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VAMOS A PLÁTICAR: THE SENSE-MAKING PROCESS OF CAREER SERVICES PRACTITIONERS AT CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN A GUIDED PATHWAYS EPOCH

Claudia Estrada-Howell

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A Dissertation

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

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by

Claudia Estrada-Howell

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ABSTRACT

The California Community College system and its vision for success, which includes a focus on increasing students' degree and certificate completion, as well as increasing the percentage of existing Career and Technical Education students who report being employed in their field of study is highlighted. To help support these goals, the California Community College System has adopted the Guided Pathways framework. This framework requires all campuses to fundamentally redesign their programs and support services to ensure they are clear, more educationally coherent pathways to credentials that in turn prepare students for success in the workforce and further education. To do so, this study explored a deeper understanding of Career Services to understand the sensemaking process of practitioners as they implement Guided Pathways in their institution. Career services have a long history of helping students become connected to various career opportunities, particularly those in four-year institutions. However, there is very little research to understand the role of Career Services within the community college sector. This study employs organizational change, specifically, and sensemaking as guiding frameworks to understand the role of Career Services practitioners and their role in the implementation of Guided Pathways in the California Community Colleges. Career Services practitioners in this study include: professional staff, faculty, career counseling staff, and faculty coordinators. This study found two interrelated themes. The two themes identified were: (a) executive leaders not understanding Career Services

contributes to unresolved sensemaking, and (b) the evolution of Career Services should be college-wide, not just departmental.

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

In the United States, individuals born in lower socio-economic conditions face a greater employment opportunity gap and often will have a difficult time gaining higher socio-economic standing (Sawhill, 2013, United States Chamber of Commerce, 2020). Employment status and economic stability are critical determinants to support family income and play a role in a family's ability to build intergenerational wealth (United States Chamber of Commerce, 2020). Additionally, the economic conditions of Americans in lower-sector income earners (measured as less than $30,000 annual income) experienced stagnation or continue to decline. In contrast, the material conditions of the top one-percent have significantly increased year after year (MacEwan & Miller, 2018). The United States, employment opportunities are coupled with postsecondary education and degree attainment. For example, some of the largest and growing industries in the U.S. are fields of education, healthcare, finance, and business economics. In said industries, it is rare that someone with only a high school degree could find and secure employment opportunities (Carnevale & Rose, 2015). Adding to this, technological advances that began in the 1960's have driven the need for a formally-educated workforce that can create, utilize, and continue to maintain increasing developments with said technologies (Carnevale & Rose, 2015). These changes pose greater demands for individuals to be

adequately prepared to join the workforce. However, there are competing demands discouraging young adults from immediately pursuing employment because wages for high school-educated workers have also declined (Carnevale & Rose, 2015). Additionally, for students pursuing postsecondary education or entering the workforce, college readiness skills, such as self-motivation, critical thinking, communication, and teamwork are not only required but critical skills to navigate institutions of higher learning (Asamsama, Mayo, Stillman, Mathews, Schnorr, & Nelson, 2016). Community college students, in particular, are required to make important career decisions immediately upon starting college. Contingent on their aspiration, they negotiate varying options such as earning certificates, associate degree(s), employment development, and/or transferring to a four-year university. These are important life decisions students must identify early in their college career. Therefore, it is imperative for colleges to offer students, particularly historically marginalized students, specialized and individualized support such as Career Services.

Purpose Statement

Given the importance these educators play in supporting community college students to make important life changing career decisions, the purpose of the study is to understand how Career Services are understood among its practitioners. The objectives of this study are threefold: First, to examine the sense-making process practitioners and career services professionals perceived the role of Career Services in California Community Colleges. Secondly, assess

the importance of Career Services within the California Community Colleges system. Lastly, consider the significance Career Services may have in the implementation of the Guided Pathways framework. Guided Pathways is a policy-driven framework assumed to lead infrastructural changes to drastically change the way community colleges in California support student success. This last consideration is to assess how Career Services may affect and impact overall student success, as defined by Guided Pathways.

Research Questions

In order to examine how community college Career Services practitioners, make sense of the role in Southern California Community Colleges, this study is led by the following research questions:

1. How do Career Services practitioners from Southern California Community Colleges describe the current role of Career Services?
2. How do Career Services practitioners from Southern California Community Colleges make sense of the role of Career Services in relation to the implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework?
3. What opportunities and or challenges do participants experience as Career Services practitioners?

Significance of The Study

There continues to be a lack of research on the role community college Career Services play and how they are impacted by varying State-led initiatives. Existing research on the effectiveness of college Career Services Centers (CSCs) has been quantified by primarily focusing on students' rating the utilization and satisfaction with Career Service programming (Chin, Cohen, Hora, 2018). Although there is a limitation of available research, there is a tremendous need to understand the role Career Services play especially given the pressure for community colleges to meet outcomes such as support students to obtain gainful employment and earn living wages. In 2020, the world experienced a devastating COVID-19 pandemic, negatively impacting the global economy. In the United States, COVID-19 exacerbated the need for workforce development and job placement. The urgency to support students to navigate these economic demands also put pressure on how Career Services would respond to support students navigating these historical transitions.

For students pursuing postsecondary education or entering the workforce, college readiness skills, such as self-motivation, critical thinking, communication, and teamwork are not only required but critical skills to navigate institutions of higher learning (Asamsama, Mayo, Stillman, Mathews, Schnorr, & Nelson, 2016). Community colleges in the United States are now part of the National completion agenda, with a focus on the attainment of certificates and associate degrees from community colleges. Baccalaureate degrees are no longer considered the most important postsecondary degree (Karp, 2013). Presently, most occupations

require at least some level of postsecondary training, and that trend is expected to continue to grow (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). Due to these demands in the labor market, colleges and universities are finding themselves with an increased responsibility of connecting students with employment opportunities related to their field of study (Hudson, Klein-Collins, 2018). In addition, colleges and universities are also having to assist students in making informed decisions about varying career paths and the skills needed for their chosen field (Hudson & Klein-Collins, 2018). Additionally, colleges and universities are also outreaching, connecting, and negotiating professional connections between employers and students (Hudson & Klein-Collins, 2018). In sum, the need and demand for Career Services have dramatically increased, but their function in the type of services and support of students are equally important to understand how they are transforming to meet student success rates, particularly following Guided Pathways as a lens.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Theoretically, this study is guided by organizational change theories (Kezar, 2014) specifically as it relates to sense-making (Helms Mills, Thurlow, & Mills, 2010; Weick, 1995). An organizational change lens is important to inform this study as we are in a historic moment of assessing how institutions modify their practices to meet the needs of students in an equitable way. Particularly with the current shift in practice due to Guided Pathways, “community colleges

have undergone organizational change by making efforts to design more effective enrollment and advising processes following the Guided Pathways framework" (Baily, 2017, Beaston, 2018 p.3). Understanding a state-led initiative is guiding institutional changes, Career Services are intricately part of these modifications. Especially with great demand to support student training and employability, "a newly designed Guided Pathways student advising and registration process must help students make informed program and course selections by utilizing innovative Career Services at the start of their journey at the college" (p. 3). An organizational change framework enables the opportunity to identify how this is actively happening at the community college level.

Sensemaking is about a reflective process of understanding how one generates information. This lens is based on an understanding of how social and individual activities or experiences shape how one sees and understands their livelihood (Dellinger, et al, 2019). Namely, sensemaking allows the uncovering and identification of social-psychological processes that *contribute* to overall outcomes, instead of solely focusing on the outcomes themselves (Helms, Thurlow, Mills, 2010). This study employs sensemaking as a lens to identify how practitioners understand their role as educational agents in Career Services, while also assessing the significance this sensemaking may have in the implementation of the Guided Pathways framework.

Assumptions

To gain rich qualitative data, pláticas is the primary method for data

collection. Pláticas are informal conversations that take place in one-on-one or group settings and involve a two-way conversation (Fierros and Delgado Bernal 2016, 113). Coupled with Delgado-Bernal's Chicana Feminist Epistemology (1998), pláticas enable the researcher to bridge their own lived experiences, culture, and knowledge, as research epistemology. Personal trajectories as a Latina, working in postsecondary Career Services for over 21 years. The intersection of my personal and professional lives enable me to create a critical observation in that racial- and gender- and other forms of representation matters for student success. The lack of inclusion and representation vary across the two decades of practice. However, very few instances have been where a LatinX individual be invited to provide a keynote address at a Workforce or Career Services convening. Here, an assumption implied in this study is the possibility of marginalization among practitioners in Career Services. This lends itself to uncover whether race, gender, and other forms of identifiers may affect how Career Services provide support to students. Additionally, the role of these identifiers may also help contextualize the sense-making processes for practitioners.

Limitation

A potential limitation of this study is a technical portion of facilitation in-person pláticas due to physical limitation due to Covid-19. Another limitation may be the ability to access potential study participants due identified individuals not working within the colleges selected for the study sample.

Delimitations

This study will not examine Career Services across the entire California Community College system. As such, the research is bound to the randomly selected college sites. In addition, organizational change observations will only occur within Career Services and not any other departments.

In this chapter, the problem and purpose statement were presented. The context and detail leading this study is contextualized with the research questions. The objective is to intentionally gather key findings to provide practical recommendations for practitioners in the community college sector. This chapter also discussed the theoretical frameworks of organizational change and sensemaking processes from the practitioners' experiences. The researcher's epistemology, assumptions, and potential limitations were discussed to support the organization of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The objective of this study is to identify the role of Career Services in California Community Colleges as perceived and provided by Career Services practitioners. This study examines the importance of the identified role for Career Services in a California Community College and the significance it may have in the implementation of the Guided Pathways framework. As such, this chapter is structured to present the literature reviewed to contextualize the need for this study. First, a historical overview of the United States education system and the economy are presented. This will be followed by carefully examining five focal areas within the California Community College sector, these include: (1) Community Colleges as a system; (2) Career Services; (3) Guided Pathways Framework; and (4) the challenges and (5) opportunities of Guided Pathways.

Historical Context

In the United States, individuals born in lower socio-economic conditions face a greater employment opportunity gap and often will have a difficult time gaining higher socio-economic standing (Sawhill, 2013, United States Chamber of Commerce, 2020). Employment status and economic stability are critical determinants to support family income and play a role in a family's ability to build intergenerational wealth (United States Chamber of Commerce, 2020). In the

United States, employment opportunities are now increasingly coupled with postsecondary education and degree attainment. Therefore a formal college education may be the bridge that connects those that are economically disadvantaged with better opportunities for social mobility and economic advancement. Many employment sectors are now requiring advanced levels of formal education to support a strong workforce. Carnevale & Rose (2015) elaborate accordingly,

> The U.S. economy's largest and fastest-growing sectors – business services, finance, healthcare, and education – have little room for high school-educated workers. Also, advances in information technology and the rise of complex consumption and production networks have been key factors in America's economic transformation since the 1960s. The increasing technological sophistication of our economy has only increased the demand for educated workers who can utilize that technology. As employers have bid up the price for college-educated workers, the real wages of high school-educated workers have fallen. (p.16)

For students pursuing postsecondary education or entering the workforce, college readiness skills, such as self-motivation, critical thinking, communication, and teamwork are not only required but critical skills to navigate institutions of higher learning (Asamsama, Mayo, Stillman, Mathews, Schnorr, & Nelson, 2016). Community colleges in the United States are now part of the National completion

agenda, with a focus on the attainment of certificates and associate degrees from community colleges. Baccalaureate degrees are no longer considered the most important postsecondary degree (Karp, 2013). In today's job market, most occupations require some postsecondary training, and that trend is expected to grow (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). Due to these demands in the labor market, colleges and universities are finding themselves with the added responsibility of connecting students with employment related to their field of study (Hudson, Klein-Collins, 2018). In addition, colleges and universities are also having to assist students in making informed decisions about varying career paths and the skills needed for their career field. Additionally, due to the growing demands of today's labor market, colleges and universities are finding themselves with the added responsibility of meeting students' expectations by helping them connect with employers. They are also helping students with making informed decisions about varying career paths along with providing them the skills and training needed for the workforce (Hudson & Klein-Collins, 2018). According to Johnson (2015), from the Public Policy Institute of California, "projections suggest that the state's economy will continue to need more highly educated workers" (p.1). Johnson also states that "in 2025, if current trends persist, 41 percent of jobs will require at least a bachelor's degree and 36 percent will require some college education short of a bachelor's degree" (Johnson, 2015, p.1). The Public Policy Institute of California research also suggests that about 1.1 million more college graduates will be needed by

employers in California by 2030 (Johnson, Mejia, & Bohn 2015). Thus, higher education, but Career Services in particular, play an incredible role in understanding how community college support and play a role in meeting workforce demands.

Higher education in California was structured by the 1960 California Education Master Plan (Little Hoover Commission, 2012). Here, public education in the state would be provided by the California University System (UC), the California State University System (CSU), and the California Community Colleges (CCC). According to the Little Hoover Commission (2012), California Community Colleges were created to provide open-door access to individuals interested in pursuing higher education and provide instruction to over 2 million students every year. Despite California's overall prosperity, too many Californians are in danger of being left behind, not making ends meet, and unable to create a middle-class life for themselves and their families (California Workforce Development Board [CWDB], Sling Shot Report, 2018). Many Californians face substantial challenges in finding employment and supporting themselves and their families in an era with volatile, rapidly evolving labor markets (CWDB, Sling Shot Report, 2018). This has resulted in a combination of skilled worker shortages across the regions of California from key industries and has given way to cohorts of students and workers being ill-prepared to compete for better-paying jobs (CWDB, Sling Shot Report, 2018). According to the California Workforce Development Board, "all of this places an increasing strain

on equality of opportunity, a core component of the American Dream, and the ability of this generation and the next to rise above the economic and social station of their parents" (Sling Shot Report, 2018, p.1). The idea and expectation that many individuals will gain equal opportunities is beginning to look like a myth for many, especially for California's young adults (CWDB, Sling Shot Report, 2018). A 2015 U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data; System [IPEDS] study employed a stratification design on data that included 1,574 bachelor degree-granting institutions. This study notes that in the years 2000 through 2009, 73% of incoming college freshmen entering students perceived the idea of a better paying job as an important reason for their decision to enroll in college (Eagan, Stolzenberg, Ramirez, Aragon, Suchard, & Rios-Aguilar, 2016). That number has since increased to an average of 86% from the year 2010 (Eagan, Stolzenberg, Ramirez, Aragon, Suchard, & Rios-Aguilar, 2016). Therefore, the widespread anxiety about the availability of well-paying jobs, the rising price of college, and questions about whether graduates have the skills employers require have all contributed to a reorientation toward Career Services and preparation across the entire postsecondary sector (Cottom, 2017; Selingo, 2016). Furthermore, it is important to note that the IPEDS survey stopped including community colleges in 1970 although the community college system enrolls the largest number of students in the United States (Eagan, Stolzenberg, Ramirez, Aragon, Suchard, & Rios-Aguilar, 2016).

Community Colleges

Historically, community colleges have played an integral role in providing access to formal education for people across the United States. As such, the following sections will describe the current role of community colleges, Nationally, and specifically in the state of California.

