first-year undergraduate students for college life, 80% (n = 65) agreed that FYE courses prepare first-year undergraduate students for college life. Four disagreed, and 12 were neutral. For statement number seven: FYE courses increase persistence and retention of first-year undergraduate students, 70.4% (n = 57) agreed that FYE courses increase persistence and retention of first-year undergraduate students. Five disagreed, and 19 were neutral.

While only 44.4% of the stakeholders agree that FYE courses should be mandatory, 70.4% believe that FYE courses increase persistence and retention of the first-year student; 80.3% believe that FYE courses prepare first-year students for college life; and 93.8% believe that a student’s success during the first year lays a foundation for future success in college. This finding has significance for future research. Most respondents, 80.3%, believe community colleges have a responsibility to prepare first-year students for college life, yet only 44.4% of the respondents believe that the community college should mandate that first-year students take a student success course. Approximately one half (53.1%) of the respondents believe academically underprepared students can do as well as academically prepared students with the right support. This finding is not consistent with the current environment where the government is calling for increased college completion, and community colleges are increasingly implementing student success courses to provide students with the right support: skills, knowledge, and support networks to help them succeed (CCCSE, 2012; Cho & Karp, 2013; Crisp & Taggart, 2013; Hatch, 2016). The finding is also in contrast to the first tenant of Valencia
College’s six Big Ideas: *Anyone can learn anything under the right conditions* (Shugart et al., 2012).

**Sub-question Three**

*According to faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes, what are the most important factors that facilitate implementing a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky community college?*

Sub-question three explored faculty, staff, and administrators’ attitudes toward the important factors that facilitate implementing a mandated First Year Experience course. The first three statements were designed to gauge whether stakeholders believe the attitudes of faculty, staff, and administrators are essential in the facilitation of a mandated FYE course. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement concerning the importance of stakeholders’ attitude toward the FYE course. For the first statement, 81.5% of the 81 respondents agreed that the administration’s attitude towards the FYE course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course. For the second statement, 83.9% of the 81 respondents agreed that the faculty's attitude towards the FYE course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course. For the third statement, 64.2% of 81 respondents agreed that the staff’s attitude towards the FYE course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course. Most respondents agree that the attitudes of all stakeholders toward the FYE course are critical to the implementation of a mandatory FYE course. This finding is significant as it indicates the stakeholders believe it is critical to obtain buy-in from all members of the campus community when implementing a mandatory FYE course. This belief is in line with Valencia College’s belief that a
A culture of inclusion, shared purpose, and responsibility is critical to the implementation of student success initiatives. The finding is supported by Valencia College’s sixth tenant of **Collaboration**: The College believes that its best ideas are formed and embraced when everyone collectively contributes to a shared purpose through an ongoing dialogue (Shugart et al., 2012). The finding is also widely supported in the literature. Crisp and Taggart (2013) encouraged collaboration among all stakeholders, and Tinto and Pusser (2006) recommended,

Those who formulate policy should place a high priority on achieving consensus on goals and strategies for student success policies and that the policies have the support of all institutional stakeholders. Consensus should be obtained on how policies should be implemented, who will implement the policies, and what other actors will be affected by the implementation of the policies (pp. 23-33).

The last three statements were included to gauge whom stakeholders feel should be allowed to teach the FYE course as well as how many of the stakeholders would like to teach the FYE course. Approximately 40% (32 of the 8) of the respondents indicated they are interested in teaching the FYE course: two administrators, eight staff, and 22 faculty. The number of respondents who identified as interested in teaching the FYE course follows the department in which they identify as working:

- Executive offices (Office of the President, Human Resources and Institutional Advancement, and Academic Affairs): 6
- Division of Advanced Manufacturing Technologies: 2
- Division of Allied Health and Nursing: 2
- Division of Arts and Humanities: 7
• Division of Business: 4
• Division of Mathematics and Sciences: 5
• Library/TLC and Information Technology departments: 3
• Outreach and Community Development, Adult Education, and Office of Workforce Solutions: 5
• Student and Organizational Success, Office of Business Affairs, and Financial Aid: 2
• Security, Maintenance Operations, or Hosting: 0
• 39.5% of respondents \((N = 81)\) indicated interest in teaching the FYE course

As stated in Chapter IV, the number of stakeholders interested in teaching the FYE course is an important factor to consider when implementing a mandated class where demand for instructors could be higher than the supply available. These findings indicate there is interest in all major areas of the campus community and is relevant information for a college which is looking to implement a course or program for all incoming first-year students. An initiative of such a large scale requires an investment of resources, and having faculty to teach the class is one of the most important considerations. Tinto & Pusser (2006) recommended that initiatives should be viable ones that can be implemented with the resources that colleges have readily available.

