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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Extended Opportunity Programs and Services Program Study:
Identifying Effective Support Services for Marginalized Community College Students

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Angeles Abraham

2023

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Extended Opportunity Programs and Services Program Study:
Identifying Effective Support Services for Marginalized Community College Students

by

Angeles Abraham

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Christina Christie, Co-Chair

Professor Mark P. Hansen, Co-Chair

California community colleges have a completion crisis problem, with over 70% of students failing to graduate. This study was conducted to identify effective support services in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) program, which serves marginalized community college students. This EOPS program study surveyed almost 2,000 EOPS students, who are served in 14 community colleges in the Los Angeles region, to explore effective support services that lead to positive retention and completion outcomes. The study had three phases: (a) the review of retention data of EOPS students in the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD), (b) the EOPS student survey, and (c) the EOPS staff survey.

The study revealed that the most used EOPS support services by students were (a) EOPS counseling, (b) book vouchers/grants, (c) student educational planning, and (d) priority registration. Student respondents revealed the most impactful EOPS support services were (a) book vouchers/grants, (b) EOPS counseling, (c) cash grants, (d) student educational planning, and (e) priority registration. Similarly, the EOPS staff ranked the most impactful support services as (a) EOPS counseling, (b) book vouchers/grants, and (c) priority registration.

The services least used by respondents were (a) foster youth support, (b) the Cooperative Resources Agencies for Education (CARE) program for single parents, and (c) graduation assistance. The least impactful services ranked by the EOPS staff were (a) foster youth support services, (b) gift cards, and (c) graduation assistance. These results indicate that staff hold similar views to their students of the top EOPS services. Such similarity in ranking also indicates that students share with the program's staff an understanding of what is most impactful and where they believe resources should be most effectively directed.

The study also reviewed retention rates of EOPS students versus non-EOPS students at all nine colleges in LACCD, and revealed that EOPS students' retention rates were over 20% higher than non-EOPS students. These results indicate that EOPS is operating effectively to improve retention rates for participants.

The intent of this study was to identify effective support services in the EOPS program to determine which services students used and valued, to identify which services EOPS staff thought were helpful, and to examine retention and completion rates systemwide. After reviewing and analyzing the data, the evaluation showed that the study's objectives had been achieved.

The dissertation of Angeles Abraham is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2023

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and father, who have always instilled in me the values of education, hard work, and faith in God. They have been exemplary role models, and I appreciate them more and more each day. First and foremost, I want to express my gratitude to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the countless blessings and opportunities He has bestowed upon me throughout my life.

I would also like to extend my thanks to my family, particularly my sisters Ancy Abraham-Koshy and Amy Abraham, for their unwavering support and encouragement in helping me become the best version of myself. Furthermore, I am immensely grateful to Dr. Roberto O. Gonzalez, one of my mentors, for consistently challenging me to excel as an administrator and inspiring me to pursue this doctoral degree.

I am deeply indebted to my mentors Dr. Theda S. Douglas, Gliceria M. Rosario, Lourdes M. Brent, Lorna C. Bukasa, Ludi Villegas-Vidal, Dawn Reid, and Kyle D. Skinner for providing me with a strong ethical foundation both in my professional and personal life. I want to give a special acknowledgment to Lourdes M. Brent for her invaluable assistance throughout this program. Without her guidance, I would not have reached the finish line. I am grateful for her tireless dedication and expertise, which have supported me every step of the way. I feel incredibly blessed to have had her by my side all these years, and I appreciate her immeasurably.

To each and every one of you who have shown unwavering love and support, I want to express my heartfelt thanks. This moment would not have been possible without your presence in my life. I am truly grateful for your continuous encouragement and belief in me.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to express my gratitude to my committee co-chairs, Dr. Mark P. Hansen and Dean Christina “Tina” Christie, for their generous support and time throughout my two years in the Educational Leadership Program at UCLA. I also want to thank my committee members, Dean Eileen Stempel, Dr. Brock M. Klein, and Dr. William Sandoval, for their guidance during the research process. I am also deeply appreciative of the substantial assistance provided by Drs. Diane Durkin and Cindy Kratzer in my study.

I would like to extend my thanks to my mentors, Dr. Roberto O. Gonzalez, Lourdes M. Brent, Lorna C. Bukasa, Theda S. Douglas, Gliceria M. Rosario, Kyle D. Skinner, Ludivina Villegas-Vidal, Dawn Reid, Alma Narez-Acosta and Jeanette Magee, for their unwavering support and dedication to excellence in the field. Their work has greatly influenced and inspired me to strive for the highest standards and achieve successful outcomes. I feel incredibly blessed to have formed strong friendships with each of them over the years.

I am grateful to all the Region 7 EOPS Directors, including Artour Aslanian and Michelle Long-Coffee, as well as the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges and the Los Angeles Community College District, for their unconditional support and assistance in collecting data for my study. Additionally, I want to thank the counseling faculty and classified staff at West Los Angeles College, especially Stefani Aguallo, for their patience and support, particularly during the final months of my study. I am also grateful to all the EOPS mentors, previous directors, and leaders at the state and local level who have championed and protected this successful program, which emerged from the Civil Rights Movement to serve the underserved.

I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the Research and Planning Group and the California Community College Chancellor's Office for their invaluable contribution to this study. The extensive work conducted by the RP Group, specifically their EOPS Impact Studies in 2012 and 2022, has been instrumental in providing a wealth of information on the subject matter. Their research has played a significant role in deepening my understanding of EOPS and reviewing the program's successful student outcomes statewide. I am deeply appreciative of the RP Group's EOPS Impact Studies and acknowledge their work as a crucial foundation for my own research.

Last but certainly not least, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the EOPS students and staff who took time out of their busy lives to participate in my study. Your willingness to share your thoughts and opinions has been invaluable, and this study would not have been possible without your voices. I also want to extend my gratitude to the EOPS Directors, the LACCD Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the LACCD Deans of Institutional Effectiveness (especially Artour Aslanian and Milagros Kudo), Joseph Vidal, and Michelle Long Coffee for their support in launching my study. Your dedication as educators is truly commendable, and I am grateful for the exceptional support system I have. Thank you all!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Most community college students in the United States fail to complete their studies, which has a direct effect on the country's workforce and individuals' economic mobility (Chen, 2021; Kantrowitz, 2021; Levesque, 2018; Santos & Haycock, 2016). Previous studies have shown only 13% of California community college students graduate with an associate degree after 2 years (Jackson et al., 2019). More noticeably, completion rates are particularly meager among low-income, first-generation college students, of whom only about 10% complete a college degree within 6 years (Education Advisory Board, 2019). It has been suggested that helping and supporting students, not only in one facet but in several aspects of their education, may increase their graduation rates (Levesque, 2018).