Community Colleges in the United States

Traditionally, community colleges in the United States offer short-term certificate programs and two-year programs of study for students to obtain either an Associate of Science and/or Associate of Arts degrees. Most recently, there are a number of community colleges that offer Bachelor's degrees as well. Community colleges are structured to provide access to students who want to expand their professional needs or transfer their academic credits as transfer students to four-year institutions. Nationally, many first-generation, low-income students often feel community colleges are their only opportunity to obtain a postsecondary degree due to proximity and cost (Ornelas, 2002). Community colleges play a critical role in providing access, mentoring, and support for students to pursue additional degrees, such as baccalaureate and graduate degrees.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), in the 2019–2020 academic year, colleges and universities were expected to award 2 million bachelor’s degrees and 1 million associate's degrees. The study notes, “among those who do graduate, too many aren’t progressing into fulfilling careers

with the skills employers need in the 21st-century workforce" (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, Digest of education statistics, 2015). Furthermore, students from economically and educationally marginalized backgrounds, oftentimes more likely to be disproportionately represented at community colleges, are commonly unprepared to navigate a college experience, which as a result, increases equity gaps (Bailey, Jaggars, Jenkins, 2015). Additionally, community colleges are unique in that they offer more flexibility with class schedules and a vast number of student services and programs. However, these offerings and vast options also add to the confusion for many students in their ability to successfully enter and complete a program of study (Scott-Clayton, 2011). For these reasons, this study aims to understand how the support and orientation provided by Career Services supports student success.

California Community Colleges (CCC)

The California Community College system is currently the largest system of higher education in the nation and second largest in the world; second to China. The California Community College system serves over 2.1 million students through open access for all students in its 116 colleges (CCCCO, 2017). Compared to other states, California depends heavily on the role of its community colleges in that they provide the vast majority of its workforce training and educational access as its state's largest post-secondary sector (Vision for Success 2017). Given that it is the largest system with over 2 million students, it is experiencing transformational changes to ensure opportunities and access are

provided equitably across the state. In the California Community College Vision for Success (Rose, 2019) report notes:

> The 116 institutions that comprise the California Community Colleges are facing major transformational changes. The 2017 Vision for Success, the system's strategic statement, poses ambitious goals for increasing degrees, certificates, university transfer, and future employment. Further, this vision calls for these goals to be achieved with reduced equity gaps and regional disparities. (p. 4)

Rose (2019) further explains, the system of public higher education in California was specifically designed for most degree-seeking students to begin at the CCC. By students starting their postsecondary trajectory at the community college, this would make the transfer process between CCC's and public four-year universities critically important to the overall output of the broader California system (CCCCO, 2019). According to the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO, 2019), the objectives of the California Community College system are to:

- prepare students to transfer to four-year universities
- develop and train the workforce for the state
- provide opportunity to obtain an Associate's Degree
- provide access to basic skills and remedial education

One of the Vision for Success goals of the California Community College is to increase the number of students earning certificates or degrees by at least 20 percent, annually (CCCCO, 2019). In 2016-2017 there were 126,501 students earning certificates or degrees. In 2017-2018 there were 126,689, which is a slight increase but the overall goal is to reach 151,801 by 2021-2022 (CCCCO, 2019).

A focal point and objective of the community college is to transfer. The need to increase the number of students to transfer to four-year institutions is also a top priority. Community colleges seek to increase transfer rates by 35% (CCCCO, 2019). The transfer phenomena is incredibly important, especially as noted in this study: the need for formal degrees beyond a high school diploma and an Associate's degree are increasing. It is reported that in 2016-2017, only 83,179 students transferred to a four-year institution, and only a slight increase was experienced in 2017- 2018: 85,870 transferred (CCCCO, 2019). There have not been significant changes, however, especially being that the transfer target is 112, 292 by the year 2021-2022 (CCCCO, 2019). A question of where are students transferring is also a good point to highlight.

In the academic year of 2018- 2019, 61,599 community college students transferred into the California State University System (CCCCO, *Transfers to the California State University System Report*, 2019). In the same year, the University of California accepted 28,752 transfers from a pool of 41,282 students. Of the admitted 28,752, this includes the largest-ever class from the California

Community Colleges with 26,700 students (UC Press Room, 2019). In all, the UC freshman admission rate for California residents increased three percentage points to 62 percent, while the admit rate for California Community College transfers remained at 76 percent in 2018- 2019 (UC Press Room, 2019). According to a recent 2019 article from the UC Press Room, “The university’s transfer enrollment is expected to rise in the coming years from growing awareness of the UC Transfer Pathways program” (UC Press Room, 2019). With the focus to increase transfer rates, it is especially important to understand how four-year institutions are receptive and supportive of community college transfer students. However, this study seeks to understand how the Career Services may help shape the experiences of students while at the community college, and how practitioners support students to meet their desired goals and aspirations.

When we analyze undergraduate graduation data, we learn that 51% percent of California State University graduates and 29% percent of University of California graduates started their educational path at a California Community College level (CCCCO, 2019). This indicates the California Community College sector plays a pivotal role in how students navigate their postsecondary education through their opportunity to obtain a baccalaureate degree. Thus, when seeking to understand how CCCs may prepare a formally-educated workforce, we see a trend that a third of UC graduates and over half of CSU

graduates, indeed, were able to do so as a result of attending a community college.

In addition to increasing transfer rates, the California Community College State Chancellor's office, have also established a vision for success to “increase the percent of Career and Technical Education (CTE) students who report being employed in their field of study, from the most recent statewide average of 60 percent to an improved rate of 76 percent” (CCCCO, 2019). In 2017-2018 the percentage of community college graduates with a certificate or an associate degree who successfully secured jobs in their fields of study grew three-percentage points, to 71 percent (CCC, 2019). This indicates a priority is assessing how CTE and Career Services are prioritizing their efforts to ensure CTE students are actively and adequately placed into gainful employment.

Community College Students

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the country serving 1.8 million students at its 116 colleges (CCCCO, 2023). According to the California Community College Chancellor's Office, 69 percent of the students enrolled in the system are people of diverse ethnic backgrounds (SOS Report, 2021). The diversity among student demographics begs to understand how they are experiencing their postsecondary trajectory. How community colleges respond to the diverse needs of its student population

are important factors to consider when assessing the desired metrics and goals to measure student success across the system.

Career Services

One of a college's most important roles is to help students with the identification of their desired careers (Bloom, 2009). Career Services, as a branch within the California community college system, offer valuable resources to help students with choosing a major; career exploration guidance; college mentoring; and assistance in obtaining jobs or internships (Schaub, 2012). In recent decades, the most common model of Career Services has been responsible for assisting students in selecting their career of interest, coordinating career and employer engagement events (such as job fairs and networking events), and helping students with career preparation such as resume writing and interview preparation (Carlson, 2017). In sum, Career Services supports students in various ways to ensure students feel supported through their time at the community college.

Historically, following the Great Depression, Career Services were available for college students as “placement offices” and focused primarily on assisting students with obtaining industry-specific employment needed during dismal economic turmoil (Carlson, 2017). After the end of World War II, college enrollment increased due to war veterans enrolling to take advantage of the GI Bill which in part, helped meet the demands of workers to maintain a good economy (Hudson & Klein-Collins, 2018). This surge to help veterans identify

transferable skills to then match and apply these to civilian work resulted in a wave of developing Career Services offices on college campuses (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000). The next shift for Career Services occurred in the decades between the 1970s and 1980s. During this timeframe, Career Services transitioned into a model that focused its services to help students find jobs and career counseling. However, this model held the expectation that students were to take full ownership of their own career development process (Dey, Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000). Later, in the 1990s and 2000s, a greater emphasis was placed on having Career Services engage with employers through activities such as candidate recruitment, networking as well as the incorporation of technological innovation with the ability to use the Internet and recruiting software (Dey, Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000). The following describes the evolution of Career Services within the community college sector:

> Dey and Real (2010), and subsequently Cruzvergara and Dey (2014) and Dey and Cruzvergara (2014), described the evolution of Career Services in a series of changing operational paradigms that included vocational guidance, teacher guidance, job placement, career counseling, and professional networking, and that pointed to an emerging model characterized by innovative connections and partnerships, and the emergence of career communities (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000).

To provide a visual representation of these changes, Table 1 notes the timeframe and area of focus to support institutional changes and practitioners' role in supporting student success through Career Services.

Table 1: Evolution of Career Services in Higher Education

Paradigm	**1940-1970 PLACEMENT [reactive]**	**1970-1990 COUNSELING [proactive]**	**1990-2010 NETWORKING [interactive]**	**2010-2030 CONNECTIONS [hyperactive]**
Environ-mental Factors	GI Bill & Manufacturing Boom	Self-actualization movements, diversity of candidates & opportunities, & Less Job	Dot-com boom, Technology, University funding, Globalization, Generational changes	Economic Downtown, Fewer jobs, Society's Expectations, Value of Higher Education, Social Media
Purpose	Placement	Decision Making & Skill Development	Preparing, Educating & Revenue Generating	Building connections & communities

Method	Employment Service	Counseling, workshops, & print resources	Coaching, Courses, Career Fairs, Web Resources	Facilitation, Relationship Development, Social Media
Name of the Office	Placement Center	Career Development Center	Career Services	Career & Professional Development
Paradigm	**1940-1970 PLACEMENT [reactive]**	**1970-1990 COUNSELING [proactive]**	**1990-2010 NETWORKING [interactive]**	**2010-2030 CONNECTIONS [hyperactive]**
Stakehol-ders	Students & Employers	Students	Students, Employers, Parents	Community: Students, Alumni, Employers, Parents, Faculty, Administrators, & Government

Theo-retical Orienta-tion	Trait-Factor (criteria matching)	Typology: matching based on personality, interests and skills	Eclectic: based on counselor's theoretical orientation	Design Thinking: Strengths Based, Chaos & Happenstance
Provider Identity	Job Filler	Generalist counselor	Supportive Coach, Educator, Organizer	Customized Connector, Multifaceted, Relationship Developer, & Group Facilitator
Provider Skills	Processing	Counseling	Multitasking, Coaching, Coordinating	Facilitating, Synthesizing, Connecting, Specialized Expertise
Director Profile	Placement Director	Director: Senior	Executive Director:	Elevated Role (AVP, VP,

		Counselor, Staff Trainer & Supervisor	Manager of Operations, Employer Developer, Fundraiser	Dean): Visionary, Strategic & Political Leader, Convener of Stakeholders, & Change Agent
Paradigm	**1940-1970 PLACEMENT [reactive]**	**1970-1990 COUNSELING [proactive]**	**1990-2010 NETWORKING [interactive]**	**2010-2030 CONNECTIONS [hyperactive]**
Reporting Line	Student Affairs	Student Affairs	Student Affairs/Academic Affairs	Enrollment Management, Advancement & Development, Alumni Relations, Academic Affairs, & Student Affairs

Location	Placement Office	Counseling Office	Web, Classroom, Event Hall	Mobile, Social Media & Campus Hot Spots
Employer Recruiting Strategy	Demand	Selective	Experiential Learning (early identification)	Branding & Campus Engagement
Industry Growth	Manufacturing & Mining	Retail & Service	Technology, Finance, Real Estate, Government	STEM, Energy, Social Impact, Healthcare, & Media
Measures of Success	Placement Data	Appointments & Attendance at Programs	Learning outcomes, Engagement, Revenues	Employability: First Destinations, Reputation, & Engagement

Adopted from "Evolution of Career Services in Higher Education," by F. Dey & C. Y. Cruzvergara, 2014, New Directions for Student Services, 2014(148), 5-18. Copyright [2014] by New Directions for Student Services.

While Table 1 is exhaustive, it provides a glimpse to understand the ongoing and warranted changes to support student success while simultaneously responding to economic and workforce demands. This is a trend that continues to inform how Career Services shifts its priorities to meet the needs of both students and workforce developments.

According to Jenkins (2017), when a student first applies for college is when they are asked to decide on a major or program of study. This is especially important as this decision correlates to students' opportunity to qualify for financial aid. To assist them in making this decision, students could, if they want to, go to their campus Career Services center and engage in a more detailed career assessment and counseling. However, this opportunity is rarely pursued given that most students choose to seek said support until time of their graduation, if at all (Jenkins, Lahr, & Fink, 2017). But we learn that the importance of timely access to counseling and career orientation is incredibly crucial to support student success. Hudson & Klein-Collins (2018) elaborate,

> Students require guidance to understand today's labor market, its changing career pathways, and the skills that employers expect. Also, Career Services must be able to respond to the requirements of different types of students. Some students will need assistance accessing entry-level employment for the first time, some will come to college as adults wanting to advance in their careers, and other returning adults will aspire

to reposition themselves in a new career (p.4).

Further, it is becoming increasingly important for higher education institutions to clearly articulate their strategic focus and investments in methods Career Services could provide to students. This is important given that Career Services are to help students transition from academic learning to the workforce realities. Career Services in higher education are facilitating ways for students to have meaningful engagement with college space, aside from their typical events such as job fairs (Hudson, Klein-Collins, 2018). Some of these innovative activities may include employer-led panels and employer-student discussions, meet-and-greets, and industry-specific networking events (Gray, 2016a). According to the 2016-2017 National Association of Colleges and Employers Survey (2017), some Career Services centers are housed within individual schools or departments in colleges or universities, while over 80 percent of the offices are centralized and support the entire college campus.

What is especially important to note, however, is that over 80 percent of students identify potential employment as a critical reason for their decision to enroll in college altogether. Yet, few students feel confident once they are enrolled at the college, whether they will have the ability to participate in the job market. According to Gallup and the Strada Education Network (2017), 39% of college students that are currently enrolled have never visited their school's Career Services office nor used their online resources. This, however, does not

mean students do not believe their school is committed to helping them find a rewarding career (Gallup, 2017). The study by Hudson & Klein-Collins (2018) also note,

> "To be more relevant, intentional, and accessible, institutions have started to reinvent Career Services to better assist their students. The various emerging approaches can be organized into six overarching themes:
>
> • Creating a Career Services culture to support early, proactive, and continuous student engagement in career exploration and preparation;
>
> • Building career activities into the curriculum;
>
> • Focusing on building "soft," transferable skills and career search skills;
>
> •Incorporating data-driven career exploration;
>
> • Leveraging strong employer partnerships; and
>
> • Enhancing use of technology-driven Career Services tools.
>
> With these various approaches, colleges are creating a customized experience that connects students to resources and support based on their career needs and expectations." (p. 6.)

To accomplish this, institutions can proactively have Career Services integrated throughout their campuses. A focus to ensure students experience a supportive culture by prioritizing professional development and job connections. In this way, students participate in career-readiness activities early in their college career

rather than becoming a reactive step at the end of their college experience (Hudson, Klein-Collins, 2018). For example, one of the key services provided by Career Services is career exploration. If students do not experience services or activities for career exploration they may miss out on learning about other career opportunities available to them. As a result, students will be systematically excluded from obtaining key skills required for those careers (Reese, 2010). Timely and intentional counseling and preparation are especially important for Career Services to support student success.

The current political and economic realities should also help inform how Career Services prioritizes workforce readiness and demands (Hudson, Klein-Collins, 2018). Career Services must offer programming that is intentional, relevant, and accessible to all students due to the change in employer needs and workforce demands (Hudson, Klein-Collins, 2018). In order for Career Services to be relevant to both students and employers, Career Services must keep both in mind when designing its services.