The fourth and fifth statements were included in the survey instrument to gauge stakeholders’ beliefs concerning whom should be allowed to teach the FYE course. Sixty-four percent (52 of the 81) of the respondents agreed that faculty from any discipline should be allowed to teach the FYE course. Eighty-six percent (70 of the 81)
of respondents agreed that staff who meet the required qualifications should be allowed to teach the FYE course. The finding indicates that most stakeholders agree that anyone, regardless of position – faculty or staff) who meets the required qualifications should be allowed to teach the FYE course.

**Sub-question Four**

*What principles and skills taught in the First Year Experience course are most critical to student success as identified by the faculty, staff, and administrators?*

Sub-question four explored stakeholders’ perceptions regarding the principles and skills they believed would have the most impact on student success and should be taught in the First Year Experience course. Respondents were presented with eighteen elements and were instructed to choose five they believed to be most important to include when implementing a mandated FYE course and the five they the respondents believe to be least important to include when implementing a mandated FYE course. Eight-one participants responded to both questions. None of the respondents chose, “other, please specify.”

The five elements that were most selected by respondents included: 1. academic success strategies, 2. knowledge of campus resources, 3. Academic planning and major exploration, 4. financial aid literacy, 5. Introduction to college-level class expectations. These five elements are widely suggested in the literature as being among the most important components of the FYE course. Academic success strategies, introduction to college-level skills, and academic planning and major exploration are among six components that York et al. (2015) propose are crucial to student success. Keup (2014) found including academic success strategies, knowledge of campus resources (campus
connection), and major (career) exploration to be accepted practice. Major and career exploration is one of the most stated ‘students’ identified as outcomes for the FYE course. 83.7% of student respondents chose ‘working in a career field’ as achieving success (Galligan’s 2014).

The five elements that stakeholders identified as least important included (in order of least importance): 1. health and wellness, 2. service learning, 3. transfer information, 4. collaborative learning, and 5. common first-year experience (e.g., learning communities or common reading). This finding is interesting and has significance as the site college offers both a learning community and a common reading. Students who test into the developmental reading course are enrolled in the FYE course and the developmental reading course learning community. As discovered in the literature review, learning communities are supported in the literature as a practice that enhances student success and encourages student retention by building a sense of community and helping students more comfortably engage in intellectual activities (Bailey & Cho, 2010; Engstrom & Tinto, 2008; Kim, 2018; Rocconi, 2011; Tinto, 1997; Tinto, 2006; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). The inconsistency between the published literature on the importance of a ‘common first-year experience’ and the stakeholders having chosen it as the least important component to include in the FYE course may be due to either a lack of experience with or education on learning communities.

It is also interesting to note that health and wellness was chosen as the least important element to include in the FYE course. Although the research related to student wellness and student success is limited, there is evidence in the literature to suggest student success and student health concerns are correlated (Floyd, 2003; Horton &
Snyder, 2009. A survey conducted by EducationUSA in the fall of 2017, with 9,500 student responses, found that the top three challenges to a community college student’s success are (a) work, (b) paying expenses, and (c) family and friends; and 35% of the students who chose family and friends specifically reporting difficulty dealing with health issues as the reason they chose family and friends. Floyd (2003), suggested that stakeholders may overlook community college health issues and services to address those issues because they are uninformed of the direct relevance student health has on the community college mission of success and makes the case that a community college which is committed to their student’s success will also be committed to the student health. According to Myers and Mobley (2004), research suggests that student health and wellness has lifelong effects on academics (as cited in Horton & Snyder, 2009).

**Sub-question Five**

*According to faculty, staff, and administrators, what are the barriers that limit the implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course at a select Kentucky community college?*

Sub-question five explored barriers that limit the implementation of a mandated First Year the community college in the study. To gauge the stakeholders’ attitudes about barriers that limit the implementation of the mandated FYE course, respondents were presented with seven statements and asked to choose: Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, or Disagree to each. Data were obtained from the 81 participants’ responses. Six of the seven statements were structured after statements used in Alamuddin and Bender’s (2018) report, *The First-Year Experience in Two-Year Public Postsecondary Programs: Results of a National Survey*. Those six statements were: 1. Resistance to change among
college faculty and/or staff; 2. Inadequate physical or technical infrastructure; 3. Lack of knowledge about the FYE course (worded in the national survey as insufficient information about best practices for working with first-year students in two-year programs; 4. Resistance to change among college leadership; 5. Lack of financial resources available (worded in the national survey as insufficient financial resources); and 6. Lack of institutional support (worded in the national survey as a lack of guidance or direction from the state system office). Using these six statements allowed the researcher to compare the study college’s stakeholders’ attitudes with other stakeholder attitudes nationally. An open-ended question was presented so that stakeholders could discuss issues they felt could be a barrier to the successful implementation of a mandated FYE course but were not available in one of the seven statements provided in the survey instrument.