This study concentrated on comprehensive support services that support degree completion for marginalized students. The study aimed to examine current institutional structures and trends in holistic approaches with an emphasis on the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) model. Since its inception in 1969, this model has been shown to successfully increase college retention and completion rates for community college students (Barraza, 2012; Bradford, 2004; Crawford, 2008; Dills, 2003; McLean, 2010; Perez, 1999; Preising, 1979; B. Price, 2015; Reyes et al., 2022; Willet et al., 2012).

The EOPS program in California's Community Colleges was established to assist low-income, first-generation, and nontraditional students disadvantaged by educational and economic factors. As such, the program helps these disadvantaged students reach their educational goals by providing comprehensive support services beyond the traditional student services offered by colleges. This additional assistance may include intrusive counseling, priority registration, comprehensive educational planning, transportation assistance, tutoring, childcare grants, and

book vouchers. These holistic additional academic and financial support services are designed to offer educational support services that address the specific needs of historically disadvantaged students. These services aim to provide support to students whose college readiness and socioeconomic background may prevent them from graduating.

Research has shown that, despite their educational and financial disadvantages, EOPS students have higher levels of retention and completion of transfer-level English and Math courses and certificate and degree programs than non-EOPS students (Reyes et al., 2022; Willett et al., 2012). However, it is unclear which program support services (e.g., counseling, book grants, priority registration, educational planning, etc.) are most effective in fostering these outcomes. This study evaluates the EOPS program at 14 community colleges in the Los Angeles region to identify the support services used by EOPS students and the ones they find most helpful and impactful in their educational journey. Additionally, this study aimed to assist EOPS directors in identifying the most effective services and prioritizing the allocation of program resources accordingly. The study was also to examine retention and service usage data to facilitate social change at the state and local levels, in order to assist students who might not qualify for specialized student programs.

Unlike a one-size-fits-all solution to support students, as is used through the general matriculation process starting at the point of enrollment in community colleges, EOPS provides holistically based support services tailored to the student's individual academic, social, personal, and financial needs. This study presents a student-centered framework for engaging practitioners in activities that will help increase community college completion rates for marginalized students.

The following section identifies the obstacles students face in completing their degrees. It examines the background of current institutional structures and trends in holistic approaches to outline a framework for adopting reforms that improve community college retention and completion outcomes with a specific focus on studying EOPS programs. Despite the success of EOPS programs, it remains unclear which specific support services most effectively contribute to positive outcomes. Therefore, this chapter concludes with an overview of the research design and the study's significance in identifying effective support services for marginalized community college students.

Background to the Problem

For students who entered college in the fall of 2015 and who continued their enrollment through the fall 2016 semester, the average national retention rate was 61.1% (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018). The impact of higher education institutions on student outcomes can be perceived as either positive or negative (Baron et al., 2019). Numerous studies have shown that many college students fail to achieve their educational goals. In California, for instance, a report from the Foundation for California Community Colleges revealed that 70% of community college students in the state do not graduate or transfer to a 4-year college (Chen, 2021). Completion and transfer rates at community colleges are generally low, especially for specific student subgroups. Kantrowitz (2021) presented data on college completion rates, highlighting that over one million students drop out of college annually; three quarters are first-generation students, and over two thirds are low-income students (with a family adjusted gross income under \$50,000). According to the California Community College Board of Governors in 2021, only 14% of Latino students and 9% of African American and Native American students who enrolled in 2015–2016 completed their program of study within 4 years. In comparison,

Asian students had the highest completion rate (21%), followed by White students (17%) within the same timeframe (Weissman, 2021a).

Community college students face greater challenges than their 4-year college counterparts in balancing full-time work, finances, childcare, and remedial classes (Yuen, 2019). Low completion rates are particularly concerning because community colleges serve as a pathway to upward social and economic mobility for low-income and minority students (Levesque, 2018; Santos & Haycock, 2016). Studies such as that conducted by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce have revealed that individuals with a bachelor's degree and full-time employment earn 84% more in their lifetime than those with only a high school diploma (Carnevale et al., 2021). Similarly, recent graduates with a bachelor's degree had a median income of \$52,000 per year whereas high school graduates of the same age had a median income of \$30,000 per year (Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities, n.d.). Over a lifetime, individuals with a bachelor's degree earn more than \$1 million more than their high school graduate counterparts of the same age. These findings indicate a significant increase in employment prospects and income among bachelor's degree holders.

Research demonstrates that students earning a college degree contribute to building a stronger workforce and economy and have a greater possibility of new career opportunities, leading to potentially higher salaries (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2015; Levesque, 2018; Newcomb, 2019). A study by Jackson et al. (2019) estimated that California will not meet the demand for an educated workforce based on current retention and completion trends. Therefore, policymakers, business stakeholders, and educational leaders rely on community colleges to train students for the occupations needed in the workforce (Grosz, 2019; McConville et al., 2021; Soricone & Endel, 2019). Thus, the primary rationale for educational

reform is to keep pace with a changing economy and provide an adequate workforce (Mehta, 2014). Additionally, changes in educational policies can serve as sources of external pressure and support for improving college retention and graduation rates (O’Day & Smith, 2019).

Ultimately, college completion leads to higher-paying career opportunities. However, research has revealed that graduating also leads to many additional positive benefits, such as stability, higher levels of well-being, and healthier and longer lifespans (Loveless, 2022). Therefore, incentivizing successful outcomes helps students achieve their career and educational goals and holds institutions accountable. However, low success rates indicate that institutions are not meeting the students’ needs, including the challenges students face during the onboarding process, a lack of resources, and an unwelcoming environment (Baron et al., 2019).

Completion Obstacles and Constraints

Students at community colleges face many challenges, both in school and in their personal and working lives, which may hinder or prevent them from achieving their educational goals (Smith, 2019). Besides pursuing college certificates and degrees, many community college students have children, work full-time, and care for their extended families. According to Porter and Umbach (2019), students face other challenges related to personal issues in areas such as school–work balance, financial concerns, obligations toward family and friends, and health and disabilities.

Even before the devastating impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, the United States’ higher education system was facing criticism for the significant inequalities affecting traditionally marginalized groups such as African American, Latino, and Native American communities (Fain, 2020). Consequently, low minority completion levels are a source of great concern, with community colleges showing little or no progress in remediating those inequalities. For example,

the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) found that only 30% of first-time college students who attended a U.S. community college full-time completed their 2-year degree within 3 years. According to this study, Asian students had the highest completion level (36%), followed by Polynesian-native students (34%), White students (32%), Hispanic students (30%), Native American students (27%), mixed-race students (25%), and African American students (23%).