Career Services plays and integral role with the newly implemented Guided Pathways Framework as career exploration is also a key element (Jenkins et al., 2017). Career exploration opportunities should be frequent and developmental, providing the students the ability to further develop their decision-making and metacognitive skills (Karp, 2013). Currently, more than one-third of college graduates reported regrets about their choice of major when they were enrolled (Gallup, 2017). Many colleges and universities in the United States are moving

forward with redesigning their student support services, onboarding practices, and programs following the “Guided Pathways” framework (Jenkins, Lahr, & Fink, 2017). As such, understanding the role of Guided Pathways is integral in understanding how Career Services can, ultimately, be modified to support students' success when strategizing efforts to enhance workforce development and career training.

Guided Pathways

The Guided Pathways Framework is an innovative approach to support student success across the California Community College sector. Its implementation offers a set of guidelines and recommendations to guide colleges to consider how students’ aspirations are to be supported from goal identification to completion. Guided Pathways has become a reform used in higher educational institutions across the Nation to increase student degree completion rates (Bailey-Hofmann, 2019). Guided pathways is an integrated, institution-wide approach to student success based on intentionally designed, clear, coherent, and structured academic experiences, informed by available evidence, that guide each student effectively and efficiently from their point of college enrollment to completion (Achieving the Dream, American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Pathways Project; Ippolito, 2018).

The Guided Pathways movement began in 2008 with the intentional purpose of redesigning community colleges across the country in order to improve student retention and graduation rates (Johnstone, 2015). The primary

goal of the Guided Pathways is to help colleges think critically about how to modify their procedure and support systems to enhance overall student success (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2015, p.1). In order to accomplish this, the Guided Pathway framework calls for clearly defined academic and certificate program paths, as well as improvements on academic advising, career guidance, and co-curricular support for students (AACC, 2017; Johnstone, 2015). Essentially, a comprehensive approach to ensure students are supported through academic learning to career development.

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2017), in Guided Pathways “programs, support services, and instructional approaches are redesigned and re-aligned to help students clarify their goals, choose and enter pathways that will achieve those goals, stay on those pathways, and master knowledge and skills that will enable them to advance in the labor market and successfully pursue further education” (AACC, 2015 p.1). But according to Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins (2015), individual programming initiatives are not sufficient for community colleges to significantly raise graduation rates and close completion gaps across different student groups. Bailey, et al. argued that colleges needed to fundamentally redesign their programs and support services to create clearer, more educationally coherent pathways to obtain credentials. They did this by fusing two decades of research on community colleges and drawing on research in behavioral economics, organizational behavior, and cognitive science. As a result, these clearly

articulated pathways would prepare students to experience success in the learning experience while also seeking alignment to workforce demands in their area of interest and to meet demands of local economy (Jenkins, Lahr, Fink & Ganga, 2018, p.1). These present a comprehensive support system for students to thrive.

Guided Pathways are to affect college-wide practices that are already in place to support student success. California-based initiatives such as Student Equity and Achievement (formally, Student Success and Support Program, Equity, and Basic Skills Transformation), the Strong Workforce Program, and California College Promise (California Guided Pathways, 2018) – these can intersect and align with efforts prescribed by Guided Pathways. According to Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins (2015), “although many community college reform efforts have sought to improve rates of student completion by scaling up discrete interventions focused on only one element of the college experience, the Guided Pathways model, in contrast, entails a systemic redesign of the student experience from initial connection to college through to completion, with changes to program structure, new student intake, instruction, and support services” (p. 2). State agencies, Student Success Centers, and other entities have launched statewide efforts to help community colleges implement Guided Pathways in several states, including Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. Community colleges often

do little to help students explore options for college and careers and choose a program of study. “This is the case even though many students arrive without clear goals for college and careers (Jenkins, Lahr, & Fink, 2017, p.3). By default, the orientation of supporting students to understand what their personal goals are, to those available at the community college sector, to then envision whether to pursue workforce development -or- to transfer to four-year institutions are the life-decision making processes where students need major support.

In a study conducted by Grubb (2006), “intrusive advising” is considered a tool to help students by providing intentional support. Intrusive advising is formally defined as “a type of advising that recommends structured one on one sessions students should participate in with their counselors and requires students to also complete mandatory milestones such as academic and career planning” (Grubb, 2006, p. 218). According to Grubb, “relying on the initiative of students themselves” to take advantage of student services is unlikely to improve student outcomes (p. 218). Karp, O’Gara, & Hughes, (2008), agree by suggesting that students who need student services such as career advising the most, are the least likely to use those services even though they are available to all students at a college campus. Intrusive Advising would also require colleges to consider increasing staff available to support students, and it appears limited funding will also prohibit comprehensive services to become available to meet these outcomes.

The need to intentionally support Minoritized Students of Color and first-generation college students is timely, especially when considered ways to increase equitable practices to yield equitable outcomes. Karp, O'Gara, & Hughes, (2008) and Grubb (2006) suggest historically underprep ared and underrepresented students may benefit as well from "intrusive advising." Furthermore, Sara Goldrick-Rab, founder of the Hope Lab (2006), notes that historically underrepresented minority students enrolled in higher education are the most vulnerable at being able to successfully navigate the complex rules of college. These complexities oftentimes are the contributing factor to their high rates of attrition (p.79). Therefore, even though "intrusive advising" is challenging to fully implement due to the limited funding of community colleges, it will be in the best interest to have a targeted and intentional approach to support historically marginalized students.

Intrusive Advising also requires a comprehensive assessment of student needs and educational goals. As a result, career planning and career exploration are a part of the approach to support and advise students (Scrivener, Weiss, Sommo, & Fresques, 2012). As noted earlier, the sooner students have access to orientation and explanation of their options to explore career training or program of study, all is heavily impacted by timely communication between practitioners and students. This level of planning and developing student advising plans should be informed by data, pre-engagement activities, career assessments, and skills inventories (Karp & Stacey, 2013). Career planning

should precede academic advising, enabling students to explore options before making selections about educational aspirations and program of study to select coursework (Karp, 2013). In a 2011 longitudinal examination of 631 high school sophomores and seniors, career choice predictors were examined through the lens of social cognitive career theory. Rogers and Creed (2011) found that career planning should intentionally start as early as at the 10th grade level for high school students and that career exploration happens throughout. Timely access, then, becomes an incredible factor to support student success. Karp & Stacey (2013) further elaborate,

> Ideally, academic and career advising is a multiphase process that occurs over a prolonged period of time. College advisors integrate academic and career counseling by guiding students through an exploration of their strengths, skills, and interests, followed by a structured investigation into various occupations and careers that match these strengths, skills, and interests. Finally, advisors work with students to develop an academic plan that will help them progress toward the professional goals they have identified (p1).

Therefore, a combination of academic and career plans should be utilized by both students and advisors throughout the college experience (Jenkins et al., 2017; Kalamarian, Karp, Ganga, 2017). However, more often colleges provide limited guidance to help incoming students choose their program of study and develop a plan for completing it (Venezia, Bracco, Nodine, 2010). This indicates

if colleges take a proactive approach to full develop what a comprehensive counseling and advising program for Career Services can look like, it can benefit and support student success.

In a 2014 case study of the eight Miami Dade Colleges, which enroll over 100,000 students annually, positive outcomes were found as a result of the college embarking on some structural and system-wide changes. These changes included: (a) the development of structured program pathways, (b) the creation of a comprehensive intake process, (c) the integration of academic programs to student support services, (d) solidify students' transition from developmental education and English language learner programs, and (e) increase student engagement through communities of interest for new students (Rodicio, Mayer, & Jenkins, 2014). These colleges also implemented pre-college advising, where students began in high school and continued until their mandatory college orientation, when newly matriculated students are assigned an advisor. Students assigned an academic advisor resulted in higher retention rates (Rodicio, Mayer, & Jenkins, 2014). Access to a practitioner in the college space enables students to consider and seek support, especially when a strong rapport is developed to ensure students' educational aspirations are the priority (Rivas, 2012). Providing the opportunity to develop mentoring relationships with Career Services staff are an added element to consider when developing robust and comprehensive support services.

Guided Pathways framework enables practitioners to consider how to structure service and programs, while simultaneously considering the role of mentoring and counseling students more intentionally. Students have been instrumental in the shaping institutional understanding of Guided Pathways. A mixed-methods study conducted in 2018 of 114 community college students found that students find receiving help with choosing a career is a beneficial part of Guided Pathways (Nance, 2018 p.42). Here, the direct and intentional support to extend beyond an academic program of study, but also the career portion of their educational trajectory is critical. The following section will highlight the pillars shaping Guided Pathways, as means to understand how practitioners in Career Services may utilize implementation efforts as a catalyst for change.

The Four Pillars of Guided Pathways

Guided Pathways is grounded on four pillars: (1) *clarify* the path, (2) *enter* the path, (3) *stay* on the path, and (4) ensure learning to *complete* the path. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2017), these pillars continue to be adopted in various ways to fit the unique needs of each individual college. The implementation of Guided Pathways varies due in part to the type of support received from their stakeholders, current resources and services already available, and the varying needs of their student population (Nance, 2018). According to Jenkins et al, the key role for the Guided Pathways framework is the potential to help students by providing *clear pathways* that will aid in their retention and goal completion, with the emphasis to provide students

early opportunities for career exploration, educational advancement, and skill-building (Jenkins, Lahr, & Fink, 2017). In essence, a comprehensive model to ensure students begin with a clear understanding of how they can navigate their educational trajectory, while having educators and practitioners versed in how to support student success.

Clarify The Path: Mapping Pathways to Students' End Goals

Clarifying the path means making processes less confusing nor complicated for students. In order to clarify the path, colleges will need to enact changes in the way they facilitate information about programs and services. Whether these are provided through websites and catalogs, the information has historically been very confusing for students (Bailey, 2017). Some colleges are creating “Career Pathways” by putting together majors that have similar outcomes and creating road maps that students can more easily follow (Nance, 2018). Colleges could make these maps easily accessible to students in order for them to use tools as guides for knowing what courses to take, how long it could take them to complete a program, and what type of career and educational opportunities they can pursue upon completing their educational goal.

Enter The Path: Help Students Choose and Enter a Program Pathway

Currently, the way that students choose their program and courses of study is done for the most part on their own (Bailey, 2017). By following the “enter the path” pillar, colleges are able to create opportunities to help new students explore programs and potential careers as well as create academic

plans (Bailey, 2017). This pillar also calls for allowing undecided students to choose from a theme of majors that align with their interests such as STEM (Bailey, 2017). There is still room to assess when and how often students may be able to change their mind and enter a different path. Nonetheless, the objective of this pillar is to ensure students are provided adequate information to make an informed-decision about what path to enter in their community college trajectory.

Stay On The Path: Keep Students On A Path

In order to ensure student retention and completion rates are met, colleges should consider how to become proactive to interject when a student is falling behind (Bailey, 2017). By following the “stay on the path” principles, students and advisors can practice a case management approach where student plans are kept on file to track student progress (Bailey, 2017). To adequately monitor and meet this task, some colleges are resorting to adopting an academic alert system technology (Nance, 2018). According to Bailey, “If students get off track or have trouble in a course, alert systems bring these issues to advisors’ attention so they can steer students toward academic or other supports” (Bailey, 2017, p.1). The benefit of employing technology in the fashion allows practitioners to review and support students more intentionally, and timely, to ensure students are, indeed, fully supported through their journey.

Ensure Learning: Ensure Students Are Learning

Most colleges design their academic programs around a set of student learning outcomes, rather than as a set of courses for students to follow (Bailey, 2017). As such, the "ensure learning" pillar calls for the alignment of program learning outcomes with success factors such as furthering educational and employment opportunities for students. This pillar seeks to ensure the assessment of course and program learning outcomes are in alignment to employment or transfer needs (AACC, 2017). The methods in which colleges make necessary changes to meet their institutional and student's needs are the premise for this dissertation study.

Central to the implementation of Guided Pathways is a case study conducted by Jenkins and Cho (2012) which consisted of tracking the progress and outcomes of first-time college students over a five-year period using data from an anonymous sample of 23 community colleges. They found that community college students who select and enter a program of study in their first year are much more likely to complete a degree/certificate or transfer successfully than students who do not enter or select a program until the second year or later. These scholars also re-evaluated systemic processes at community colleges and formulated key questions colleges should ask stakeholders in order to shift from simply adopting "best practices" to actually creating "best process" (p. 20-21). Jenkins and Cho (2012) propose the following

question to support the alignment and implementation of best processes. These are as follows:

- How can we improve understanding among high school students about the credential program opportunities offered by the college?
- How can we motivate and guide students to prepare to enter a college-level program of study as soon as they graduate high school?
- Can we more effectively recruit students from adult basic skills, non-credit vocational, and community-based education programs into college-level programs of study?

Entry – Questions colleges' advising staff, in partnership with developmental education and academic departments, should be asking:

- What guidance and support can we provide to help students develop clear goals for college and careers and choose a program of study as soon as possible?
- What approaches to remedial instruction are most effective for preparing academically underprepared students to enter and succeed in a program of study?
- How can we help students who are attempting to enter a program of study pass the gatekeeper courses that often prevent students from getting on a program path?

Progress – Questions academic departments, in consultation with student services staff, should be asking:

- Are we effectively tracking and advising program concentrators to ensure that they are making progress toward completion?
- Are our programs well structured so that students can complete them as quickly as possible?
- Are required courses offered when students need to take them?

Completion – Questions academic departments and top administrators should be asking:

- Are our academic program options and requirements clearly defined for students entering the college and for program majors?
- How are we assessing whether students are mastering the skills and knowledge that our programs seek to teach them?
- What can we learn from baccalaureate program faculty, employers, and program alumni to ensure that our programs prepare students to succeed in further education and (with career–technical programs) advance in the labor market? (Jenkins & Cho, 2012, p. 20-21).

Challenges and Opportunities of Guided Pathway Implementation

There are a number of interrelated challenges related to the implementation of Guided Pathways, including the following:

- faculty issues (Jenkins, et al, 2017, Kubler, 2018)
- Guided Pathways framework limitations (Jenkins, et al, 2017, Ross, 2016;);
- student variables (Bensimon et al 2012; Grubb 2006; Kubler, 2018)
- equity concerns (Bensimon et al 2012; Grubb 2006; Kubler, 2018);
- organizational structures (Ross, 2016).

A detailed discussion on these challenges and opportunities are presented here.

Faculty Issues

Faculty have a great level of influence in how Guided Pathways may be implemented. However, when certain faculty are dealing with highly impacted programs or have limited-access to students, these create challenges in securing faculty support (Jenkins, Lahr, Fink, 2017; Rodicio, Mayer, & Jenkins, 2014). As in the case study at Miami Dade College, researchers found that some faculty members of the Guided Pathways task force were initially skeptical about the need for prescriptive program maps for students (Rodicio, et. al,2014). Another major faculty concern is the fear of the potential for courses in the humanities to be cut if these are not directly incorporated into specific pathways (Kubler, 2018). Overall, clear articulation and communication of expectations in faculty teaching, guidance, and possible curricular development to support a successful implementation of Guided Pathways.