A comparison of responses for the six statements about perceived barriers in both the survey instrument for this study and the one used by Alamuddin and Bender’s in their 2018 national survey is presented. Total respondents for the survey for this study was 81 (n=81). Total respondents for the national survey was 163 (n=163).

1. For resistance to change among college faculty and/or staff, 49.4% of the respondents from the survey for this study thought this could be a barrier to the implementation of the mandated FYE course compared to 38% of the respondents from the national survey who agreed it could be a barrier.

2. For inadequate physical or technical infrastructure, 19.8% of the respondents from the survey for this study thought this could be a barrier to the
implementation of the mandated FYE course compared to 29.5% of the respondents from the national survey who agreed it could be a barrier.

3. For insufficient information about best practices for working with first-year students in two-year programs, 46.9% of the respondents from the survey for this study thought lack of knowledge about the FYE course could be a barrier to the implementation of the mandated FYE course compared to 23.3% of respondent from the national survey who agreed it could be a barrier.

4. For resistance to change among college leadership, 29.6% of the respondents from the survey for this study thought this could be a barrier to the implementation of the mandated FYE course compared to 17.8% of the respondents from the national survey who agreed it could be a barrier.

5. For lack of financial resources available, 39.5% of the respondents from the survey for this study thought this could be a barrier to the implementation of the mandated FYE course compared to 74.2% of the respondents from the national survey who agreed it could be a barrier.

6. For lack of institutional support, 43.2% of the respondents from the survey for this study thought this could be a barrier to the implementation of the mandated FYE course compared to 12.9% of the respondents from the national survey who agreed it could be a barrier.

In addition to the six statements from the national survey, one additional statement was offered as a potential choice. When asked their level of agreement that a lack of a systematic means of evaluating the effectiveness of a course would be a barrier to the FYE course implementation, 46.9% agreed that it would present a barrier.
The top three perceived barriers, as chosen by the respondents of the survey for this study: 1. Resistance to change among faculty and/or staff (49.4%); 2. Lack of knowledge about the FYE course (46.9%); and 3. Lack of a systematic means of evaluating the effectiveness of a course (46.9%). The top three perceived barriers, as chosen by the respondents of the national survey: 1. Insufficient financial resources (74.2%); 2. Resistance to change among faculty and/or staff (38.0%); and 3. Inadequate physical or technological infrastructure (29.5%). These findings have implications for the implementation of a mandated FYE course. As evidenced by the number of respondents who chose ‘resistance to change by among faculty and/or staff’ as their top three choices on both the survey in this study and the national survey, resistance to change can be a barrier to the successful implementation of a mandated FYE course or any initiative where the aim is to increase student success. A sense of shared purpose and a culture of inclusion and collaboration are necessary to ensure that resistance to change among stakeholders is not a barrier, real or perceived. Shugart et al. (2012) postulate that collaboration is critical. It is the sixth of Valencia College’s six Big Ideas:

When agreement on purposes, on ends, is strong, disagreements on means become less likely to become obstacles…But these ideas do not come from the top down or the bottom up. Because they are a part of the culture, they emerge from an ongoing dialog in the organization over the reality we are facing, what the data say and mean, what we believe, what might make a difference in our students' learning. This is collaboration. (Shugart et al., 2012, para. 19)

Respondents were also given a chance to list any barriers they felt might exist but were not identified in the seven-statement matrix question. The open-ended question
yielded 22 perceived barriers from 17 respondents. From the responses, five thematic concerns emerged: curriculum, impact/relevance, necessity, communication, and cost. Seven statements demonstrated concern over the impact or relevance of the course on the students’ programs. One respondent stated, “Some faculty/advisors feel that this is not relevant to their majors/programs.” Another stated, “For tech programs, there should be an integrated FYE for their program area (if there isn't such a course already).” One was concerned about student pathways and the impact a “required” elective would make it for students to transfer, “And there is a concern about using this as a required elective that would make it harder for students to complete transfer pathways.” Three respondents were concerned about degree requirements as evidenced by the following comments, “AAS degree requirements are already pushing the limits on the maximum number credit hours allowed. Any other required courses would reduce the number of technical core classes;” “Limited availability of class spots in a student's AS/AA track;” and “Requirements that programs stay under a certain number of credit hours will limit the ability to implement a mandatory FYE course.” One respondent stated, “Students feel it is a waste of time.” This statement was interpreted by the researcher to mean the student felt the class was not relevant, and thus, it was coded as Impact/Relevance. One respondent stated, “lack of communication” as a barrier. A respondent commented that while the FYE course may be beneficial to “some” students, they were unsure that is should be mandatory. Three respondents were concerned with the added cost the student would endure by having to take a mandated three-hour FYE course, and one respondent was concerned the number of faculty a mandated FYE course would require and was concerned that it would be “thrown at faculty in other disciplines who are already
teaching over-loads in their subject areas.” These statements are relevant to the implementation of a mandated FYE course and should be considered before the implementation of a mandated FYE course. These responses are in line with one of the top three barriers that were chosen as a part of the choices offered, lack of knowledge about the FYE course. These responses indicate stakeholders have concerns about the benefits to the students versus the costs of the course, the course’s transferability to four-year institutions, who will be “required” to teach the course, and communication about the implementation of the mandated FYE course. Stakeholders’ lack of knowledge of the course and how the course would be implemented is a concern that can be addressed when educating stakeholders and will be discussed in the Implementations section of this dissertation. A table with all open-ended responses regarding the potential barriers which stakeholders believed may exist, but were not one of the available choices is included in Appendix I.