Similar results were noted in the Beginning Postsecondary Students national survey for students who enrolled in the 2003–2004 academic year. This study followed students for 6 years and found that one third had achieved a credential within 6 years, including 8% with a certificate, 14% with an associate degree, and 12% with a bachelor’s degree (Ma & Baum, 2016). The study also discovered that only 21% of the students who planned to earn a bachelor’s degree had earned it 6 years later.

Marginalized Students

Thiem and Dasgupta (2022) reported that marginalized community college students typically come from low-income families, are first-generation students, belong to racial/ethnic minority groups, and/or have disabilities. Furthermore, according to the Center for First-Generation Student Success (2020), first-generation college students face even more challenges in completing college compared to other students. The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators defines “first-generation” as any student whose parents did not graduate from college (Feijoo et al., 2022). According to the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (n.d.), the RTI International in 2019 found 56% of undergraduates were first-generation college students, and 59% of these students were also the first siblings in their family to attend college during the 2015–2016 academic year in the United States. Among

community college students, the 2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study ([NPSAS], 2018) found that one third are first-generation. The *Completing College* study conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) revealed that although 42% of students whose parents had attended college graduated within 4 years, only 27% of first-generation students graduated within the same timeframe (DeAngelo et al., 2011).

Additionally, it is estimated that 50% of all first-generation college students in the United States come from low-income families (Saenz, 2007). According to the Education Advisory Board (2019), approximately 90% of low-income, first-generation students fail to graduate college within 6 years. However, Levesque (2018) argued that guiding students through the college environment and connecting their coursework to their lives may help improve completion rates.

First-generation students, in particular, are affected by low persistence rates (Cataldi et al., 2018), and multiple reasons have been attributed to low rates of college retention among marginalized students. For example, the Revealing Institutional Strengths and Challenges survey was administered to 6,000 2-year college students from 10 community colleges in California, Michigan, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming and found that work obligations and finances were the biggest hindrances to course completion (Porter & Umbach, 2019; Smith, 2019). Similarly, in April 2020, the Student Senate for California Community College Board of Directors surveyed students at 64 California community colleges to understand the unique struggles students faced during the transition to online instruction during the initial weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey found that the biggest struggles noted were finances, mental health, and adjusting to remote learning. Additionally, the report also determined that support service programs, particularly EOPS,

helped students successfully transition to the online environment and kept them engaged in their institution (Student Senate for California Community Colleges, 2020).

In general, first-generation college students are less likely to achieve their educational goals and career pathways compared to their peers. However, there are exceptions. Students enrolled in the EOPS program demonstrate higher college retention and completion outcomes (Reyes et al., 2022; Willett et al., 2012).

Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS)

EOPS is a program established throughout California's community colleges to support marginalized students who have faced significant barriers to attaining a college education. EOPS has proven effective in increasing student academic success and completion (Reyes et al., 2022; Willett et al., 2012). However, it remains unclear which specific aspects or components of EOPS have the greatest impact on student success. This research aimed to examine the EOPS support services that students used and identified as most helpful in achieving their academic goals.

Each campus's EOPS program receives an annual budget to provide approved services to eligible students. However, funding is limited and often threatened because of changing politics and priorities at the state, college, and local district levels. Consequently, it cannot be assumed that all EOPS services receive equal support. Therefore, it would be beneficial for EOPS directors to have data demonstrating which services students value the most so that those services can be prioritized in funding while still adhering to the mandated state allocation model.

The Research and Planning Group (RP Group) for California Community Colleges conducted the EOPS Impact Study (Willett et al., 2012) and EOPS Impact Study 2.0 (Reyes et al., 2022), which demonstrated the effects of the EOPS program by comparing EOPS participants to comparable nonparticipants on key student outcomes. The studies revealed that

EOPS students had better outcomes than non-EOPS students in terms of retention, completion of degrees or certificates, success in transfer-level English and math courses, and the number of transferable units completed. Additionally, EOPS students rated higher than non-EOPS students on all outcomes, except for transferring to a 4-year university within 3 years. Among those who did transfer, EOPS students were more likely to transfer to an in-state public university, such as a California State University or the University of California. On the other hand, non-EOPS students were more likely to transfer to an in-state private university, including unaccredited for-profit institutions, or an out-of-state university. According to the data, EOPS students outperformed non-EOPS students in terms of retention and completion.

Gaps in Research

Even though previous research, including the EOPS Impact Study from 2012 (referred to as EOPS Impact Study 1.0; Willett et al., 2012), has demonstrated the effectiveness of EOPS for student outcomes, it has not yet addressed the question of which specific services contribute to students' success. Similarly, the EOPS Impact Study 2.0 (Reyes et al., 2022) showed higher persistence, retention, and completion rates for EOPS students compared to non-EOPS students. However, this study did not identify the specific services that contributed to the program's success and its impact on students. Furthermore, there is a lack of research specifically focusing on the influence of different types of support services on the successful outcomes identified in previous studies (Bradford, 2004; Crawford, 2008; Perez, 1999; Preising, 1979). Therefore, this study aimed to address this research gap by investigating the specific impacts of various support services within the EOPS program.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative survey study was to identify the most helpful EOPS support services for EOPS students in terms of positively impacting persistence, retention, and completion rates. The study aimed to bring about social change at the local level, particularly for marginalized students who may not qualify for specialized programs. Additionally, the study intended to investigate whether certain areas of support are more beneficial than others and to present a framework for engaging practitioners in activities that enhance community college completion rates for marginalized students.

As existing research highlights, a significant number of community college students in the United States fail to complete their studies (Chen, 2019; Chen, 2021; Kantrowitz, 2021; Santos & Haycock, 2016). Dropout rates among first-year college students reach 30%, while the dropout rate rises to 43% for community colleges (Vlasova, 2022). Low-income, first-generation students face even greater challenges, with an estimated 90% failing to earn a college degree within 6 years (Educational Advisory Board, 2019). Nonetheless, studies suggest that providing students with support in multiple aspects of their education may increase graduation rates (Levesque, 2018). The EOPS Impact Study 2.0 indicated that EOPS students exhibit higher completion rates in English and math transfer-level classes compared to their non-EOPS peers (Reyes et al., 2022). EOPS students also achieve higher GPAs, remain enrolled, and earn college credentials at a higher rate (Reyes et al., 2022). These findings suggest that EOPS support services contribute to improved retention and outcomes for students compared to their non-EOPS counterparts. However, it remains unclear which specific program support services led to these positive outcomes.