Guided Pathways Framework Limitations

There are a number of challenges impacting the implementation of Guided Pathways. One is the availability of resources, both human capital and material resources, to ensure students are fully supported through their academic journey. Secondly, curricular alignment for the college campus to agree through shared governance processes may be a feat. Lastly, curricular development coupled with ensuring student enrollment projections and course offerings are both structured and flexible to meet student needs (Ross, 2016). These may also include additional challenges that colleges have already been encountering with Guided Pathways such as; locating an accurate job and salary information for students, capturing varying transfer requirements, developing program maps for underprepared students, managing off-plan course registration, measuring and documenting learning outcomes mastery by individual students, and the proliferation of “Pathways Reforms” (Jenkins, et al, 2017). Although different forms of the Guided Pathways framework have been used nationally (Bailey et al., 2015) by an estimated 200 colleges (Jenkins et al., 2017), including over 20 California Community Colleges, there are currently no formal studies documenting levels of student success as a direct result of implementing the four pillars of the AACC Guided Pathways model (Bailey-Hoffman, 2019).

Student Variables and Equity Concerns

One of the many challenges within community colleges is the diversity of the students it serves and the varying counseling and student service's needs. According to Grubb (2006), students who attend community colleges tend to be of varying ages and life experiences. In the same vein, Grubb (2006) notes that:

> Many older students are there to upgrade their skills, and they need only to be steered to the appropriate courses. Other older students, including dislocated workers preparing for new careers, may need to know much more about employment options. Many younger students entering community colleges from high schools are ‘‘experimenters,’’ unsure about the relationship between schooling and their aspirations. (p.197)

Ageism and age differences in regards to student learning arose in the literature, describing the potential to exacerbate learning inequalities between young, full-time students and older part-time students (Bensimon et al., 2012). Leading community college scholar Bensimon and her team further detail,

> “when considering equity and inequitable outcomes, there are many student-related factors that can be pointed to as possible causes of the inequities noted previously, including students’ inadequate prior education, students’ and families’ lack of resources, deficits in prior knowledge, poverty, language differences, and so on” (Bensimon et al, 2012, p.162).

Coupled with these inequalities, Kroeger, Gold, Willams and Wilson (2019), further add the experiences that underrepresented minority, low-income, and/or first generation college students face unique challenges in the college-to-career transition. Further, racial disparities are further pronounced as recent Black and Latina/o graduates are more likely to be under- or unemployed than their White counterparts (Kroeger & Gould, 2017; Williams & Wilson, 2019). According to the National Association of Colleges (2021) note employers, workforce, and Career Services centers play an incredibly important role in this process. In a national survey conducted by NACE, they found first-generation, first-time college students use campus Career Services at higher rates than continuing-generation students (NACE, 2021). Similarly, in the same survey they found that Black students report going to the Career Services center more than their White peers—an average of 2.13 visits during the 2019-20 school year, as compared to compared to 1.99 for Asian American students, 1.60 for Latina/o students, and 1.37 for White students (NACE, 2021). The intersectional experience of being first-generation, low-income, minoritized students of color play a role in understanding institutional practices that uphold discriminatory practices.

Organizational Structures

Our current higher education and workforce development systems were re-designed from an already outdated lens in which about two-thirds of employment opportunities do not require credentials. Additionally, lifelong learning was

considered recreational instead of a necessary objective for reaching and maintaining competitive economic well-being (Holzer & Dunlop, 2013). According to Ross (2016), the 2015 Bailey, Smith Jaggars, & Jenkins book *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* presented flawed perceptions and missed organizational challenges faced by many community college, and argued:

> The organizational compartmentalizing and the administrative hierarchies that exist in the community college are not only structural features; they are electric with power and status. The various methods suggested by the authors to bring people together to work through these dynamics toward the common goal of creating Guided Pathways are good ones, tried and true in the tool kit of management consultants. But they also can be foiled by genuine ideological differences about the purpose of a particular area of study or of education in general. They can also be foiled by turf protection, administrative power struggles, and pure and simple personal animosity (Ross, 2016, p.1)

This view is further supported by Fistchall (2019), where they describe institutional silos as an ongoing challenge for implementing new initiatives in community colleges. This phenomenological study found that there are silos created as a direct result in the attempt to implement initiatives to seek organizational change (Fistchall, 2019).

Taken together, the implementation of Guided Pathways is saddled with challenges such as; faculty issues, framework limitations, student variables, equity concerns, and organizational siloed structures. In the following section, the theoretical framework employed in this study will to help contextualize the role of Career Services in California Community Colleges Guided Pathways implementation.

Theoretical Framework: Organizational Change and Sensemaking

This study employs organizational change theories (Kezar, 2014) and sensemaking (Helms Mills, Thurlow, & Mills, 2010; Weick, 1995). The objective of employing “sensemaking” is in the attempt to understand how current Career Service practitioners approach and implement their work. The organizational change frameworks will enable to provide a lens to understand the practice of Career Services along the shift of implementing Guided Pathways. While one framework is to understand personal epistemology, the latter seeks to understand how this sensemaking of epistemic knowledge formulates action in the implementation of Guided Pathways. Particularly as colleges seek to employ innovative ways given that “in recent years, community colleges have undergone organizational change by making efforts to design more effective enrollment and advising processes following the Guided Pathways framework” (Baily, 2017, Beaston, 2018 p.3). As such, the innovative approach that may be rooted in the

practitioners' understanding of their role, further pronounces how this lens may lend itself to inform how Guided Pathways is implemented.

According to Beaston (2018), the organizational shifts and changes through critical initiatives such as Guided Pathways should not forget critical services, "a newly designed Guided Pathways student advising and registration process must help students make informed program and course selections by utilizing innovative Career Services at the start of their journey at the college" (p. 3). In addition, and as previously mentioned, the 2012 Jenkins and Cho's case study on the implementation of Guided Pathways consisted of tracking the progress and outcomes of first-time college students over a five-year period using data from an anonymous sample of 23 community colleges. The study resulted in the recommendation for community colleges to change the idea of focusing on adopting best practices and instead to adopt best process, and to do so, Jenkins and Cho recommend community college institutions ask themselves some key questions focused on; student connection, entry, and progress (Jenkins & Cho, 2012). According to Jenkins (2011), in order to achieve positive improvements in student outcomes, colleges and universities need to redesign their policies, programs, and services at scale instead of focusing on scaling some best practices.

Achieving these organizational changes will require a campus-wide collaborative engagement within departments and across them (Rose, 2016). In higher education, change is highly influenced by its large constituents and

stakeholders, both internal and external to the institution (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010). According to Deil-Amen and DeLuca (2010), internal constituents include: students, faculty, staff, administrators, and governing boards, while external stakeholders include: parents, the public, and their elected leaders in government, business, labor, press, and other media, foundations, and other public and private institutions in the community (p. 27). The concept of organizational change within community colleges, and the ability for them to react well to change, is very important for their success in the labor market. According to Wagoner (2004);

> The capacity to successfully implement change is of particular importance for community colleges due to their mission of comprehensive programs and services to multiple audiences in a local service market. Although flexibility to anticipate and respond to change is a critical part of any institution working with a local service market, staff within the institution do not necessarily accept or promote the precept of change. For many organizations, the manner in which change is perceived creates communication issues and conflicts that ultimately impede change from occurring. Many factors account for this. Of critical importance, however, is the role that institutional and individual characteristics play in coloring perceptions. Institutions differ, and change may be perceived differently in larger institutions than smaller ones, or in urban rather than rural settings. In addition, individual characteristics may influence the manner in which

> organizational change is perceived, such as professional group and department membership, age, and gender, or degree of involvement in change. (p. 715-716)

This consideration of internal and external factors is critical for institutional transformation as “an institution to be considered whole, it must take into account all its parts and components” (Burke, 2018, p. 100). Furthermore, community colleges have shared governance protocols, administrative hierarchies, and institutional compartmentalizing that are not only structural systems, but they engage power and status in the decision-making process (Rose, 2016). These structures and protocols are equally important to consider for a study assessing how practitioners understand their position within these processes as they simultaneously seek to implement changes centered in student success.

The nuances of understanding among practitioners warrants this study to understand the sensemaking process, as it can impact how practitioners consider their epistemology when implementing change. Hence, the “concept of sensemaking is well named because literally, it means the making of sense” (Weick, 1995, p. 4), and it enables an understanding of one's understanding leads to the perspective in enacting change.

Sensemaking

Sensemaking as both method and theory is focused in the process of generating information based on social and individual activities or experiences (Dellinger, et al, 2019). Namely, sensemaking allows the uncovering of social-psychological processes that contribute to the overall outcomes, instead of a focus on the outcomes themselves (Helms, Thurlow, Mills, 2010). This study employs sensemaking as a lens to identify the role of Career Services practitioners and how the significance of their knowledge may have on their implementation of Guided Pathways to impact organizational change in the community college sector.

There are two distinct tenets within organizational change scholarship: content school and the process school (Eckel & Kezar, 2002). The content school is focused on precursors and outcomes of change. In the process school, the focus is on the stakeholders and their direct role in the change-making process. There are six categories of change process theories, which include: (1) scientific management; (2) evolutionary; (3) social cognition; (4) cultural; (5) political; and (6) institutional (Kezar, 2014). This study focuses on the social cognition school of thought, specifically as it relates to the sensemaking process of Career Services practitioners. Social cognition theories consider how people within an organization make-sense and meaning of change, especially how their own self-identity connects to their work through. The emphasis of cultural

theories note the deep value of organizational culture and understanding that culture is inherently tied to the possibilities of transformational change (Kezar, 2014). The institutional theory looks to examine the potential impacts of change from the organization's internal and external conditions. Sensemaking within organizational change refers to the individuals within the organization changing their mindset by creating meaning, and as a result, changing behaviors, values, priorities, and commitments to meet desired organizational changes (Eckel & Kezar, 2003a). Thus, the sensemaking connected to understanding how Career Service practitioners' approach and implement Guided Pathways enables readers to understand how organizational change is driven by critical agents of change.

Summary

In this chapter, a discussion of the California Community College system and its vision for success, which includes a focus on increasing students' degree and certificate completion, as well as increasing the percentage of existing Career and Technical Education students who report being employed in their field of study is highlighted. To help support these goals, the California Community College System has adopted the Guided Pathways framework. This framework requires all campuses to fundamentally redesign their programs and support services to ensure they are clear, more educationally coherent pathways to credentials that in turn prepare students for success in the workforce and further education. To do so, a deeper understanding of Career Services will

enable this study to understand the sensemaking process of practitioners as they implement Guided Pathways in their institution. Career services have a long history of helping students become connected to various career opportunities, particularly those in four-year institutions. However, there is very little research to understand the role of Career Services within the community college sector. This study employs organizational change, specifically, and sensemaking as guiding frameworks to understand the role of Career Services practitioners and their role in the implementation of Guided Pathways in the California Community Colleges. Career Services practitioners in this study include: professional staff, faculty, career counseling staff, and faculty coordinators.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, a discussion on the purpose and significance of this study will be presented. An outline of the research questions guiding all of the work follows. The research design and methodology which includes: data collection, data analysis, reliability, research sample, and research setting are presented. Further, this chapter will discuss concepts of trustworthiness, limitations and delimitations, and the positionality of the researcher. This chapter concludes with a brief summary of additional strategies employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify how California community college Career Services practitioners make-sense of their role within Career Services. Specifically, how they make sense of their role given the current implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework. This study examined how the sensemaking process impacted, if at all, the implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework. Finally, this study sought to identify opportunities and challenges that Career Services practitioners encounter, particularly as they are actively engaged in organizational change as a direct result of implementing the Guided Pathways Framework.

Currently, there is a lack of research on the role of Career Services within the community college sector, and how they may be shaped due to multiple initiatives. Although there is a lack of research, the need to understand the role that Career Services play in the implementation of key initiatives are especially important. Given the pressure for community colleges to provide positive outcomes in employment and living wages, warrants for a study focused on the role of Career Services. Starting in 2020, the world experienced a devastating pandemic that also negatively impacted the economy. In the United States, the pandemic resulted in a greater need for workforce development and job placement. For students choosing to enter postsecondary education and for those entering the workforce right after high school, college readiness skills are not only required but important due to the fact that many of these skills are the

equivalent to those needed to enter and be successful in college (Asamsama, Mayo, Stillman, Mathews, Schnorr, & Nelson, 2016). Community colleges in the United States are now part of the degree-completion agenda, with an increased focus on the attainment of certificates and associate degrees. As a result, baccalaureate degrees are no longer considered the most important postsecondary credentials (Karp, 2013).

In today's job market, most occupations require at least some postsecondary training, and that trend was expected to grow (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). Due to these demands in the labor market, colleges and universities find themselves with the added responsibility of connecting students with employment related to their field of study. In addition, colleges and universities also have to assist students in making informed decisions about varying career paths and the skills needed for their career field. Additionally, college and university leaders have to meet students' expectations by helping them connect directly with employers. They are also helping students with making informed decisions about varying career paths along with providing them with the skills and training needed for the workforce (Hudson & Klein-Collins, 2018). Thus, higher education, but Career Services in particular, play an incredible role in understanding how community college support and play a role in meeting workforce demands.

Research Questions

In order to examine how community college Career Services practitioners,

make sense of career services in Southern California Community Colleges, especially given the implementation of Guided Pathways, this study enacted the following research questions:

1. How do Career Services practitioners from Southern California Community Colleges describe and understand the current role of Career Services?
2. How do Career Services practitioners from Southern California Community Colleges make sense of the role of Career Services in relation to the implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework?
3. What opportunities and or challenges do study participants experience as practitioners when engaging in their role within Career Services?

Research Design

This was an exploratory study designed to understand how community college Career Services practitioners make sense of their role. A qualitative research design was employed with semi-structured, one-on-one pláticas as a methodological tool. The investigation and engagement with the lived experiences of Career Services practitioners in California community colleges is the focus of this study. By employing qualitative modes of inquiry, this study sought to illuminate how the individual experiences of each participant influences organizational change through the implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework in the California community college sector.

Epistemology

Epistemology can be defined as the study of knowledge; how knowledge itself is produced or in general terms: the multiple ways of knowing (Delgado Bernal, 1998). However, the idea of epistemology representing just the "way of knowing" is not fully representative and should be more specifically seen as a "system of knowing" that is linked to the participants' viewpoints based on the circumstances under which people live and learn (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Additionally, there exist strong interconnections between method, methodology, and epistemology (Harding, 1987; Delgado Bernal, 1998). Methods refer to strategies for data collection. Whereas methodology includes an assessment of the engagement of theories and analysis used in the studies such as; research question creation through the creation of criteria used for reviewing the findings (Delgado Bernal & Fieros, 2016). Further, the process of interpretation may also include how the researcher's positionality informs how they seek and interpret research and subsequent findings. As such, Delgado Bernal and Fierros (2016) state:

> It makes sense then that researchers' epistemological orientation, their worldviews, are closely tied to the methodologies they employ in their research and noting the differences and the interconnections between method, methodology, and epistemology is crucial to understanding how pláticas can be a strategy to collect data as well as part of a Chicana/Latina feminist methodology (p.101).