**Limitations of the Study**

As stated in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, several limitations need to be considered. Four potential limitations were discussed in Chapter 1 and two other limitations warrant discussion. First, the study used a non-random, purposeful, convenience sample from one of the 1,051 community colleges in the United States. The sample consisted of 210 full-time faculty, staff, and administrators at a community college in Kentucky. The participants were initially selected based on their employment status and were qualified to complete the full survey based on their knowledge of the current FYE course. Second, the researcher did not pilot the survey instrument on a large scale. The pilot sample size was small but was representative of the stakeholders who
were part of the researcher's study. Third, participants understanding of the questions asked may depend on social and cultural experiences and; lastly, the researcher's relationship with the college in the study has the potential to create bias.

Two additional potential limitations occurred. The survey garnered 140 initial responses. Although the initial response rate was 66.7%, the response rate was lower than the researcher anticipated. An administrator sent a survey gauging respondents' interest in teaching the FYE course at the site college shortly before the survey was sent for this study. Stakeholders could have mistaken the survey they received for this research study for the FYE teaching interest survey they had completed. A site administrator sent the study survey to the 210 stakeholders on behalf of the researcher without attaching the informed consent statement. Six respondents attempted the survey but were sent to the end of the survey after responding that they had not read the Implied Consent. This error was corrected quickly, and the site administrator once again emailed the survey.

**Implications of the Study**

The current findings add to a growing body of literature on community college research, and the research has practical applications. The findings of this study have several implications for future practice and can be used by other similar institutions which are seeking to implement a student success course. Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers some insight institutional stakeholder perceptions on the implementation and mandating of an FYE course. The research identified stakeholder perceived barriers to the implementation of the FYE course as well as the barriers discussed in the literature. A review of the literature uncovered recommendations for course development and execution of the mandated FYE course.
**Recommendations for Practice or Policy**

Although little formal research has been conducted on the implementation of a student of a mandated success course, particularly regarding community colleges (Hearn, 2006), this study highlights several organizations, such as the Lumina Foundation, Achieving the Dream, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ithaka S+R, the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Student in Transition, and the American Association of Community Colleges that have helped institutions either directly or indirectly to implement student success initiatives through collaboration, research, and education. The findings of this study suggest that collaboration, consensus, open dialogue, and a shared purpose among the entire college community are vital to achieving successful implementation of any initiative (Crisp & Taggart, 2013; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates, 2005; Shugart et al., 2012; Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

Another important practical implication from this study is that the education of all stakeholders is key to obtaining stakeholder support for initiatives. This finding was evidenced by the decrease in the number of respondents who persisted in taking the survey when participants were asked whether they had knowledge of the FYE course, 38 respondents answered they did not know about the course and were sent to the end of the survey. It was also evident in the participant's comments about potential barriers to the implementation of the FYE course. The evidence from this study suggests that stakeholders representing student support areas were the ones most likely to support the mandated FYE course. Finally, findings appear to indicate that Position at the College is correlated with the level of agreement with the mandating of the FYE course with faculty
representing the most significant numbers of those who responded yet were least likely to agree with the FYE course being mandated.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

As has already been stated in this study, there has been much research conducted on student success and the efficacy of student success courses, but little formal research has been conducted on implementing or mandating a student success course. There is a lack of research regarding implementation procedures, stakeholder perceptions, or the barriers to mandating a community college success course as well. Recent research has focused on the impact student success courses have had on student success, but not regarding the elements of the course that make it successful or the measures that are taken to implement a college-wide course. Further research in these areas would be beneficial for community colleges and their students.

The researcher makes several recommendations for future research related to this study. Since the site college was only one of the sixteen within the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and all colleges are looking to implement some form of student success initiative (course, program, or orientation), future research might explore stakeholder perspectives at all sixteen colleges. A longitudinal study should assess the effects of the mandated FYE course as implemented by the site college, including components of the course that worked for best practices research related to community colleges. It would be interesting to compare the types of initiatives each of the sixteen KSTCS colleges implemented are part of the mandate. Studies about the particulars of mandating a student success course would be beneficial in implementation research. Since age was correlated with the level of agreement with the mandating of the FYE
course, a study investigating the links between age and perception of the FYE course would be interesting. Another study could investigate why faculty were least likely of the stakeholder groups to agree with the FYE course being mandated. Finally, and to this researcher, one of the most important studies to be conducted would be one that investigates stakeholders’ beliefs that student success courses prepare undergraduate students for success, but do not support the course being mandated.