Although EOPS students must demonstrate educational and financial disadvantages to qualify for the program, research indicates that they experience better outcomes than non-EOPS students. However, it is essential to determine which program support services contribute to these outcomes. The goal of identifying associations between services and outcomes is to provide EOPS directors and programs with a better understanding of which support services students perceive as most beneficial in their pursuit of academic goals. It is anticipated that this research can inform the optimization of EOPS funding and resource allocation, aiming to maximize student retention and completion rates.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What services do EOPS students from community colleges in the Los Angeles area report using? Does the usage of services differ across campuses and among different racial/ethnic student groups?
2. What are the reasons why EOPS students do not use specific services? Do these reasons vary across campuses and among different racial/ethnic student groups?
3. To what extent do students perceive each EOPS service as helpful or beneficial? Do these perceptions differ across campuses and among different racial/ethnic student groups?
4. To what extent do EOPS directors, counselors, and staff perceive each service as helpful or beneficial? Do these perceptions differ from their students? Do these perceptions differ across campuses?

Research Design

This EOPS program study conducted a survey among EOPS students from 14 community colleges in the Los Angeles region with the primary objective of exploring effective support

services that contribute to retention and completion outcomes. The study consisted of three phases: (a) the review of retention data for EOPS students in the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD), (b) the EOPS student survey, and (c) the EOPS staff survey. A survey questionnaire was used to gather data from EOPS students and staff, providing insights into EOPS program support services in the Los Angeles region. Additionally, retention rates of EOPS students within the LACCD were examined.

Quantitative data from students and staff regarding EOPS student support services were collected for statistical analysis. The analysis aimed to identify differences in service usage, the extent of service use, and satisfaction among campuses/colleges and student subgroups. Students and staff ranked EOPS support services based on usage and perceived helpfulness, enabling the determination of the perceived influence of EOPS support services on student retention and identifying services of greater value. Surveys were chosen as an effective tool for this quantitative research because of their cost-effectiveness, flexibility, and ability to collect data from a considerable sample size. LACCD retention data were analyzed by comparing EOPS students with non-EOPS students across all nine LACCD colleges. The analysis encompassed the overall district EOPS retention data at the individual colleges.

This study aimed to gain insights into the support services used and valued by students in pursuit of their academic goals. The findings from this study aim to assist educational leaders and EOPS directors in understanding students' perspectives on effective support services and making informed decisions regarding resource allocation to enhance student outcomes.

Study Significance

The findings of this study will greatly contribute to the positive impact of support services in serving marginalized students. California community college retention and

completion rates are among the lowest in the nation, particularly for marginalized students; therefore, administrators, faculty, budget decision makers, and other stakeholders are under pressure to make the best use of their funding to foster the most positive outcomes. In addition, educational institutions are subject to constant changes based on political and financial factors, and programs such as EOPS are designated as categorical programs, meaning that specific funding is allotted to them that cannot be moved to other campus needs despite the unique fiscal context of a specific campus. This funding protection allows categorical programs to consistently meet student needs so that services may continue to specifically target populations to foster positive completion outcomes. This also holds programs accountable, in contrast to a flexible funding model that allows college presidents to move financial resources around on individual campuses. As a result, students served by EOPS programs may be provided reliable and quantifiable support services.

EOPS directors and administrators therefore have the challenge of determining the most effective practices for distributing funds based on their assessment. The presence of certifiable data will help clarify the specific services that have the greatest impact on improving outcomes and will foster best practices in EOPS programs. This will facilitate the achievement of positive student outcomes even during periods when funding and resources are scarce.

Four more chapters follow. Chapter 2 is a comprehensive review of the current literature, examining the need to identify support services that improve retention and completion rates. It also discusses the gap in the literature regarding a model for supporting marginalized community college students and clarifies how this study will fill this gap. Chapter 3 discusses the study's research design. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the study's findings, with Chapter 4 presenting the research results and Chapter 5 providing an interpretation of the findings.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter synthesizes and consolidates existing research that demonstrates the need for comprehensive support services for marginalized community college students. It begins by exploring empirical literature relevant to the study's phenomenon. Key themes covered in the empirical literature include workforce demands, community college completion rates, marginalized student characteristics and outcomes, California Community College Initiatives, and the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) support program and services. Reviewing research in these areas is crucial for understanding the EOPS program study topic and identifying research gaps that need to be addressed.

The chapter then focuses on reviewing the EOPS model. Specifically, it aims to understand the disparities in college completion rates between disadvantaged students and their more advantaged peers; this contextualization will help to justify the importance of the support services provided under the EOPS program. Additionally, the review helps identify the relevant support services offered by EOPS programs that contribute to higher college retention and completion rates among EOPS students.

The chapter concludes with a review of theoretical frameworks applicable to the proposed research, namely Tinto's (1993) student departure theory, Astin's (1984) student involvement theory, and Christie and Alkin's (2013) evaluation tree theory. The theoretical review explores the origins of these theories, their previous applications in research, and their extension in the present study to determine the most impactful EOPS support services.

Source Justification

This chapter is based on a review of existing research, articles, and literature on various topics such as workforce demands; the completion crisis in higher education; federal, state, and

local policies; community college reform; support services and programs; the EOPS program; theoretical frameworks related to student engagement and completion; and the program evaluation of the EOPS program model. Because of the nature of EOPS and the rapidly changing landscape of higher education, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the research and literature include both juried and nonjuried sources. These sources encompass reputable online publications, peer-reviewed academic journals, scholarly articles, national and local databases, and previous EOPS studies completed since 1979. The literature review also highlights gaps in the existing literature that have not been addressed or require further understanding. The results of this study can be used to identify effective support services and enhance the ability of programs and colleges to assist students in achieving their educational goals and becoming valuable members of the workforce.

Workforce Demands

A series of recent studies has indicated that workforce education prepares students to be more productive and prosperous in the workplace, which benefits a state's economy. The Opportunity America survey (2021) found that in 2020, about 30% of jobs nationwide required postsecondary education or training but not necessarily a bachelor's degree. The demand for educated workers has been Central California's economy for decades and is continuing to grow. However, if current trends continue, California will not meet its future workforce requirements (Johnson, Bohn, & Mejia, 2019; Johnson, Cook, & Jackson, 2019). According to recent reports, the state is expected to fall 1.1 million bachelor's degrees short of economic demand because 40% of jobs will require a bachelor's degree by 2030 (Johnson, Bohn, & Mejia, 2019; Johnson, Cook, & Jackson, 2019).