Therefore, Delgado Bernal's Chicana Feminist Epistemology (CFE, 1998) is employed to conduct this study. Chicana feminist epistemology allows the researcher to be grounded in the unique life experiences and viewpoints of Chicanas (Delgado Bernal, 1998). According to Delgado Bernal (1998), Chicana researchers have "cultural intuition" which are unique viewpoints developed from four sources; (1) personal experience, (2) existing literature, (3) professional experience, and (4) the analytical research process. Personal experience is the ability of the researcher to become a subject in her own research by not discounting her own lived experiences and how they acquire knowledge. Another source of cultural intuition is the existing literature on the topic that is being researched. Third, professional experience informs how one may think and approach a research area of study. For example, the years of working in a particular field is a source of cultural intuition, as it informs how one thinks, experiences, and feels within a certain sector. Lastly, the analytical research process itself is a source of cultural intuition in Chicana feminist epistemology, because it provides knowledge gained through the lived-experience to inform how one interprets key findings and recommendations.

Data Collection

To foster rich dialogue, pláticas were employed as the primary method for data collection. Pláticas are "informal conversations that take place in one-on-one or group spaces" (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 117). Adding to this,

“unlike an interview, where one person is asking all the questions, a plática involves a two-way conversation” (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 113). Further, Guajardo and Guajardo (2008) note that using pláticas as a data collection method has been helpful as educators and researchers, this method emphasizes the sharing of ideas, experiences, and stories, and relationship building. Accordingly, pláticas as a primary method is “most theoretically and epistemologically congruent” as there is added value in the reciprocity that naturally occurs in a plática, due to the vulnerability that is encountered by both the researcher and the participants (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008). One way to interpret this is that pláticas seem to inform the method through which scholars learn, teach, and experience reality and vice versa (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Finally, the reason pláticas were employed as the primary method in this study was that pláticas provided a space for sense-making and theory building for the participants.

A successful recruitment of seven participants became the focus for the study. Recruitment was made electronically with a recruitment email (see Appendix A), and posting on a social media platform, LinkedIn. Pláticas were conducted between researcher and study participants. Since pláticas are not formally-structured the intended interview questions were asked in varied times throughout each session. Pláticas were held via zoom and averaged one and a half hours in length. Plática recordings were collected once approval to conduct the study was received from California State University, San Bernardino

Institutional Review Board. All plática sessions and data were transcribed using Rev. Data for this study.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the pláticas, Rev.com was employed to create transcriptions of the plática sessions. Data was coded, organized by codes, and themes were identified based on salient patterns (Saldaña, 2016). For this study, inductive coding and initial coding (or provisional coding) could provide codes that may emerge during pláticas that may have been modified or deleted during the analysis process. Following the initial coding, Axial coding was used to group, sort, and reduce the number of codes generated in the first coding cycle. Additional emotion and values coding methods were employed, which enabled me to label the participants' emotions, attitudes, or beliefs. In-Vivo coding was used for words or phrases that frequently stood out (Saldaña, 2016). After analyzing the codes, these were categorized by themes. Themes were then organized by sentence descriptions, to best capture possible meanings associated with participants. After the themes were compiled, these were further categorized to help describe the role of Career Services, and subsequently the role in the implementation of Guided Pathways as a method to direct our understanding to organizational change.

Research Sample

The participants for this study were a group of seven Career Service practitioners from the California Community College system. Sampling consisted of criterion and snowball sampling. The following criteria needed to be met in order for participants to be recognized as Career Services practitioners:

1. Currently employed in Career Services at a community college in Southern California.
2. Have been employed with Career Service within the last three years.
3. Have current knowledge and understanding of the Guided Pathways framework.

The seven participants were recruited by posting the recruitment flier (Appendix A) on LinkedIn, social media platform. Seven participants were selected to participate based on meeting the criteria. The participants had to self-select and confirm they met the criterion. Participants expressed concerns regarding the confidentiality of their responses, particularly because of the small number of individuals who work in Career Services. In response to their concerns, racial identifiers are not discussed and gender neutral pseudo names and pronouns are employed to protect the participants' identity. Finally, the numbers of "years of experience" are presented in a range (e.g. one to five years, one to ten years) for each participant, as an approach to further protect them from being identified.

Setting

This research study was based on the California community college system, specifically seven community colleges within the system. The California Community College System as a whole comprises 116 colleges. As the producer of the largest number of degrees conferred in the state of California, approximately 19,210 Academic Tenured/Tenure track faculty and 2,301 Educational Administrators are employed within the system (CCC, 2020). The system is now also offering Baccalaureate degrees in a small number of colleges. The following section will discuss the trustworthiness of the study.

Trustworthiness

When using pláticas as the primary method for data collection, trustworthiness was built upon by providing an audit trail and all field notes to the study participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn directly from the participant experiences and how they make-sense of those experiences, and proactively avoid steering them in any one particular direction (Krefting, 1991). Member-checking is also employed to assist in the accuracy of the transcribed pláticas. Member-checking, here, is presented by providing a synthesized report to the participants and involving them in the interpretation of the data as needed. This engagement enhances the trustworthiness of the research findings and validity of the presentation (Brit, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016; Delgado Bernal, 1998).

Limitation

A great limitation of this study was the challenge of not being able to conduct in-person pláticas sessions due to location and participant availability. All pláticas were conducted via zoom. Another limitation was the inability to engage a larger number of participants due in part to many participants' limited availability.

Delimitations

The study focused on Southern California Career Services instead of the entire California Community College system. As such, the research is bound by

the college sites where the study is conducted. In addition, the study only focused on Career Services and no other student service departments.

Positionality of the Researcher

To gain rich dialogue, pláticas were employed as the primary method for data collection. Pláticas are informal conversations that take place in one-on-one or group spaces and involve a two-way conversation (Fierros and Delgado Bernal 2016, p. 113). For this method, employing a Chicana Feminist Epistemological approach (Delgado Bernal, 1998) enables me to acknowledge how the researcher's own lived experiences, culture, and knowledge, are valued as part of the research. Being Latina and working in higher education and in the field of Career Services for over two decades, this enables me to acknowledge that representation matters. Career Services, in my experience, have been led predominantly (anecdotally) by Caucasian practitioners. Very few times I have seen or heard a LatinX be named keynote speaker at a workforce or Career Services-related conference or event. What this means, to me, is that policies, initiatives, and, in the end, funding have been decision-driven efforts on a long-standing uneven playing field.

As a first-generation college student whose second language is English, the inability to speak up also influences how I perceive other's experiences of feeling silenced. Not being an English-dominant individual has at times, created the inability to express myself in the best way. As a Chicana, a language barrier is something I have struggled with since the first day I moved to this country.

Similar to my experiences, I know there are many students trying to find their way in college and encounter many challenges. Career Services, in my experiences, have offered so much in terms of knowledge and information that every student, including those consistently marginalized by college systems, should have access to these services. Thus, as the researcher, I engage in my personal, professional, and scholarly perspective to acknowledge that research participants may have their own experiences that influence their reasons for being in Career Services. The aim of this study is not to highlight my point of view regarding students and Career Services, but rather to further understand various views, influences, and experiences in how Career Services practitioners navigate their professional trajectory in the implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework.

Summary

In this chapter, a discussion on the purpose and significance of this study will be presented. An outline of the research questions guiding all of the work follows. The research design and methodology which includes: data collection, data analysis, reliability, research sample, and research setting are presented. Further, this chapter will discuss concepts of trustworthiness, limitations and delimitations, and the positionality of the researcher. This chapter concludes with a brief summary of additional strategies employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter the presentation of key findings for this study are discussed. The purpose of this study was to identify how California community college Career Services practitioners make-sense of their role within Career Services. Specifically, how they make sense of their role given the current implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework. The study is guided by three research questions: (1) How do Career Services practitioners from Southern California Community Colleges describe and understand the current role of Career Services?; (2) How do Career Services practitioners from Southern California Community Colleges make sense of the role of Career Services in relation to the implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework?; and (3) What opportunities and or challenges do study participants experience as practitioners when engaging in their role within Career Services?

Once data is analyzed, two overarching and interrelated themes emerge. These two themes represent the role of Career Services from a practitioner's perspective. The two themes identified were: (a) executive leaders not understanding Career Services contributes to unresolved sensemaking, and (b) the evolution of Career Services should be college-wide, not just departmental. Within these two key themes, a discussion of sub-themes within are further

discussed. A focal discussion of the practitioners' experiences related to their Career Services role are explained throughout this chapter.

Executive Leaders Not Understanding Career Services Contributes to Unresolved Sensemaking

Career Services practitioners feel that campus executive leaders, at their respective colleges, lack an understanding about the role of Career Services. In this context, executive leaders were defined as college presidents, vice presidents, deans and department chairs. Collectively, practitioners felt executive leaders do not understand the role of Career Services and as a direct result, this presents undefined expectations across the college campus. Quinn, a practitioner with two to six years at their college, reflected on their experience with various executive leaders over the years. Quinn expressed:

> In all honesty, I don't know what's expected of me, or if I am meeting any sort of goals or vision that anyone has in mind. It's really frustrating. Really frustrating. And I'm also being asked to split my time now in general counseling.

Quinn's experience was quite common among all of the participants. Time constraints and the requirement for them to "split their time" means they are part-time employees for Career Services and another department many times with the expectation of meeting full- time work demands. Participants described not having clear direction nor support from their institutions' executive leadership.

Most of the participants mentioned having too much on their plates and not enough support to meet outcomes.

Similarly, Aliser, a practitioner with one to five years of experience, described a domino effect due to a lack of understanding from executive leadership and emphasized the need for more support to get Career Services information into the classrooms. Aliser's explains:

> How that message from the [college president's office] is passed to the rest of the campus areas is lacking and it takes those leaders [vice presidents] deans and then the structure below the deans to get into the classroom for the students.

Aliser explained there was an overall lack of knowledge in regards to Career Services from their institutions' executive leadership. Without college presidential guidance or vision for Career Services, offering Career Services at the classroom level became more challenging because mid-level administrators also did not have such support. Participants explained that the lack of knowledge and guidance leads to misdirected training efforts and inadequate staffing and budgets for the Career Service centers. The leadership's inability to understand nor define the role of Career Services have subsequent misalignment and misdirected training, staffing, budget allocations.

Misdirected Career Service Training Results in Unresolved Sensemaking

Due to a lack of understanding of the role of Career Services by executive leadership, participants mentioned the ongoing short staffing and lack of funding provided to their department. All seven participants experienced their executive leadership's efforts to alleviate some of the Career Services short staffing by offering career counseling training toward other areas, namely, to general counseling faculty. Some of the participants described their colleges general counseling department as the colleges “golden child” and the most staffed compared to career counseling. Participants mentioned executive leaders often decide to offer career assessment training through a workshop to the general counseling department. The aim for such training was to increase the amount of “career counseling” happening during education planning appointments. However, participants felt that this was not an effective way to alleviate the needs to increase staffing in Career Services. Amin, a practitioner for five to ten years, described their experience below:

> Soon after that workshop, everyone's all pumped up. “Yeah, we are awesome.” I can tell you… talking to some people that were in that same room doing the workshop within those two weeks, it was, I mean, that's as comprehensive as it's going to get for sure. It's a two-week kind of immersive thing. I think it was like every other day or something like that. But anyway, it was a great conversation for two weeks. And that's the same thing that happened with, I remember there was a Myers Briggs

> career assessment workshop thing that they paid a bunch of money for. It only lasts two weeks then everyone goes back to doing their job like it never happened.

Amins' experience was mirrored across most of the participants' own experiences. Although at first Amin felt excited about the opportunity to have another department get a glimpse into the role of Career Services, in the end they felt it diminished their role further and created a perception of career counseling as being something anyone could do as long as they take a two-week career assessment workshop.

Additionally, Quinn, a practitioner for two to six years, had a very similar experience:

> They [General Counselors] all went through Strong Interest inventory training and got certified. But then that was all. When they got out, it was like, "here, this is yours" [Strong Interest Inventory logins]. Which makes sense by all means, if you need someone to manage it, whatever, that makes sense for the most part housing it here at the career center. But then when I said, "Oh, I can create it so that everyone has their own link". And so when you're meeting with a student, you can also give an inventory as appropriate. There's no pressure to offer it to every appointment or whatever, but you know, have that relationship with a student. Why not? You've all been trained now." No one wanted any part of it. And it was asked multiple times and one person did. I shouldn't say

> no one, one person did. Or if something's asked… and I'm like, okay then great, here's some resources. I'd love to hear from you all. What are you using? What do you not want to use? It's always no.

Amin and Quinn's experiences capture a dynamic in that they acknowledged that executive leaders knew there was a greater need for Career Services to support students. Consequently, they felt that had the executive leadership not believed this, they would not have spent resources on offering career assessment training outside of the understaffed Career Services centers.

What was also expressed from Amin and Quinn recollection is the lack of support from their executive leadership in managing the expected change from the general counselors after they completed the Career Service-centered training. This created more confusion for participants around their own role because they did not know if following up with the counselors who received said training was something they should do, or if executive leadership provided additional guidance to the general counseling department. Amin and Quinn felt executive leadership was only focusing on the potential outcomes of the training to ease some of the Career Services center's own staffing issues. This confusion then leads to this study approach to understand how practitioners' sensemaking process in their practice.

Sensemaking allows the uncovering of social-psychological processes that contribute to the overall outcomes, instead of just focusing on the outcomes themselves (Helms, Thurlow, Mills, 2010). In both occasions described by Amin

and Quinn, the counselors who received the Career Service training did not put it into practice nor were there any incentives or clear directions for them to follow. Both Amin and Quinn also mentioned that as a result of this confusion and unclear stance, they both ended up with additional work.

Similar to Quinn, Kai, a practitioner of five to ten years, also felt efforts had been made to incorporate Career Service planning into the fabric of what general counselors currently do in order to expand and support students career planning at their college. Kai recalled, “Who's Kai coming in here telling me what I should be doing with my ED (education) plan when [they] don't even do ED plans?” Kai understood the need for executive leadership to provide general counselors guidance on how counselors were supposed to start incorporating career conversations with their students, after they received the training.

Frankie, a practitioner of five to ten years, mentioned that while efforts to provide training to others was valuable, there was still a need to clarify the role of Career Service counselors. Frankie also described the need to clearly differentiate Career Service counseling from other types of counseling at community colleges. Frankie elaborates:

> Demystifying that not all of counseling is education plans, students really need that career piece. So reminding our leadership, colleagues, and our students that counseling looks very different in each setting. And I feel that the knowledge in itself in terms of the career work through working with the National Association of Colleges and Employers and the National

> Career Development Association, there's a lot of great ways that we can get professional development, whether it's through career assessments or just being more equity minded when it comes to career counseling.

Frankie's comment suggests that practitioners acknowledge there is the need for ongoing multifaceted training as important for Career Services practitioners, and others interested in supporting their role. This training should not, however, be perceived as a one-time process to ignore the issue of Career Service short staffing but should be an intentional form of training.