**Conclusion**

Community colleges are vital to the future of higher education in America and the economic growth of America’s citizens and communities. Their open access policy, coupled with low tuition and ‘commuter’ accessible facilities, make them an important pathway to postsecondary education attainment for many students. Without community colleges, many of today’s citizens would not be able to attain postsecondary education, thus be stuck in the cycle of poverty that has plagued generations of underprepared, first-generation, low-income, minority, and rural students (Evans et al., 2017; Ma & Baum, 2016; Mullins, 2017; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Governmental officials have become increasingly interested in the role that community colleges play in higher education as a result of recent economic recesses and the student loan debt crisis (Evans et al., 2017). However, the majority of the federal and state funds are granted to research universities, and the research primarily conducted deals with four-year postsecondary education and their students. The continued attention that community colleges have received since the economic recession that ended in 2009 makes this researcher hopeful that funding to and research on community colleges will become bountiful.
A review of the literature found that there is a gap in studies concerning the requiring of courses that help students succeed and when a course is identified, there is little consensus on the elements that are included in the course (Crisp & Taggart, 2013; Hulbert, 2014; Zeidenberg et al., 2007). Academic success strategies, knowledge of campus resources, academic planning and significant exploration, financial aid literacy and introduction to college-level class expectations widely suggested in the literature as being among the most important components of the FYE course with academic success strategies, introduction to college-level skills, and academic planning and major exploration being among the six components that York et al. (2015) identifies as being the most crucial.

Results from this study seem to reinforce Hope’s (2010) assertion that there is a “pervasive and intuitive sense that such courses are an absolute good” (p. 2). Most of the respondents to this study, 80.3%, agreed that the FYE course prepares the first-year undergraduate student to be more successful in college. However, only 44.4% of the respondents believed it should be mandatory for the first-year undergraduate to take. This finding is an interesting one and one that this researcher would like to research further. Questions the researcher would like to investigate are “Are educational stakeholders interested in doing what is best for students, or they concerned with the preservation of self?” and “Is this finding indicative of the college culture or is this representative of community college beliefs in general?”

Regardless of what this study did or did not do to promote community college student postsecondary education, the one thing it did well was to reinforce this researcher’s belief that postsecondary education attainment is the catalyst for a better life
for students through both the improvement of economic conditions and the attainment of knowledge and that community college are the pathways.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela

“Scientia potentia est – knowledge is power.”

Sir Francis Bacon as cited by Thomas Hobbes
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from


APPENDIX A: WKU IRB Approval

DATE: February 5, 2019
TO: Carmen Purpus, Doctoral Candidate
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB
PROJECT TITLE: [1382797-1] Institutional Adoption and Implementation of a Mandated Community College First Year Experience Course
REFERENCE #: IRB 19-250
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: February 5, 2019
EXPIRATION DATE: May 31, 2019
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by an implied consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of May 31, 2019.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Robin Pyles at (270) 745-3360 or irb@wklu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.
This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB's records.
APPENDIX B: Site Approval Letter

January 10, 2019

Office of Research Integrity
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, KY 42101

Dear Members of the IRB Committee:

As President and CEO of Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC), I am aware of the research proposed by Carmen Purpus, doctoral student at Western Kentucky University. It is my understanding that the research will include sending surveys via email to faculty, staff and administrators.

I grant Carmen Purpus permission to engage our faculty, staff and administrators, per research methods outlined in her dissertation study documentation. If I can be of further assistance, please contact my office at (270) 901-1111.

Sincerely,

Phillip W. Neal
President/CEO

Dr. Phillip Neal
President/CEO
1845 Loop Drive • Bowling Green, KY 42101
P: (270) 901-1111
southeastcentral.letsos.ccd

Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College is an equal educational and employement opportunity institution.
APPENDIX C: Implied Consent Document

IMPLIED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Institutional Adoption and Implementation of a Mandated Community College First Year Experience Course

Investigator: Carmen Purpus, WKU’s Educational Leadership Doctoral Program, carmen.purpus@wku.edu

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Western Kentucky University. The University requires that you give your agreement to participate in this project.

You must be 18 years old or older to participate in this research study.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have. You should keep a copy of this form for your records.

1. Nature and Purpose of the Project: You are being invited to participate in a research study on the institutional adoption and implementation of a mandated First Year Experience course.

2. Explanation of Procedures: You are being asked to respond an online survey that will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

3. Discomfort and Risks: Although it is not possible to identify all potential risks, there are no anticipated risks involved in participating in this study greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

4. Benefits: Although there are no anticipated direct benefits to be derived from completing the survey, the information you provide may provide you with benefit community colleges that are interested in implementing a mandatory First Year Experience course, including Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College.