As a result, California community colleges must address these workforce demands, increase the completion and transfer rates for economic growth and economic mobility, and close equality gaps. Policymakers and business stakeholders rely on community colleges to provide job-focused training programs that prepare students for growing fields in the workforce (Grosz, 2019; Levesque, 2018; Weissman, 2021a, 2021b). Grosz (2019) discovered that community colleges are issuing an increasing number of vocational certificates and degrees in growing occupations, but only at half the pace that those jobs are growing.

There have been numerous studies investigating the primary rationale for educational reform, which is to keep pace with a changing economy (Mehta, 2014). Of recent note, policymakers have been promoting workforce training programs to improve economic outcomes and address California's workforce needs (Johnson, Bohn, & Mejia, 2019). As one such example, the California Community College Chancellor's Office (n.d.-d) has created a new initiative to address these gaps, called Vision for Success. This plan seeks to close student achievement gaps, increase rates of student degree and certificate attainment (particularly in technical career fields), increase gainful employment rates, and promote student transfer rates to 4-year institutions. This plan was founded on the core belief that colleges should simplify paths toward career goals and help students remain focused on those paths until completion.

Much of the existing research focuses on how the labor market has significantly influenced the development and transformation of the policies and practices of California's community colleges; these workforce demands have transformed higher education. As an example, the California Community Colleges Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) offers colleges fiscal incentives based on the number of students who have completed career education units and attained a job with a salary at the level of the regional living wage (California

Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2021). Moreover, to compete with for-profit colleges, community colleges have shifted their focus to career technical education (CTE) and have begun offering free tuition to students regardless of their income status. The need-based Board of Governors Fee Waiver has been replaced by the California College Promise Grant program. All California community college students receive the California Promise grant during the first 2 years of enrollment. Several government initiatives and projects, such as the federal Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 and California's CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids) program in local community colleges, are directly related to workforce demands. The primary aim of these workforce initiatives is to satisfy the employment and training needs of companies to build and sustain a skilled workforce. However, additional efforts may also be necessary to achieve this goal. For example, increased efforts should be made to integrate credit and noncredit workforce training programs to the ever-changing labor market demands. One possible option is to implement innovative programs that better reflect workforce needs. Another possible community college response might be the issuance of short-term vocational certificates that provide quick entry into the labor market. This would facilitate a more widespread acquisition of industry-certified credentials.

A more systematic and theoretical analysis is required to support community colleges in their efforts to create career-transfer bridges to 4-year universities. As an example, a number of universities currently offer bridges from an associate degree in nursing to a bachelor of science degree in nursing. Similarly, community colleges may help students transform their CTE vocational certifications into bachelor's degrees by forming partnerships with local 4-year universities, thereby permitting students to attain higher degrees. These bridges would enable students to gain the practical skills and knowledge that would facilitate their transition into new

or advanced roles and to gain the relevant skills necessary to maintain a competitive advantage in a fluctuating job market and economy. Santos and Haycock (2016) emphasized that the aim of workforce education is to establish economic capital for individuals, businesses, and communities, and to prepare individuals to be more productive and prosperous in the workplace. These goals benefit both workers and the state's economy. Therefore, it is imperative that colleges work to address the shifting social and economic needs of the community. Addressing the current completion crisis, exacerbated because of the COVID-19 pandemic, should be viewed as vitally important.

Completion Crisis

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, California's community college enrollment is the lowest it has been in at least 3 decades (Burke, 2021). More troubling is the fact that the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy at Cal State Sacramento found that 70% of California community college students do not graduate (Chen, 2021). This has also been explored in prior studies by Vlasova (2022) who revealed high community college dropout rates, with only 13% of students graduating from community college within 2 years. In addition, only 27% of community college students in California currently earn industry certificates that prepare them for the workforce, compared to the 83% national average (Opportunity America Survey, 2021). A new approach is needed to address this crisis.

For years, U.S. higher education institutions have been tasked with addressing the equity gaps afflicting African American, Latino, and Native American populations (Fain, 2020). Even though there has been great improvement in college access for students from all racial and economic backgrounds over the last 40 years, there is a crisis in America's college completion rates (Santos & Haycock, 2016). Santos and Haycock (2016) discovered that 70% of U.S. high

school graduates enroll in college within 2 years of graduating, but U.S. college completion rates are among the lowest in the world. Similarly, the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2020) found that the number of high school graduates attending college rose from 63% to 70% between 2000 and 2016, but one third of those students still did not have degrees 6 years later. Santos and Haycock (2016) explained that only four in 10 students earned a bachelor's degree within 4 years and noted that the rate for students in 2-year institutions dropped to 28% earning a certificate or degree.

A report by the National Center for Education Statistics showed that only 13% of community college students graduate in 2 years (Chen, 2021). These low college completion rates are an important concern for colleges, especially in regard to the success of marginalized students. Whitmire (2019) explored data from the Pell Institute and uncovered that graduation rates are the lowest among low-income minority students, with only 11% earning a bachelor's degree within 6 years compared to 58% of students from higher-income groups. Seminal contributions have been made by the Educational Advisory Board (2019), which found that about 90% of low-income, first-generation students do not graduate college within 6 years. These findings illustrate the need for additional support services to address completion rates for marginalized students.

Marginalized Students' Characteristics

Thiem and Dasgupta (2022) reported that marginalized community college students belong to groups who experience social, economic, and cultural disadvantages in society. These students come from low-income families, are first-generation students, are racial/ethnic minorities, and/or have disabilities. The authors strongly suggested that this group of students faces various challenges in accessing and completing higher education, including financial

hardship, lack of academic preparation, inadequate support services, and discrimination and/or bias. Marginalized community college students often require additional resources and support to succeed in their educational and career goals. The majority of prior research has identified marginalized students as low-income and being first-generation college students. These definitions closely match those of EOPS students as stated in the California Education Code (§ 69640)—that is, those students affected by language, social, and economic disadvantages.

Formative contributions have been made by the Center for First-Generation Student Success (2017), which notes that “the term ‘first-generation’ implies the possibility that a student may lack the critical cultural capital necessary for college success because their parents did not attend college” (para. 4). In the context of this study, the term *first-generation* is used to refer to students whose parents did not graduate from college with either a 2-year or 4-year degree. According to the Center for First-Generation Student Success (2017), in the academic year 2015–2016, 56% of undergraduates nationally were first-generation college students (neither parent had a bachelor’s degree). In addition, RTI International in 2019 discovered 59% of these students were also the first sibling in their families to go to college (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, n.d.). Thus, many community college students are the first to attend college, which presents additional responsibilities and challenges (Chen, 2019; Ma & Baum, 2016).