Lack of Staffing in Career Services Contributes to Unresolved Sensemaking

Participants are clear that student services in higher education need adequate staffing and funding in order to provide high quality services to support student success. Practitioners in this study felt that Career Services have been and continue to be severely overlooked. California community colleges were created to provide open access and career mobility for its residents. This work does not happen alone, Career Centers that offer Career Services to students such as opportunities to network, industry panels, internships, jobs, career counseling, career planning, graduate school planning, and more, all require dedicated individuals who are well trained and dedicated to supporting students. Participants in this study described their feelings about the lack of staffing and funding support, and the impacts on their role. Jona, a practitioner of one to three years, mentioned:

> And I just, there's so much that I want us to do, but I've had to pump our brakes a little bit because we're still in the process of rehiring. And then I just realized that being in this role, there's so much pushback from the powers that be of certain things, that it can be really discouraging, especially when it comes to our budgets and stuff. So I would say definitely our challenge is staffing and also our space. As much as I love our team, the people on our team, we are doing a disservice to our students.

Jona's call for more staffing was also felt by all of the participants in this study. This shortfall made these practitioners feel like they were always doing more with less adding to the lack of clarity for their roles. Some of these participants were also being pulled in a variety of directions to cover for other positions on the campus. Furthermore, participants felt the lack of staffing also made it difficult to promote services to students and classroom faculty. Cielo, a practitioner who has worked in various campuses described their current Career center:

> Our team is so small at the career center, it's hard to represent in every space and it's hard to reach every student. So imagine all the students who either are taking a hundred percent online classes right now and never heard of the career center or never knew we existed to provide the services that we offer for career counseling, career preparation, career events, hiring opportunities where we connect students to employers. We connect students to workplace learning opportunities where they get to

> meet with employers and learn about their day-to-day and maybe even field trip opportunities where they can see work sites and talk to professionals in the field to see if this is even it for them.

Cielo's sentiments are not unique. Overall practitioners in this study also note that executive leadership's lack of support for staffing and funding resulted in frustration towards them making sense of their roles and the services to students.

Frankie understood that there was an opportunity to improve Career Services for community college students because if in larger universities career services are gravely supported, then there are possibilities for community colleges. Frankie elaborates,

> And so I think finding and building infrastructure is really important, but sometimes with the turnover and just us doing million things at a time and being very intentional. I think there's a lot of things that each of us care about and we have our own strengths, and that's the beauty of being able to work with such a diverse team; people that don't all come from the same background in terms of what they studied or even regionally. But it was definitely challenging seeing places like the four-year institutions that have the staffing and the history of just getting support and not having to justify the importance of career centers and the work that we do.

Community college executive leaders can play a critical role to establish awareness at their college of the valuable resources that Career Centers offer.

For Frankie and Cielo the fact that they have not given up and remain committed to trying their best given the limiting circumstances, speaks to the possibilities.

Similarly, Amin, also expresses concern about current staffing and how it influences the potential support for Career Services practitioners:

> There is only one person staffing my career center, it's very difficult. I mean, it's an area of specialization. When students come to me and they're interested in becoming a counselor for community colleges, I always let them know about all the other categoricals in general, and they always ask about career counseling. I'm like, it's great, but there's not a lot of positions here.

While understaffing is not uncommon in community colleges, participants feel that for Career Services it is a huge problem given the demands they are under. They feel that in other departments also housing counselors, such as Educational Opportunity Program Support (EOPS) and Disabled Students Program Services (DSPS), often serve a manageable cohort of students. These departments are often better staffed than Career Services, who actually support all students. Furthermore, some participants mention they are also expected to provide support for prospective students and alumni. These conditions impact the future of Career Services by decreasing support from current practitioners.

In summary, this key finding enables an understanding where when the executive leadership holds an unclear understanding and expectations of Career Services, it spirals to the lack of support, expectations, and infrastructure to

protect the sustainability of this department. Further, the lack of understanding and clear articulation of Career Services often dictates and presents unclear perceptions and coherent understanding of intended outcomes. This, then, not only jeopardizes how practitioners see and understand their roles within Career Services, but the entire campus community - especially students – may miss a critical opportunity to enhance their educational and personal trajectory by obtaining adequate support from Career Services.

The Evolution of Career Services Should Be College-Wide, Not Just Departmental

Over the years, the evolution of Career Services has occurred in a shifting infrastructure and operational paradigms to include vocational guidance, teacher guidance, job placement, career counseling, professional networking, with the emergence of career communities, often resulting in a model characterized by innovative connections and partnerships (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000). Fast forward to 2023 and the current requirement of California Community Colleges to continue the implementation of the Guided Pathways framework. This is to include better alignment for students in their educational and career pathways. According to Jenkins et al (2017), the Guided Pathways framework's key role is its potential to help students by providing clear pathways that will aid in their retention and completion, as well as provide students early opportunities for career exploration, educational advancement, and skills-building. The participants in this study spoke of their experiences and efforts in trying to

provide input and support for the alignment that Career Services could play in the Guided Pathways journey for students. Participants felt there was minimal to no connection with Career Services in the Guided Pathways conversations, planning, and execution.

Jona, for example, felt a sense of frustration that the Guided Pathways meetings at their campus were more about power dynamics and, often, delaying implementation. Jona tried to attend all the Guided Pathways meetings at first and always made an effort bringing up Career Services. However, this effort went unnoticed as Jona explains:

> Well, I felt very disheartened by that experience or the multiple experiences I had during those first kind of pathways meetings. I still think Guided Pathways [group members at the college] are super confused about what they're doing and they just have this new shiny thing they want to do, but they don't finish the last thing they were working on. And it's weird because here, pathways, it's being run by faculty who don't believe in the framework. So it's a little strange so I've stopped attending the main guided pathways group.

Jonas' experience was similar for most of the participants. While understanding a new framework is challenging, the reluctance from others was even more confusing for the practitioners. They felt the importance of students getting access to career development was diminished throughout the process. Jona and the other participants understood the importance of Career Services to be

included in an important college-wide effort such as Guided Pathways, but also felt defeated when college members were confused about Guided Pathways altogether.

Career Services was Not Invited to The Table

Overall, participants in this study felt they were not supported by executive leadership to play a role in their colleges' Guided Pathways planning and implementation meetings. According to Beaston (2018), Guided Pathways efforts should not forget critical services, "a newly designed Guided Pathways student advising and registration process must help students make informed program and course selections by utilizing innovative Career Services at the start of their journey at the college" (p. 3). Nonetheless, participants in this study experienced the opposite in witnessing Career Services be excluded from Guided Pathways.

Similar to Jona's experience, Kai was initially hopeful when Guided Pathways started at their college and was happy to hear the college moved towards calling the initiative as "academic and career pathways." This excitement was short-lived because Kai knew that even though the word "career" was part of the title, career was not actually invited to participate in the meetings. Kai recalls:

> We thought we had movement when we went to the academic and career pathways because it's an academic and career pathway. And then they put the teams together and they didn't have anybody from the career center on their teams.

Not being invited to the meetings was a common theme among participants when it came to Guided Pathways meetings or implementation decisions. Aliser felt that the connection between career and guided pathways is so clear that it is difficult to imagine one without the other. Aliser does not think others see it that way, as they elaborate:

> There are still areas where we are still struggling. [Guided Pathways] is still one of those areas that we are working harder to, to have a louder voice or being present in certain circles for career services. We know that when things are not well perceived it is because of the lack of knowledge, until they understand it, they will open their hearts.

The theme regarding a lack of awareness about Career Services persists and informs the lack of proper implementation of Guided Pathways. Moreover, Frankie described the shortfalls the institutions' experience when they do not engage Career Services departments in Guided Pathways conversations:

> I don't think every Career Center in our region has their Career Center working closely with Guided Pathways, or they're hiring people to do certain part-time work, but they have no idea what the Career Center really does. Guided Pathways has connections with work-based learning connections where we should be helping to build some of the content that gets into the classrooms or so the professors in the class can actually understand some of our [career] tools and then be able to explain them

> better so that they can refer students to come to see us in the Career Center and meet with Career counselors.

Frankie's assertion on the connection between Guided Pathways and Career Services was a poignant part of this theme. Integration of the work already happening in a deliberate and purposeful way can result in scaling access to services students will benefit from in the end. In order for this to be possible, Career Services needs a seat at the table, every table on a college campus.

Integration of Career Services Just Makes Sense

Unlike academic counseling departments whose primary role is to assist current students with academic planning, Career Services have a more dynamic and complex audience such as prospective students, current students, alumni, instructional faculty, and employers. As such, practitioners said their roles expand beyond a particular space. Quinn notes the following:

> I wish Career Services were more just infiltrated into the campus and what we do, I've been able to have really good conversations with departments about this. Actually, one of my favorite things that I've been doing recently, one of my favorite things I've gotten to do is work with the English department, and once a semester I go with them and we've just been having really cool conversations about the narrative of career counseling and what would it look like for students to express their narrative within

their English classes and then bring it full circle into the career counseling side and their career journey.

Quinn's efforts to integrate Career counseling into the classroom is a perfect example of the role Career Services may play along faculty, and direct access to students. College campuses can be proactive to have Career Services thoughtfully integrated throughout their students' experience. This could potentially develop a culture to reflect prioritizing professional development and job connections by having students participate in career readiness activities early in their college experience. This is timely and critical for students, rather than career development becoming a reactive step students take at the end of their educational trajectory (Hudson, Klein-Collins, 2018). Quinn, with the collaboration of a faculty member, identified an opportunity for engaging Career Services into the classroom.

This faculty-Career Services collaboration was something that Kai also mentioned. Kai reflected on a positive outcome initiated by instructional faculty with the attempt to understand what Career Services could be. Integrating Career Services into their students' classroom experience was especially important. Kai notes that while it has taken a long time for faculty to talk about Career Services, it seems to be happening in some spaces due to Guided Pathways. Kai remembers:

The biggest challenge I think is that it's taken all this time for career to be at the front. People are talking about it now. Faculty are talking about it

> now. That didn't used to happen. They're talking about work-based learning. They're talking about students' career interests. And there were pockets of who did that before. Of course, career education faculty always have done that because they've always been preparing people for the workforce. But sociology faculty and philosophy faculty, our math professor is on our academic and career pathway success team for his area for that acp. So now that we've maybe dragged them kicking and screaming, it is still not where I want them to be, but getting closer and closer.

Kai acknowledges the effort to increase faculty to be interested in Career Services was an indication of the possibility to fully integrate Career Services throughout the college campus. Kai's support of this and the observation of how long it has taken for this to occur was also an experience noted by other participants.

For Jona, the integration of Career Services is moving at a much slower pace at their college campus. Jona feels it will take collaboration with key faculty to engage Career Services and encourage students to be involved. Jona details:

> What we still haven't even grazed upon is really integrating into the classroom. We can come and do a presentation on Career Services and our different resources and maybe get two students to make an appointment, but the actual conversation of careers is not integrated in every classroom, yet. There's a few of the all-star faculty. So I just think

> we need to work on continuing to make personal connections on campus with faculty and with students.

Overall, participants felt positive in the possibility to integrate Career Services across their college campuses. Some participants describe their role as relationship-builders that can start making one-on-one connections with faculty members.

Other participants describe a deep desire to clearly articulate and integrate Career Services into the classroom. This can become a clearly identified Career Services' goal as they work towards the improvement of equitable access and outcomes for all students. Cielo elaborates:

> If students are not lucky enough to take a class where a professor believes in the importance of career exploration, then they won't have career work-based learning embedded in their curriculum. If they don't have that, a student can go through their entire educational journey completing coursework for the sake of receiving a grade. I've been a student before, so I know I just want to get an essay discussion board done, discussion posts done, or get my essays done and just receive the grade and think I'm going to graduate. I don't think I want to spend the extra time because I'm busy too as a student, I don't know if I have time to explore things on my own. So personally, if a faculty member does actually have work-based learning and career services, pre-planning and all embedded in their curriculum, that's what will encourage students to

> realize how they can utilize their time in the classroom and apply that to their personal career planning efforts and take initiative to reach out to folks who had support them, which is our career center. I would love to see career services everywhere.

Cielo describes the lack of access for some students, especially for those that do not have access to career information in their classes. Cielo feels that the connection to all students will enable them to know Career Services throughout their educational journey. This is particularly important if integrated as part of the curriculum. The integration of Career Services within academic services is something institutions may consider to intentionally support. In this fashion, all students become aware of Career Services and no students are left behind. If students do not experience services or activities for career exploration, they may miss learning about critical career opportunities available to them. Furthermore, students may miss learning essential skills required for careers they have yet to identify as an aspirational career (Reese, 2010).

Summary of Findings

This chapter presents key findings for study and describes themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. The purpose of this study is to identify the role of Career Services in California Community Colleges as perceived by Career Services professionals in the field. Once data is analyzed, two overarching and interrelated themes emerge. These two themes represent the role of Career Services from a practitioner's perspective. The two themes

identified were: (a) executive leaders not understanding Career Services contributes to unresolved sensemaking, and (b) the evolution of Career Services should be college-wide, not just departmental. Within these two key themes, a discussion of sub-themes within are further discussed. A focal discussion of the practitioners' experiences related to their Career Services role are explained throughout this chapter.

The data gathered through pláticas is rich in nature and allows for deep examination of the practitioners' experiences of sensemaking. Understanding their role in Career Services and how this understanding shapes their practice is central to this study. Participants demonstrate a passion for Career Services and expect their respective college campus to integrate their role into the college culture. The pláticas elaborate on how conditions and initiatives, such as Guided Pathways, make an impact in the understanding of their role as Career Services practitioners. They provide insight to institutional barriers such as executive leadership's lack of clear understanding of what Career Services entails, and the potential they hold to support overall student success.

The participants display a level of vulnerability throughout their pláticas and very honestly and candidly described some of the good and some of the not so good things efforts at their respective institutions. They bring to light the importance of obtaining support by executive leadership and the incredible need to be fully integrated into the college culture, especially when state-mandated initiatives are deployed. Although a great portion of their narrative describes less

than ideal conditions, participants hold strong commitment, professionalism and resilience towards their practice. They also demonstrate genuine care for all students, especially those who are disproportionately impacted and may not always obtain access to Career Services.

As the researcher and as someone holding an executive leadership position within Career Services, the participants' pláticas on the sensemaking process, creates a space for both (research and participant) to unpack the meaning of shared experiences. In the process of facilitating pláticas, it evoked re-living similar situations as a young professional in Career Services. The participants' willingness to speak candidly also allows for moments in which what was said was the first time it was ever articulated aloud to another person. A couple of participants carry a sense of distrust towards their executive leadership due to the constant lack of support. Unfortunately, these speak to similar feelings and experiences shared by all participants, including the researcher. As the researcher, empathy is deeply warranted to conduct and facilitate often difficult conversations. Nonetheless, the richness of a qualitative study such as this, enables the researcher to posit their positionality for participants to know “they are not alone,” especially given the ongoing lack of support for Career Services experience at the community college level. Platícas offers a transformative method, and through participants’ narratives of the Career Services practitioners, it is evident this was not simply research but also a healing process to unpack

feelings often not expressed from resilient and committed Career Service practitioners.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify how California community college Career Services practitioners make-sense of their role within Career Services. Specifically, how they make sense of their role given the current implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework. An exploratory study design was employed by using sensemaking and organizational change as the theoretical frameworks (Eckel & Kezar, 2003a). The existing literature on the evolution of Career Services was especially critical to understand the current context of the department (Dey and Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000). The role of Career Services practitioners and their contribution to the implementation of the Guided Pathways framework is also central in this study.