5. Confidentiality: Responses are voluntary and confidential. You may decline to participate by exiting out of the survey at any time without penalty. Your survey answers will be sent to a link at Qualtrics where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. The survey does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. All responses will be compiled together and analyzed as a group.

6. Refusal/Withdrawal: Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

Your continued cooperation with the following research implies your consent.

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Robin Pyles, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-3360

WKU IRB# 19-250
Approved: 2/05/2019
End Date: 5/31/2019
EXPEDITED
Original: 2/05/2019
# APPENDIX D: Main Areas of Employment Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Office of the President, Human Resource and Institutional Advancement, or Academic Affairs</td>
<td>5.04%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Division of Advanced Manufacturing Technologies</td>
<td>7.56%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Division of Allied Health and Nursing</td>
<td>10.92%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Division of Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>24.37%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Division of Business</td>
<td>13.45%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Division of Mathematics and Sciences</td>
<td>13.45%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Library/TLC or Information Technology</td>
<td>4.20%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Outreach and Community Development, Adult Education, or Office of Workforce Solutions</td>
<td>8.40%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Student and Organizational Success, Office of Business Affairs, or Financial Aid</td>
<td>8.40%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Security, Maintenance Operations, or Hosting</td>
<td>4.20%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E: Factors that Facilitate Mandated FYE Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Administration's attitude towards the First Year Experience (FYE) course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course.</td>
<td>81.48%</td>
<td>16.05%</td>
<td>2.47%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The faculty's attitude towards the First Year Experience (FYE) course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course.</td>
<td>83.95%</td>
<td>14.81%</td>
<td>1.23%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The staff's attitude towards the First Year Experience (FYE) course is critical to the mandatory implementation of the First Year Experience course.</td>
<td>64.20%</td>
<td>30.86%</td>
<td>4.94%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Faculty from any discipline should be allowed to teach the First Year Experience (FYE) course.</td>
<td>64.20%</td>
<td>20.99%</td>
<td>14.81%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Staff who meet required qualifications should be allowed to teach the First Year Experience (FYE) course.</td>
<td>86.42%</td>
<td>9.88%</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I am interested in teaching the First Year Experience (FYE) course (response only measures level of interest at the college as respondents are not identified).</td>
<td>39.51%</td>
<td>20.99%</td>
<td>39.51%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX F: Interest in Teaching the FYE Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department or Division</th>
<th>Total Agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office of the President, Human Resource and Institutional Advancement, or Academic Affairs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Advanced Manufacturing Technologies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Allied Health and Nursing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Business</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Mathematics and Sciences</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library/TLC or Information Technology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach and Community Development, Adult Education, or Office of Workforce Solutions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student and Organizational Success, Office of Business Affairs, or Financial Aid</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security, Maintenance Operations, or Hosting</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Stakeholders Interested in Teaching the FYE Course</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX G: Most Important Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>academic success strategies (e.g., study skills)</td>
<td>17.41%</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>knowledge of campus resources</td>
<td>12.94%</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>academic planning and major exploration</td>
<td>10.70%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>financial aid literacy</td>
<td>8.96%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>introduction to college-level class expectations</td>
<td>8.21%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>goal setting and motivation</td>
<td>7.46%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>analytical, critical thinking, and problem-solving</td>
<td>7.21%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>campus involvement and forming social networks</td>
<td>5.72%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>career exploration</td>
<td>5.72%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>information and digital literacy</td>
<td>5.47%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>research and writing skills</td>
<td>3.73%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>common first-year experience (e.g., learning communities or common reading)</td>
<td>2.24%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>personal exploration and development</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>transfer information</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>health and wellness education</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>collaborative learning</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>service learning</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>other, please specify</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX H: Least Important Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>health and wellness education</td>
<td>17.42%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>service learning</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>transfer information</td>
<td>10.23%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>collaborative learning</td>
<td>8.71%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>common first-year experience (e.g., learning communities or common reading)</td>
<td>7.95%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>research and writing skills</td>
<td>7.58%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>personal exploration and development</td>
<td>5.68%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>campus involvement and forming social networks</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>analytical, critical thinking, and problem-solving</td>
<td>3.41%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>knowledge of campus resources</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>financial aid literacy</td>
<td>2.65%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>information and digital literacy</td>
<td>2.27%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>academic planning and major exploration</td>
<td>2.27%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>introduction to college-level class expectations</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>career exploration</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>goal setting and motivation</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>academic success strategies (e.g., study skills)</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>other, please specify</td>
<td>0.76%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I: Open-ended Question Responses

Code:
1 - Curriculum
2 - Impact/Relevance
3 - Necessity
4 - Communication
5 – Cost
6 – Miscellaneous