It is apparent that marginalized students generally have more difficulty completing college than other students. Chen (2019) noted that about 36% of first-generation students are members of ethnic minority groups. In fact, more than 50% of Latino college students are classified under the first-generation category as are 43% of Native Americans and 41% of African Americans. In comparison, the proportion of first-generation White and Asian students is

often substantially smaller at approximately 35% (Nomi, 2005). The lower completion rates for marginalized students suggest that this population may face unique challenges. Santos and Haycock (2016) found that household resources are scarce for low-income students and students of color, making it difficult for their families to help them; in addition, most of these students also need to contribute financially to the household. Similarly, Haveman and Smeeding (2006) also discovered that low-income households have fewer resources at home, tend to live in neighborhoods in which most of the residents are from ethnic minority groups, and are less prepared academically.

This has also been explored in prior studies, such as the 2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study ([NPSAS], 2018), which illustrated that two thirds of all undergraduate students attended community college at one point, and one third receive the federal Pell Grant and one third are first-generation students (Beer, n.d.). Ma and Baum (2016) further noted that 46% of all undergraduates in the United States are enrolled in community colleges, and many of these students are low-income or first-generation students. These authors noted that community colleges serve a higher percentage of nontraditional students—students who have learning, physical, or mental disadvantages or are low-income, from an ethnic minority, enrolled part time, a parent, and/or are 25 years or older. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2021), 73% of community college students applied for financial aid, and 62% received federal aid in 2015–2016. The American Association of Community Colleges identified 29% of their enrollees as first-generation college students.

The Center for Community College Student Engagement (2014) identified working full-time, having dependents, being academically underprepared, and lacking finances as significant obstacles that prevented students from graduating. Studies of the Faces of the Future survey

gained insights from their poll, which was conducted to learn about the characteristics of first-generation students (Nomi, 2005). It was discovered that these students tend to take fewer classes per semester and handle more substantial financial issues and household duties. The survey also noted that financial aid was an effective form of assistance for first-generation students because they are less likely to receive financial assistance from their families to cover their basic college education costs. In addition, the survey found that first-generation students are more likely to be female, be older than the typical college age, be employed full-time, and have dependents who rely on them as breadwinners. Moreover, although the primary goal of many non-first-generation students is to attend community college to prepare to transfer to a 4-year university, many first-generation students usually attend community colleges to develop job-related skills or earn an associate degree (McDonnell & Nomi, 2005; McDonnell & Soricone, 2014). According to Striplin (1999), upward mobility is the primary goal of many community college, marginalized students. Overall, marginalized students face multiple challenges that ultimately affect their academic outcomes. The next section reviews the literature on the performance outcomes of marginalized students.

Marginalized Students' Outcomes

California's community college system is the largest college system in the United States, serving about two million students (Burke & Willis, 2021). Previous research has shown that these community colleges serve more marginalized students than other institutions and thus have higher rates of challenges such as food and housing insecurity among students (Burke, 2021). Although these students faced many obstacles even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic intensified their challenges. Burke and Willis (2021) emphasized that male students, older students, those with children, and African American, Latino, and Native American students

were most impacted: the period of remote learning caused by the pandemic led to many dropping out of college. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2020) found that community colleges were the only type of higher education institution to experience a drop in a 6-year completion rate, particularly among Latino and African American students. Completion refers to earning any credential from a higher education institution, including a certificate, associate, transfer, bachelor's degree, or higher degree (Marlowe et al., 2016; Terry Long, 2018).

Santos and Haycock (2016) identified three interconnected higher education setbacks: affordability, completion, and intergroup inequities. The authors suggested that low-income students and students of color are still enrolling at lower rates and are more likely to attend 2-year institutions. They also found that students from higher-income households are three times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree by the age of 24. The University of California Los Angeles's (UCLA) *Completing College* study has recognized that although 42% of students whose parents attended college graduated within 4 years, only 27% of first-generation students did so (DeAngelo et al., 2011). Furthermore, the National Center for Education Statistics' fall 2010 data showed that only 13% of community college students graduate in 2 years, 22% within 3 years, and 28% within 4 years (Kraemer, 2013).

Seminal contributions have been made by Cahalan and Perna (2015), who found that students from low-income families complete degrees at lower rates (9%) than students who come from higher-income households (77%). Furthermore, National Center for Education Statistics discovered that only 11% of low-income, first-generation students had earned bachelor's degrees within 6 years compared to 55% of their counterparts (Engle & Tinto, 2008). This has also been explored in prior studies by the Pell Institute (2011), whose statistics reveal that 47% of low-income, first-generation students drop out of college compared to 23% of their counterparts.

Recently, the Educational Advisory Board (2019) found that 90% of low-income, first-generation students do not graduate college within 6 years. Engle and Tinto (2008) also concluded that students with low-income and first-generation status are at a greater risk of failure in higher education. Low-income students are twice as likely as high-income students to drop out of community college, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only widened equity gaps for low-income students and students of color (St. Amour, 2020a, 2020b). As a consequence, these students are less likely to advance with regard to upward social and financial mobility.

Social Mobility

Prior research suggests that education is a solid driver of social mobility (The Equality Trust, n.d.; Nazimuddin, 2014; “Social Mobility,” 2022; Striplin, 1999). A series of recent studies has indicated that career education is a vital path toward upward economic mobility for low-income households (Bohn & McConville, 2019). Furthermore, Santos and Haycock (2016) found that the college completion rate crisis in the United States has been detrimental for both students and for the country as a whole. As an example, since 1980, intergenerational mobility has steadily declined, and the United States is joining the United Kingdom and Italy in its low numbers of individuals born in poverty who manage to escape poverty.

Santos and Haycock (2016) suggested that quality education is the only viable solution. They found that 60% of those born poor remain poor, but that that rate falls to 16% for those with a college degree. Chris Sinclair, the Executive Director of FLIP National, a nonprofit student-based organization that promotes equal opportunities for first-generation, low-income students in higher education nationwide, noted that “there’s just not that same social mobility, that same upward mobility for students because there’s so many hurdles to overcome” for this population (Berman, 2021, para. 25). Many community college students are the first to attend

college (Chen, 2021). For them, upward mobility is the primary goal because first-generation community college students are the first in their immediate family to attend postsecondary school after high school (Striplin, 1999).