The study is guided by three research questions: (1) How do Career Services practitioners from Southern California Community Colleges describe and understand the current role of Career Services?; (2)How do Career Services practitioners from Southern California Community Colleges make sense of the role of Career Services in relation to the implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework?; and (3) What opportunities and or challenges do study participants experience as practitioners when engaging in their role within Career Services?

This study highlights the role of Career Service practitioners, from their own understanding and experience. Findings align to existing literature by

reiterating the need for Career Services to play a critical and important role for overall student's success (Hudson, Klein-Collins, 2018). The positive role Career Services can have within community college campuses is to serve all students in an equitable way, especially as it is intended by Guided Pathways. Through the experiences presented by the practitioners in this study, the role of Career Services should be prioritized as a valuable asset to the entire college culture. This will help increase equitable outcomes and access for all students to meet and accomplish their career goals.

Career Services offer a vast number of services such as job fairs, industry field trips, career exploration, graduate school planning, soft skills development, classroom presentations, and additional work-based learning opportunities such as internships and on campus employment (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000). The support and programming offered by Career Services supports prospective students, students, alumni, employers, and faculty. However, as reiterated by study participants, Career Services needs additional support from executive leadership.

In this chapter, a summary of the study findings is presented. Second, a discussion how these results align with the existing literature is presented in chapter two. Third, a discussion of Career Services recommendations for institutions and educational leaders to support students. Fourth, suggestions for future research are considered. Lastly, a formal conclusion is presented.

Overview of Findings

To foster rich dialogue, pláticas were employed as the primary method for data collection. Pláticas are “informal conversations that take place in one-on-one or group spaces" (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 117). Adding to this, “unlike an interview, where one person is asking all the questions, a plática involves a two-way conversation” (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 113). The participants for this study were a group of practitioners from the California Community College system specifically from Career Services. Recruitment consisted of criterion and snowball sampling. Seven participants were selected to participate based on meeting the following criterion:

1. Currently employed at a community college in Southern California.
2. Have been employed with Career Services within the last three years.
3. Have current knowledge and understanding of the Guided Pathways framework.

Participants expressed concerns regarding the confidentiality of their responses, particularly because of the small number of individuals who work in Career Services. In response to their concerns, racial identities are not disclosed and gender-neutral pseudo names and pronouns are employed to protect gender identities. Finally, date ranges are provided to describe their experience in the field but also to protect them from being identified.

In this study two overarching and interrelated themes emerge. These two themes represent the sensemaking of the role of Career Services from a

practitioner's perspective. The two themes identified were: (a) executive leaders not understanding Career Services contributes to unresolved sensemaking, and (b) the evolution of Career Services should be college-wide, not just departmental. Within these two key themes, a discussion of sub-themes within are further discussed.

Executive Leaders Not Understanding Career Services Contributes to Unresolved Sensemaking

Participants in this study reveal executive leaders at their respective colleges hold a lack of understanding about the role of Career Services. Collectively, practitioners felt executive leaders' not understanding the role of Career Services resulted in undefined and unclear expectations. This makes it very difficult for practitioners to make sense of their roles and for other departments to value Career Services. This complicates the sensemaking of practitioners' effort to understand their role and support meeting outcomes rooted in student success. Sensemaking refers to the people in the organization changing their mindset by creating meaning, and as a result, should change behaviors, values, priorities, and commitments (Eckel & Kezar, 2003a). Without executive college guidance or vision for Career Services, programs and support by Career Services within the classroom level became a great challenge because mid-level administrators do not have adequate support nor understanding.

The lack of knowledge and guidance aligned with misdirected training efforts and inadequate staffing, minimal budgets at the Career centers created a culture in which Career Service practitioners feel unsupported in their roles. It is clear from the literature that a college culture is inherently tied to transformational change (Kezar, 2014). The executive leadership's inability to define the role of Career Services also trickled down into effects on misdirected training and staffing and budget support.

Misdirected Career Training Results in Unresolved Sensemaking

Participants mention college executive leaders often decide to offer career assessment training through a workshop to the general counseling department. The aim for such training is to increase the amount of career counseling happening during education planning appointments due to understaffing in Career Services. However, participants feel this is not an effective way to expand these services. According to Acevedo (2022) the idea of adding more responsibilities to the role of general counselors is flawed and could reproduce further student inequities.

Participants note executive leadership focuses on the potential outcomes and not necessarily what is in need to meet these. This is a misalignment and misunderstanding in fully grappling with what Career Services is, and the potential it holds. This aligns with the existing literature in that sensemaking

allows the uncovering of social-psychological processes that contribute to the overall outcomes, instead of focusing on the outcomes themselves (Helms, Thurlow, Mills, 2010). The lack of support from executive leadership to manage expected changes from general counselors after they completed the career training is overwhelming. This creates confusion for career practitioners around their own role because they often do not know if following up with general counselors was something they should do. In the end, general counselors that receive career training often do not put it into practice. Finally, participants also describe the need to clearly differentiate career counseling from other types of counseling at community colleges. They acknowledge the need for ongoing multifaceted training was important for Career Services practitioners and others interested in supporting their role. However, said training should not be perceived as a one-time process to ignore the issue of short staffing; instead, career training should be intentional and ongoing.

Lack of Staffing in Career Services Contributes to Unresolved Sensemaking

Participants make it clear that student services in higher education need adequate staffing and funding in order to provide high quality services. Practitioners in this study feel that Career Services continue to be severely overlooked. Community colleges in California were created to provide open access and career mobility for its residents. This work does not happen alone, Career Centers that offer Career Services to students such as opportunities to

network, industry panels, internships, jobs, career counseling, career planning, graduate school planning, and more. All of these services require dedicated individuals who can follow-thru and connect students with industry.

The participants in this study described feelings about the lack of staffing and funding support and the impact it has on their role. These shortfalls make practitioners feel like they are always doing more with less adding to the lack of clarity for their roles. Some of the participants are also being pulled in a variety of directions to cover for other positions on the campus. Further, participants feel a lack of staffing also makes it difficult to promote services to students and faculty members. As previously stated, practitioners also note their executive leadership's lack of support for staffing and funding results in the frustration towards Career Services not understanding their roles and services they provide students. Community college executive leaders can play a critical role to establish awareness at their college and the valuable resources that Career Services offers to all students.

While understaffing is not uncommon in community colleges, participants in this study felt that for Career Services it was a key problem given the demands that they were under. Practitioners felt other departments that also house counselors such as Educational Opportunity Program Support (EOPS) and Disabled Students Program Services (DSPS), which serve manageable cohorts of students, were better staffed than Career Services are, which is a department designed to support all students. Further, some participants mention they are

also expected to provide support for prospective students and alumni. These conditions impact the future and sustainability of Career Services.

The Evolution of Career Services Should Be College-Wide, Not Just Departmental

The evolution of Career Services has occurred in a shifting infrastructure and operational paradigms to include vocational guidance, teacher guidance, job placement, career counseling, professional networking, with the emergence of career communities, often resulting in a model characterized by innovative connections and partnerships (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000). Fast forward to 2023 and the current requirement of California Community Colleges to continue the implementation of the Guided Pathways framework. This is to include better alignment for students in their educational and career pathways.

According to Jenkins et al (2017), the Guided Pathways framework's key role is its potential to help students by providing clear pathways that will aid in their retention and completion, as well as provide students early opportunities for career exploration, educational advancement, and skills-building. The participants in this study spoke of their experiences and efforts in trying to provide input and support for the alignment that Career Services could play in the Guided Pathways journey for students. Participants felt there was minimal to no connection with Career Services in the Guided Pathways conversations, planning, and execution.

Career Services was Not Invited to The Table

According to Beaston (2018), Guided Pathways efforts should not forget critical services, “a newly designed Guided Pathways student advising and registration process must help students make informed program and course selections by utilizing innovative Career Services at the start of their journey at the college” (p. 3). Nonetheless, participants in this study experienced the opposite in witnessing Career Services be excluded from Guided Pathways. Not being invited to the Guided Pathways meetings where important decisions were being made was a common theme among the participants.

Participants understood the clear connection between Guided Pathways and Career Services. However, the ongoing theme regarding a lack of understanding about the role of Career Services persists and the lack of proper implementation of Guided Pathways continues. Accordingly, sensemaking must be considered when implementing change. “The concept of sensemaking is well named because literally, it means the making of sense” (Weick, 1995, p. 4). Integration of the work already happening in a deliberate and purposeful way can result in scaling access to a service that students will benefit from in the end. In order for this to be possible, Career Services needs a seat at the table, every table on campus.

Integration of Career Services Makes Sense

Unlike academic counseling departments whose primary role is to assist current students with academic planning, Career Services practitioners have a more dynamic and complex audience, including prospective students, current students, alumni, instructional faculty, and employers. As such, the practitioners' roles expand beyond a particular space and audience.

Institutions can proactively have Career Services integrated throughout their campus. Students and college personnel can experience a campus culture that reflects a priority on professional development and job connections by having students participate in career readiness activities early in their college experience rather than it becoming a reactive step students take at the end (Hudson, Klein-Collins, 2018). Overall, participants feel positive about the possibility of integrating Career Services across their campuses.

Most participants view their role as relationship builders that can start making individual connections with faculty members. Other participants describe a deep desire for integration to become a goal they work towards the improvement of equitable access and outcomes for students, especially in the area of work-based learning. One participant feels strongly to connect all students to Career Services throughout their journey, particularly as part of the curriculum is something institutions may support to ensure no students are left out. If students do not experience services or activities for career exploration they

may miss out on learning about career opportunities available to them; further, they may miss learning key skills and possible career interests (Reese, 2010).

To recap, Dey and Cruzvergara (2014) tracked the evolution of Career Services and described it as a series of shifting operational paradigms (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000). Early in the 20th century, there was a phase of vocational coaching whose primary goal was to help people who had just immigrated to the country find employment. The transition to vocational counseling in the 1920s and 1930s, which resulted from the necessity to train more teachers, was the next phase. 'Placement centers' were necessary on college campuses during the 1940s to 1960s because GI Bill veterans were looking for work. The idea that people like to work in roles and at organizations where other people are like them evolved. The Meyers-Briggs Type Inventory subsequently gained enormous popularity. In two decades, career planning and counseling centers emerged, focusing on assisting students in organizing their own employment search. These centers changed into networking hubs in the 1990s and 2000s, where people could use their connections to find the jobs they wanted. From 2010 to today the role of these centers has evolved into places centers that provide customized connections and communities throughout a college campus.

Findings from this study align with the growth of Career Services (Dey and Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000) and add to the ongoing evolution. Particularly it relates to how different the needs are for community colleges considering Guided

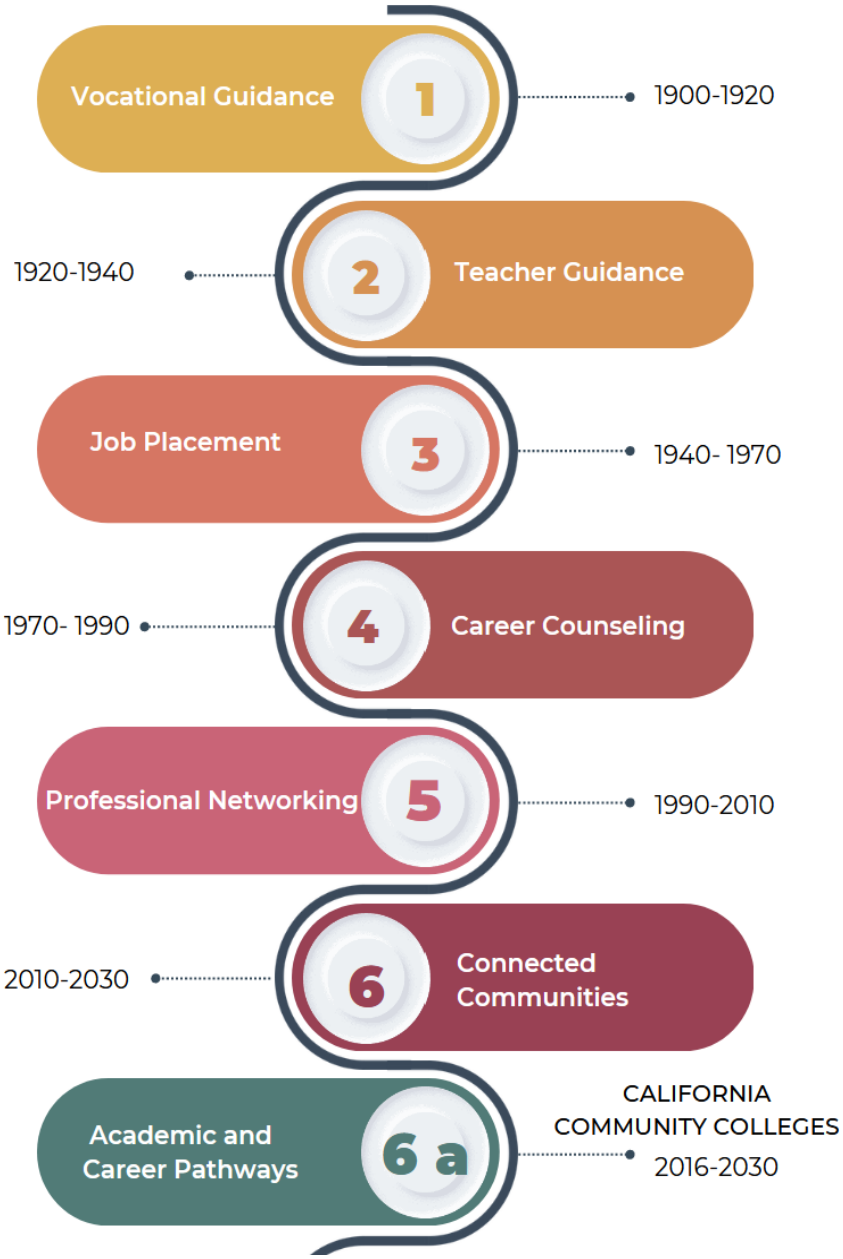
Pathways epoch. As previously stated, participants express a lack of support from executive leadership and a lack of understanding the important role the services play for students. In many cases, participants reflect on misdirected career training, specifically for the use of career assessments. While they encouraged the ongoing training to expand beyond career center staff, they call for the need for executive leadership to frame the training and set clear expectations.

All of the participants also describe the severe lack of staffing in Career centers and the amount of work they are responsible for. Some participants were the sole staff members in their respective Career centers. Further, participants feel Career Services Can play a critical part in the Guided Pathways implementation throughout the college campus. At the same time, participants would like to see Career Services voices elevated and prioritized at Guided Pathways implementation meetings. Being invited and included to the table at other important meetings on campus is incredibly important. Finally, participants recommend seeing Career Services integrated as a priority community colleges commit to.

This study contributes to the evolution of Career Services timeline by honing in specifically on California community colleges and their role strategically critical to the Guided Pathways framework. The role of Career Services at California community colleges includes the expansion and integration into the classroom with work-based learning. This alignment is especially critical in the

academic and career pathways of each student. Below, California Community College Career Services Evolution Figure 1 demonstrates this clearly identified connection. In the next section, recommendations for institutions and educational leaders are presented, suggestions for future research, and the conclusion follows.

Figure 1. Community College Career Services Evolution.