<p>| Definition of what exactly is meant by an FYE course | 1 |
| agreement on the number of credit hours and what the curriculum should be | 1 |
| trying to take on too much with one course, i.e. including CIT105 components in a large load | 1 |
| Some faculty/advisors feel that this is not relevant to their majors/programs. | 2 |
| For tech programs, there should be an integrated FYE for their program area (if there isn't such a course already). | 2 |
| And there is a concern about using this as a required elective that would make it harder for students to complete transfer pathways | 2 |
| FYE may be needed by some students but unsure if it should be a mandatory class | 3 |
| Ensuring to transfer to the student the importance of the course. Even if the institution is on board I think it will be good to show the student why it's important as well. Maybe have testimonials from students who have taken the FYE Course and how they feel it prepared them for college. | 4 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students not being able to afford another class as part of their program. If they can only take 1 class a term and want to pay their own way, this will deter them.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also, students who were high achievers in K-12 and are at KCTCS to save money before transferring will be turned off by being required to take such a course</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAS degree requirements are already pushing the limits on the maximum number credit hours allowed. Any other required courses would reduce the number of technical core classes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often, students with the greatest need experience embarrassment when taking a special class or participating in a program. They need it but feel uncomfortable and sometimes are willing to &quot;wing it&quot; on their own</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements that programs stay under a certain number of credit hours will limit the ability to implement a mandatory FYE course</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel it is a waste of time</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe only make it cost one credit</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited days available for FYE105 students to complete the course</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited availability of class spots in a student's AS/AA track</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of agreement between whether or not coursework should focus on the theoretical study of what makes students successful or applied activities from which students can learn by doing. I for one think the theoretical framework</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
should be left out. Students don't need proof that certain practices work. They need an opportunity to see if those practices work for them

| All students do not need this course. It should be an option but not required for all | 3 |
| Not enough faculty to teach ONLY FYE. Instead, it's being thrown at faculty in other disciplines who are already teaching over-loads in their subject areas | 6 |
I have read the informed consent form included in the email. I agree to participate in the research project by completing the survey. I understand that I can withdraw at any time by exiting the survey.

- Yes
- No

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your feedback is appreciated.
This study takes approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.
Click the "two arrows" to get started!
Choose the answer that most accurately answers the question.

What is your gender?
- Female
- Male

What is your age?
- Under 18
- 18 - 29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70 or older
What is your ethnicity?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Other
- White
- Other

What is your level of education?

- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- 2 year degree
- 4 year degree
- Master's or other professional degree
- Doctorate

Where do you work (main area of employment)? (drop down menu)

What is your position at the College? (drop down menu)
How long have you been employed at the College? (drop down menu)

Do you have knowledge of or experience with the First Year Experience (FYE 105) course? Choose one.

- Yes
- No

For the following statements, indicate level of agreement or disagreement.

For the following statements, indicate level of agreement or disagreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student learning and success is a campus-wide responsibility. Agree</td>
<td>Student learning and success is a campus-wide responsibility. Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Student learning and success is a campus-wide responsibility. Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student's success during the first year lays a foundation for future success in college. Agree</td>
<td>A student's success during the first year lays a foundation for future success in college. Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>A student's success during the first year lays a foundation for future success in college. Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academically underprepared students can do as well as academically prepared students with the right support. Agree</td>
<td>Academically underprepared students can do as well as academically prepared students with the right support. Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Academically underprepared students can do as well as academically prepared students with the right support. Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community colleges have a responsibility to prepare first-year undergraduate students for college life. Agree</td>
<td>Community colleges have a responsibility to prepare first-year undergraduate students for college life. Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Community colleges have a responsibility to prepare first-year undergraduate students for college life. Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the following statements, indicate level of agreement or disagreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year Experience (FYE) courses prepare first-year undergraduate students to be more successful in college. Agree</td>
<td>First Year Experience (FYE) courses prepare first-year undergraduate students to be more successful in college. Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Year Experience (FYE) courses increase persistence and retention of first year undergraduate students. Agree</td>
<td>First Year Experience (FYE) courses increase persistence and retention of first year undergraduate students. Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Year Experience (FYE) courses should be mandatory. Agree</td>
<td>First Year Experience (FYE) courses should be mandatory. Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the following statements, indicate level of agreement or disagreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration's attitude towards the First Year Experience (FYE) course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course. Agree</td>
<td>Administration's attitude towards the First Year Experience (FYE) course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course. Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration's attitude towards the First Year Experience (FYE) course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course.</td>
<td>Administration's attitude towards the First Year Experience (FYE) course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course. Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the following statements, indicate level of agreement or disagreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The faculty's attitude towards the First Year Experience (FYE) course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course.</td>
<td>The faculty's attitude towards the First Year Experience (FYE) course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course. Agree</td>
<td>The faculty's attitude towards the First Year Experience (FYE) course is critical to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience course. Neither agree nor disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff's attitude towards the First Year Experience (FYE) course is critical to the mandatory implementation of the First Year Experience course.</td>
<td>Faculty from any discipline should be allowed to teach the First Year Experience (FYE) course. Agree</td>
<td>Faculty from any discipline should be allowed to teach the First Year Experience (FYE) course. Neither agree nor disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff who meet required qualifications should be allowed to teach the First Year Experience (FYE) course.</td>
<td>Staff who meet required qualifications should be allowed to teach the First Year Experience (FYE) course. Agree</td>
<td>Staff who meet required qualifications should be allowed to teach the First Year Experience (FYE) course. Neither agree nor disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in teaching the First Year Experience (FYE) course</td>
<td>I am interested in teaching the First Year Experience (FYE) course</td>
<td>I am interested in teaching the First Year Experience (FYE) course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the following statements, indicate level of agreement or disagreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(response only measures level of interest at the college as respondents are not identified). Agree are identified.</td>
<td>(response only measures level of interest at the college as respondents are not identified). Neither agree nor disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What factors do you think are most important to consider when implementing a mandatory First Year Experience (FYE) Course. Check all that apply.