Federal, State, and Local Policy

The majority of prior research has indicated workforce demands have shaped federal, state, and local policies in higher education. Santos and Haycock (2016) described how this has been achieved by cash programs, specifically block, categorical, and competitive grant programs. State and federal partnerships encourage all levels of government to collaborate to create realistic solutions to this complex problem of completion. Although states may be wary of federal partnerships, such partnerships have demonstrated long-term success in creating an educated workforce. For example, the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) offers states federal funding to improve secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs. This act constitutes the primary federal funding source for college and CTE programs to prepare students for jobs in local and regional economies. It was established as a state education, economic, and workforce development initiative to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary for easily transitioning to employment.

At the state and local levels, the CalWORKs program is the state's welfare-to-work program for students with children enrolled in community colleges. Specifically, colleges collaborate with the Department of Public Social Services to assist students with their educational and vocational training, and the cultivation of job-related skills. Students are required to complete short-term vocational training programs to enhance their skills and to develop the new skills they need to find jobs as they transition from initial dependence on financial aid to self-sufficiency. The goal of these government initiatives is to equip students

with the skills needed to enter the workforce and to offer realistic options for expanding their academic horizons through the acquisition of the critical skills necessary to achieve job success. Several studies suggest that performance-based funding is a method used to assist students to acquire these vital skills.

Performance-Based Funding: The Student Centered Funding Formula

An increasing number of states are adopting performance-based funding policies to incentivize colleges to become more effective in helping students achieve career success (Kelchen, 2018). A more comprehensive description can be found in the California Community College Chancellor's Office (2021), which created and implemented the SCFF to ensure colleges are held accountable for student outcomes. One of the major problems is that institutions appear to have little incentive to prioritize practices that promote student success (Santos & Haycock, 2016). However, the SCFF metrics demonstrate alignment with the California Community College Chancellor's Office (n.d.-d) Vision for Success initiative goal of closing achievement gaps and improving student outcomes.

The funding formula employed by the SCFF is determined by how well students are progressing, which is evaluated through general apportionments based on three calculations: (a) enrollment, (b) the number of students receiving a College Promise Grant or Pell Grant or who are covered by an AB 540 nonresident tuition exemption, and (c) student outcomes. These student outcomes include earning associate degrees and credit certificates, transferring to 4-year colleges or universities, completing transfer-level math and English courses within their first year, completing nine or more career-education units, and earning the regional living wage after completing their education. Doyle and Kirst (2015) showed that advocacy partnerships and higher education policies should correlate with the restructuring of the role of government in

higher education, and that enrollment-based funding should favor completion-based funding. This is precisely what the SCFF implements; it has transformed community colleges statewide by incentivizing the completion of career education and the securing of employment for students.

California Community College Initiatives

The literature pertaining to developing a strong workforce strongly suggests that workers who possess the necessary skills, experience, and credentials needed by employers excel in work performance. In addition, education is viewed as a steppingstone toward economic growth and encourages local, regional, and national economic development (Bok, 2013). Doyle and Kirst (2015) suggested that the rapid increase and development within the technology and knowledge-based industries have increased the demand for higher education, representing an opportunity for policy change.

As a means of addressing this need for policy change, the California Community College Chancellor's Office created the California Guided Career Pathway project in 2017. This created a requirement for colleges to implement institutional strategies focused on enhancing student success by designing structured educational practices that support each student from their point of entry to their attainment of postsecondary credentials, and into their career entry. In the Guided Pathways model, colleges are allocated funds to help new students explore career programs and achieve their academic goals. Santos and Haycock (2016) stated that

unless we simultaneously use these massive new resources to change incentives up and down the line—from students and schools to colleges and states—we won't effectively harness the broader power of new resources to move both people and institutions toward more productive action. (p. 324)

Therefore, rather than work with only a small subset of students, the Guided Pathways project represents a college-wide undertaking that provides a framework for integrating California-based initiatives such as the Student Success and Support Program, Equity, Basic Skills Transformation, the Strong Workforce Program, and the California College Promise (Foundation for California Community Colleges, n.d.). This project requires the redesign of major departments, student services, remedial education, and functions throughout each college, which may take several years to achieve and requires coordination among administrators, faculty members, advisors, financial aid personnel, schedulers, technology specialists, and many others (Jenkins et al., 2018). Though this project began in the 2017–2018 academic year, the California Community College Chancellor’s Office extended the timeframe for its completion to fall 2022 to ensure its thoughtful and adequate execution. As such, this project represents the significant reform currently being undertaken in community colleges.

Community College Reform

Research has shown that institutional support for achievement may take many forms and that higher levels of student achievement are associated with social integration (Booth et al., 2013a, 2013b). Notably, Means and Pyne (2017) investigated low-income, first-generation students’ views on engagement with college access programs throughout their first year of college. The researchers found that institutional support structures—including comprehensive scholarship programs and academic support services—increased the students’ sense of academic and social belonging. Pitre and Pitre’s (2009) study also suggested that school integration, government assistance programs, and an increased minority ethnic presence in schools enhanced students’ persistence and retention levels. Moreover, additional studies have indicated that college preparatory courses, institutional integration, and encouraging interpersonal qualities are

all elements that contribute to positive educational outcomes (Hudley et al., 2009; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014; Sommerfeld & Bowen, 2013; Wilkins, 2014).

A series of recent studies has indicated that the entire college community system has a role in engaging in comprehensive reform to address student success and outcomes. In *Student Support (Re)defined*, the Research and Planning (RP) Group for California Community Colleges described how community colleges could deliver support both inside and outside the classroom to improve student success rates (Booth et al., 2013a). They established five key themes that synthesize students' voices concerning success factors they view as improving achievement (Booth et al., 2013a): (a) colleges must foster students' motivation; (b) colleges must teach students how to succeed in the postsecondary environment; (c) colleges must structure support to ensure success factors are addressed; (d) colleges must provide comprehensive support to historically underserved students (especially marginalized students) to prevent the equity gap from growing; and (e) the belief that everyone has a role to play in supporting student achievement, but faculty must take the lead. Collectively, the themes acknowledge the importance of comprehensive service delivery to particular populations (Booth et al., 2013a, 2013b; Cooper, 2010).