Recommendations for Institutions of Higher Education

Career Services practitioners in California Community Colleges face multiple challenges. For Career Services “gone are the days of transactional services and general career information, instead, new levels of expectations have emerged requiring career services professionals to re-define their value proposition for a larger group of stakeholders” (Dey, Cruzvergara, 2014. p. 10). This, however, is not possible unless institutions believe and fully understand their value and asset they are to student success. Strategies that California Community College leaders may implement to ensure all students have access to quality Career Services are presented. Recommendations for institutional leaders are to: (a) clearly define and elevate the role of Career Services at the institution; (b) provide adequate funding and staffing support; (c) provide ongoing career training opportunities for staff and students; (d) create alignment with institutional strategies to incorporate Career Services; and (e) promote Career Services and increase visibility as part of the college campus culture. Recommendations for educational leaders are to: (1) understand the role of Career Services; (2) provide Career Services practitioners opportunities for decision-making processes; and (3) support campus-wide participation in career training. Suggestions for future research include: (i) additional research of community college Career Services and Career Centers; (ii) include a larger pool of participants to adequately document Career Services; and (iii) examine and

document student experiences with Career Services at California's community colleges.

Clearly Define and Elevate the Role of Career Services at the Institution

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear community colleges have not clearly defined the role and expectations of Career Services. Findings suggest there is no clarity about the role practitioners' hold nor what they are expected to perform at their institution. A key role of colleges is to help students with the establishment of their careers and aspirations (Bloom, 2009). As such, it is important for community colleges to support and define the role Career Services have for students, alumni, employers and any additional stakeholders. Clearly identified goals, objectives, and expectations should include clear alignment with Career Services' goals along the college's strategic and equity planning. Another strategy to consider is to provide support in the ongoing development of the Career Services' mission and vision statements, as well as to provide them access to Institutional Effectiveness and Research Office for data support. Further, institutions can elevate the role of Career Services by providing ongoing opportunities for campus wide collaborations.

Provide Adequate Funding and Staffing Support

In order for practitioners to understand their role, they should not have the need to take on multiple positions simultaneously. Participants in this study

describe the ongoing challenge of not being able to meet multiple priorities due to limited staffing, or them having the demand to support other departments. According to Hudson and Klein-Collins (2018), it is becoming increasingly important for higher education institutions to emphasize their strategic focus and investments in new ways that Career Services can help students transition from learning to the workforce. Institutions should make a commitment to provide adequate and permanent funding, in addition to staffing support for Career Services. Institutions can prioritize these positions in order to expand opportunities for equitable access to these services for all students.

Provide Ongoing Training Opportunities

This study presents the lack of understanding of what Career Services is and could be, on multiple levels. First, Career Services practitioners need relevant and updated training to remain abreast industry and student needs. These trainings need to be available on an ongoing basis to facilitate the ability for practitioners to be up to date. Second, there needs to be an intentional campus-wide training available for faculty and staff to enhance and support cross-departmental collaboration with these Career Services. Any training should be relevant and openly accessible, executive leadership should frame the purpose of the training, as well as facilitate and oversee the implementation of what is actually learned. Finally, training for campus leadership should include

presidents, vice presidents, deans, directors, and student government leaders as well as training for academic and classified senate leadership.

Create Alignment with Institutional Strategies to Embed Career Services

The Guided Pathways framework requires one to ensure there is a clear connection with Career options for students. This presents the opportunity for institutions to embed Career Services into the classrooms by expanding work-based learning opportunities. Work-based learning opportunities include employer panels, field trips, internships, and service learning. To accomplish this, institutions can proactively engage Career Services to be integrated throughout their campuses. This sets the tone for all students to experience a robust and comprehensive college culture. This culture can reflect a prioritization on professional development and job connections by having students participate in career readiness activities early in their college experience. The goal is to avoid career selection to become a reactive step students take at the end of their educational trajectory (Hudson, Klein-Collins, 2018). This type of access and integration provides students, who would not otherwise visit the Career center, an opportunity to engage in valuable exposure to industries and careers. Expanding service learning opportunities is also an excellent way to see these services inside the classrooms.

Promote Career Services and Their Visibility

Career Services are underrepresented and underutilized, in part due to the lack of staffing and that sheer fact many students may not know that Career Services exists. Though “career services must become a presence that permeates the institutional culture and experience,” this study posits this is not the case (Dey, Cruzvergara, 2014. p.11). Institutional leaders should analyze the status of their Career Services and position them in a visible and prominent location on campus. Career Services should also gain access to multiple modalities of communication with students such as email, text messaging, video conferencing, and by any other means that allows for students to become aware of the services from day one. To summarize, community colleges have a historic and unique opportunity to define and elevate the role of Career Services throughout a student's college journey, and in particular with the implementation of Guided Pathways. Community colleges should not continue to overlook the powerful resource Career Services can be student success.

Recommendations for Educational Leaders

Understand the Role of Career Services

Educational executive leaders, which include college presidents, vice presidents, deans, directors, and student government leaders as well as academic and classified senate leadership, should clearly understand the role of Career Services. Doing so would create a culture of support for students inside

and outside of the classroom, especially when it comes to the identification of career aspirations. Leaders should know the Guided Pathways framework's key role is the potential to help students by providing clear pathways that will aid in their retention and completion. Guided Pathways is also to provide students early opportunities for career exploration, educational advancement, and developing critical skills (Jenkins, Lahr, & Fink, 2017). Early career exploration requires support from Career Services and, as such, leaders need to understand the role they have at each of their respective campuses. If educational leaders are unclear about the role of Career Services, by default they will be limited to establish appropriate goals and strategic plans for the department. A lack of clarity on the role of Career Services, will subsequently position career practitioners to function with a lack of concrete goals. This can be avoided by establishing a strong and clear articulation of the role and expectations for Career Services, and the incredible role they play to support student success.

Provide Career Services Practitioners Opportunities for Decision Making

Once educational leaders understand the role of Career Services it is important to also become their advocate. This support will encourage Career Services practitioners to collaborate with leadership and engage in important and meaningful ways on campus-wide decision-making processes. Leaders should also consider expanding more prominent job titles for Career Services practitioners such as renaming a coordinator to a director. If there is a faculty

coordinator, consider creating a chair position. This could build buy-in and leverage their voice once they are given opportunities to weigh in on decision-making protocols.

Participate in Career Training

Educational leaders should participate in professional development opportunities to better understand the changing needs of Career Services. It is important for leaders to understand labor market research, data, trends, and labor demands. Leaders should also become well trained in work-based learning and Title IV requirements for work experience, credit for prior learning, apprenticeships and internships. This training should occur at least every semester, minimally annually. Leadership should also be expected to put into practice what they learn from these training opportunities.

Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of the study provide an understanding of the role of Career Services from the perspective of seven practitioners in Southern California's community colleges. Based on findings from this study, future research recommendations are three-fold:

(1) There was very limited literature on Career Services, and no research has been conducted specifically on California community college Career Centers.

(2) This study focused on the experiences of seven practitioners from seven different community colleges. Recommendation is to expand to additional career centers and throughout the state.

(3) Equally important to fully understand the impact Career Services may have within the community college sector, a study focused solely on the student experience is imperative.

Conclusion

In this chapter, findings and implications from this study are presented. Recommendations for institutions of higher education, educational leaders, and suggestions for future research are also discussed. Participants' experiences captured through pláticas enabled a presentation of their narratives. These described how Career Services practitioners attempt to make sense of their role and the importance of supporting Career Services at community colleges in Southern California. These seven practitioners highlight the importance of support from executive leadership. They also mention the ongoing understaffing and lack of funding continue as a major hindrance to support as many students as Career Services could support. Participants also feel hope that one day campuses will understand the significant role and contributions Career Services can provide, especially along initiatives such as Guided Pathways. They hope one day institutions provide students access to Career Services throughout their college experience and beyond.

This study is for those interested to become champions for the next generation of Career Services. For those interested to support students in ways that have institutionally impossible to bring to fruition. This study is especially for community college educators because this work is timely and time sensitive. Students need to understand the return on investment of their own education, and as educators we have the obligation to follow through with the promise that higher education results in a better life for our students. Higher education is supposed to open doors for all students, especially disproportionately impacted populations. Higher education is to connect students to career establishment and upward mobility. In particular, and most importantly, community college students deserve the best we can offer. Students should not have to wait or equate excellent Career Services to four-year institutions or the ivy leagues. Community colleges could and should rise to the occasion because we serve the largest proportion of students in the state of California. The careers of tomorrow have not been invented yet and we need to be ready to respond and support all of our students' needs and aspirations.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

Recruitment Announcement

Subject Line: Seeking California Community College Career Services Practitioners

Dear (Insert Name),

Hello my name is Claudia Estrada-Howell and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership program at California State University San Bernardino. The research for my dissertation will rely on professional input from faculty and classified career services practitioners. Specifically, I am in need of participants who:

1. Are currently employed at a college in Southern California.
2. Are currently employed with Career Services and/or were employed no longer than 2 years ago.
3. Served in their role for a minimum of 1 year.
4. Have current knowledge and understanding of the Guided Pathways Framework.

This study will consist of one-on-one individual interviews via zoom. The interview will take approximately 1-2 hours. If you are interested in participating, please contact Claudia Estrada-Howell at estradac@coyote.csusb.edu to schedule an interview time.

Sincerely,

Claudia Estrada-Howell

Doctoral Candidate Ed.D. in Educational Leadership, California State University San Bernardino

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO
Ed.D., Educational Leadership

INFORMED CONSENT

IRB-FY2023-96

Vamos a Pláticar: The Sense Making of the Role of Career Services at California Community Colleges in a Guided Pathways Epoch

PURPOSE: Claudia Estrada-Howell, Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership at California State University San Bernardino, invites you to participate in a research study. This study's purpose is to identify how California community college career services practitioners make sense of the role of career services. Specifically, how they make sense of the role given the implementation of the Guided Pathways Framework. Overall, this project addresses a gap in the existing literature. It also promises to inform the dialog on the program development and implementation of Career Services at colleges and universities. This study will highlight implications for policy and practice as well as areas for future research.

DESCRIPTION: I would like to ask you to participate in an interview. Your participation will require approximately 60- 120 minutes. The interview will be conducted in a virtual face-to-face remote conversation using Zoom. The date and time and will be scheduled at your convenience. A follow-up interview may be requested, if necessary. With your permission, all interviews will be recorded.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is entirely voluntary. You do not have to be in this study, and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

CONFIDENTIAL: I will do everything to protect your confidentiality. Specifically, your name will never be used in any dissemination of the work (e.g., articles and presentations). You, your college, and your colleagues will be assigned pseudonyms in order to protect your identity. Lastly, in efforts to protect confidentiality, any data collected will be kept in a password-protected and firewall safe CSUSB cloud file. The video and audio recordings will be destroyed three years after the project has ended.

DURATION: The extent of your participation would include one interview, with the possibility of one follow-up interview, if needed. The interview(s) would last approximately 60-120 minutes each. Following the interview(s), you could be contacted via email with follow-up or clarifying questions. Such an exchange would require no more than fifteen minutes. Following the interview, you will receive a transcript of the interview, along with a PDF copy of the electronically signed consent form. All participants will be granted the opportunity to review their transcript, confirm, and/or withdraw the transcript from the study.

RISKS: I know of no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you by participating in this research study. Your identity and your college will remain confidential.

BENEFITS: Participants may benefit from the study because by sharing their stories, other practitioners may see themselves in those stories.
AUDIO/VIDEO: I understand that this research will be recorded via audio/video.
Initials _____
CONTACT: If you should have any questions regarding this study, please contact Claudia Estrada-Howell. For answers to questions about the research and research subjects' rights, or in the event of a research-related injury, please contact Dr. Nancy Acevedo at nacevedo-gil@csusb.edu. You may also contact California State University San Bernardino's IRB Compliance Officer.
RESULTS: This study will be published as a part of Claudia Estrada-Howell's dissertation. Likewise, it may be disseminated through various outlets, including conference presentations and publications. Findings will be published online through Scholar Works, an online institutional repository for California State University San Bernardino.
CONFIRMATION STATEMENT: I have read the above information and agree to participate in your study.
SIGNATURE:
Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Prospective Participant Questionnaire

[Date]
Dear [practitioner],
Thank you for your interest in my study. Please complete the following online questionnaire for my research study entitled Vamos a Pláticar: The Sense Making of the Role of Career Services at California Community Colleges in a Guided Pathways Epoch.

1. Are you currently employed at a college in Southern California YES/NO
2. Have you been employed with Career Services or Work Based Learning within the last three years. YES/NO
3. Have you served in your role for a minimum of 1 year. YES/NO
4. Do you have current knowledge and understanding of the Guided Pathways
   Framework. YES/NO

Kindly,
Claudia Estrada-Howell,
California State University San Bernardino, Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

January 11, 2023

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
IRB-FY2023-96
Status: Approved

Prof. Nancy Acevedo-Gil and Ms. Claudia Estrada
COE - Doctoral Studies
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Prof. Nancy Acevedo-Gil and Ms. Claudia Estrada:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Vamos a Pláticar: The Sense Making of the Role of Career Services at California Community Colleges in a Guided Pathways Epoch. " has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. The CSUSB IRB has weighed the risk and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants. The study is approved as of January 11, 2023. The study will require an annual administrative check-in (annual report) on the current status of the study on January 10, 2024. Please use the renewal form to complete the annual report.

This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses. Investigators should consider the changing COVID-19 circumstances based on current CDC, California Department of Public Health, and campus guidance and submit appropriate protocol modifications to the IRB as needed. CSUSB campus and affiliate health screenings should be completed for all campus human research related activities.

Human research activities conducted at off-campus sites should follow CDC, California Department of Public Health, and local guidance. See CSUSB's COVID-19 Prevention Plan for more information regarding campus requirements.

If your study is closed to enrollment, the data has been de-identified, and you're only analyzing the data - you may close the study by submitting the Closure Application Form through the Cayuse Human Ethics (IRB) system. The Cayuse system automatically reminders you at 90, 60, and 30 days before the study is due for renewal or submission of your annual report (administrative check-in). The modification, renewal, study closure, and unanticipated/adverse event forms are located in the Cayuse system with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission Webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action. Please note a lapse in your approval may result in your not being able to use the data collected during the lapse in the application's approval period.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy.

- **Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.**
- **Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study.**
- **Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.**
- **Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.**

THE CSUSB IRB HAS NOT EVALUATED YOUR PROPOSAL FOR SCIENTIFIC MERIT, EXCEPT TO WEIGH THE RISKS AND BENEFITS TO THE HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN YOUR IRB APPLICATION. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IRBS DECISION PLEASE CONTACT MICHAEL GILLESPIE, THE IRB COMPLIANCE OFFICER. MR. MICHAEL GILLESPIE CAN BE REACHED BY PHONE AT (909) 537-7588, BY FAX AT (909) 537-7028, OR BY EMAIL AT MGILLESP@CSUSB.EDU. PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR APPLICATION

APPROVAL NUMBER IRB-FY2023-96 IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE. ANY COMPLAINTS YOU RECEIVE REGARDING YOUR RESEARCH FROM PARTICIPANTS OR OTHERS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO MR. GILLESPIE.

BEST OF LUCK WITH YOUR RESEARCH.

SINCERELY,

KING-TO YEUNG

KING-TO YEUNG, PH.D., IRB CHAIR

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

KY/MG

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