- Campus-wide coordination and cooperation
- Comprehensive curriculum that includes high impact practices
- Providing first year academic advising
- Education of the campus community on the First Year Experience (FYE) Course
- Professional development and training for First Year Experience (FYE) teachers
- Having a first-year curriculum committee
- Combining First Year Courses with other courses to create learning communities
- Having a common reading experience for all First Year Experience courses

Of the following, which do you consider to be most important to include when creating the First Year Experience course curriculum? Choose five.

- academic planning and major exploration
- common first-year experience (e.g. learning communities or common reading)
- academic success strategies (e.g. study skills)
- financial aid literacy
- analytical, critical thinking, and problem solving
- goal setting and motivation
- knowledge of campus resources
- personal exploration and development
- research and writing skills
Of the following, which do you consider to be least important to include when creating the First Year Experience course curriculum? Choose three to five.

- academic planning and major exploration
- academic success strategies (e.g. study skills)
- analytical, critical thinking, and problem solving
- campus involvement and forming social networks
- career exploration
- collaborative learning
- common first-year experience (e.g. learning communities or common reading)
- financial aid literacy
- goal setting and motivation
- health and wellness education
- information and digital literacy
- introduction to college level class expectations
- knowledge of campus resources
- personal exploration and development
- research and writing skills
- service learning
- transfer information
- other, please specify

For each of the following statements, indicate level of agreement or disagreement regarding each as a barrier to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience (FYE) course at your college.

For each of the following statements, indicate level of agreement or disagreement regarding each as a barrier to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience (FYE) course at your college.

- Lack of a systematic means of evaluating the effectiveness of a course
- Lack of a systematic means of evaluating the effectiveness of a course
- Lack of a systematic means of evaluating the effectiveness of a course

Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
For each of the following statements, indicate level of agreement or disagreement regarding each as a barrier to the implementation of a mandatory First Year Experience (FYE) course at your college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of financial resources available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of institutional support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge about the First Year Experience (FYE) course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate physical or technological infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance to change among college faculty and/or staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance to change among college leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List any potential barriers that may exist but have not been identified in the previous question.

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APPENDIX K: The 16 KCTCS Colleges

Kentucky Community and Technical College System
300 North Main Street
Versailles, KY 40383
877.KCTCS.414 (toll-free)
877.328.2748
819.256.3100

KCTCS COLLEGES

Ashland Community and Technical College
ashland.kctcs.edu
800.928.4256 (toll-free)

Big Sandy Community and Technical College
bigsand.kctcs.edu
888.641.4132 (toll-free)

Bluegrass Community and Technical College
bluegrass.kctcs.edu
866.774.4872 (toll-free)

Elizabethtown Community and Technical College
elizabethtown.kctcs.edu
877.246.3222 (toll-free)

Gateway Community and Technical College
gateway.kctcs.edu
859.441.4500

Hazard Community and Technical College
hazard.kctcs.edu
800.246.7521 (toll-free)

Henderson Community College
henderson.kctcs.edu
800.696.9918 (toll-free)

Hopkinsville Community College
hopkinsville.kctcs.edu
270.707.3760

Jefferson Community and Technical College
jefferson.kctcs.edu
502.213.5313

Madisonville Community College
madisonville.kctcs.edu
270.821.2280

Maysville Community and Technical College
maysville.kctcs.edu
606.759.7141

Owensboro Community and Technical College
owensboro.kctcs.edu
866.715.6282 (toll-free)

Somerset Community College
somerset.kctcs.edu
877.697.9725 (toll-free)

Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College
southcentral.kctcs.edu
855.246.2482 (toll-free)

Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College
southeast.kctcs.edu
888.774.7122 (toll-free)

West Kentucky Community and Technical College
westkentucky.kctcs.edu
270.334.9200

KCTCS 2017-2018 Catalog