Bailey et al. (2015) revealed that improving instruction, supporting students, and improving the overall student experience are vitally necessary but insufficient. They further discovered that targeted reforms must be implemented as part of a broader institutional restructuring. The report by the RP Group suggested that "six success factor" categories contribute to students' success:

Directed: students have a goal and know how to achieve it

Focused: students stay on track, keeping their eyes on the prize;

Nurtured: students feel somebody wants to help them to succeed

Engaged: students actively participate in class and extracurricular activities

Connected: students feel like they are part of the college community

Valued: students' skills, talents, abilities, and experiences are recognized. (Booth et al., 2013b, p. 6)

Similar to the RP Group study, Karp's (2011) framework of nonacademic support highlights the evidence that holistic support can encourage the success of community college students. In his analysis, four mechanisms that encourage student success emerged: (a) the creation of social relationships, (b) the clarification of aspirations and enhancing commitment, (c) the development of college knowledge, and (d) the feasibility of college life. These different areas (academic, social, and financial) cannot be addressed if an institution chooses to focus on only a single form of support. Therefore, education reform should be based on a holistic approach through comprehensive support services (Bailey, 2009).

Comprehensive Support Versus Single-Shot Solutions

The literature regarding effective support services for community college students is complex. Studies suggest that no single set of practices is effective for every student (D. V. Price & Tovar, 2014; Rose, 2009; Jenkins, 2007). Emerging research indicates that integrated programs that combine multiple curricular and cocurricular types of support may be more effective for underserved students (Kezar & Holcombe, 2018).

As an example of this approach, the Working Students Success Network collaborated with the community college reform group Achieving the Dream to propose an integrated student support rather than a series of single, one-time services. According to their findings, institutions that incorporate integrated support services appear to make notable leaps in the following

categories: (a) expanding services in areas where they previously offered limited support, such as food insecurity; (b) offering more intensive support to students with the greatest levels of need, including adults in basic education programs, students using welfare services, and those in workforce education or training programs; and (c) engaging outside partners, such as community-based organizations, businesses, and public agencies (American Association of Community Colleges, 2018; Lenhart et al., 2018). In short, students require greater support in areas beyond career preparation in order to increase their retention and completion rates.

The literature review shows that a holistic education represents a comprehensive strategy by which institutions should aim to satisfy students' psychological, social, ethical, and academic needs (American University School of Education, 2020). A study by the Community College Research Center of Columbia University concluded that institutions should provide personalized advice to create pathways to meet individual educational goals (Jaggars et al., 2013). For instance, students who lack financial resources or are in remedial classes appear to need more rigorous or continuing counseling. Students who do not meet high-need criteria could be provided with attentive guidance and advice at critical stages (Donaldson et al., 2016).

Intervention and Special Programs

Kezar and Holcombe (2018) reported that support programs have progressed in assisting disadvantaged students in higher education but that they typically focus on only one area of the student's needs. They describe the California State University (CSU) STEM Collaboratives model, in which researchers encourage campuses to reconsider how they support their low-income and first-generation students in STEM programs in the CSU system. They found that many students left STEM programs after their first year and believe that a comprehensively supportive environment with targeted support in and outside the classroom would improve

retention rates in STEM, particularly among students from historically underrepresented backgrounds. They concluded that specific interventions are less impactful than the integration of multiple support systems and collaboration between academic and student affairs. The researchers found that comprehensive programs appear to support student success and also build communities across campus and help to boost both the student experience and student success.

Studies have found that high-risk students who enroll in such support programs tend to have higher retention rates than the general student population and also have higher grades in regular college work (Kulik et al.,1983). As has been previously reported, Engle and Tinto (2008) discovered that by encouraging college campus engagement and the removal of obstacles (primarily financial) that hinder marginalized students from wholly engaging in these experiences correlate with successful outcomes. Consequently, comprehensive models may act as a bridge that ensures that all students complete their college courses, persist to the next academic term, and ultimately achieve their educational objectives through the assistance of the matriculation process (i.e., orientation, assessment, counseling; McDonnell & Soricone, 2014). Fontaine and Cook (2014) also affirm that retention programs must be comprehensive and that integrated efforts are required to increase the degree completion rate, which was notably lowered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Post-Pandemic Effects on Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has had deleterious effects on K-16 education, both for academic work and for student support services, such as access to financial aid, admissions, registration, and counseling, and including specific support programs such as EOPS. It should also be noted that underrepresented students have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and that this has led educational institutions to examine ways to better educate and serve their

students in the future. Studies have shown that graduation rates can be improved for students of color—as well as for students who are economically disadvantaged—through the implementation of comprehensive support services (Beal et al., 2020). The article identified that helping students navigate these wrap-around services help support students staying in school. According to one report, 70% of California Community College students fail to graduate (Chen, 2021). In light of such poor outcomes, this is the time to reform our educational practices.

As institutions have reopened, they have attempted a post-pandemic sense of normalcy. Studies have found that educational systems with vaccine mandates unfortunately prevented students of color from returning to school in person (Howard, 2021). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) noted that African Americans and Latinos are less likely to be vaccinated than any other racial and ethnic minority group. Thus, the requirement mandating COVID-19 vaccinations of many K-12 and higher education institutions for all students to attend classes in person has generated greater equity gaps regarding access and attainment to education, especially for students of color.

Without access to in-person instruction and face-to-face support services because of COVID-19-related mandates, students were forced to participate in fully online classes, programs, and support services to access their education. Therefore, the need for virtual comprehensive support services has become part of the “new normal” post-pandemic, which can be seen as an unexpected benefit insofar as students who cannot access services in person (or find it difficult to do so) will be able to do so in a virtual environment. Virtual access to comprehensive support services will ensure that the equity gaps do not widen, especially for historically underrepresented students.

A number of authors have recognized issues with regard to access and equity in online student support services, which became a major concern during the pandemic (Bouchev et al., 2021). Most importantly, care must be taken to ensure that services offered to online students are comparable to those offered face-to-face, so that achievement and equity gaps do not occur (Bouchev et al., 2021). *Education Week* found that public education has been forced to adopt new virtual and hybrid practices post-COVID-19 (Superville, 2020). Yee (2016) found that academic outcomes are closely associated with the circumstances students face outside of the classroom. In the community college setting, the flexibility offered by virtual modalities has made education more equitable for nontraditional students, who out of necessity struggle to balance family and work obligations. By providing enhanced, flexible access to office hours with instructors as well as appointments with counselors, especially in situations where that access would be curtailed by their other commitments, this virtual access has proved vital. (Smith et al., 2021). Moreover, Karp and Bork's (2014) study revealed that accessing nonacademic support services directly correlated with greater college persistence. Therefore, offering multiple modalities of student comprehensive supports may be fundamental to student success and outcomes.

Support Services and Programs

Support services in the context of this study refer to the various support modalities provided to college students to help them overcome the barriers to academic success (Karp, 2011). There are different types of support programs designed for marginalized community college students. Basic support services include counseling, educational planning, financial support, tutoring, workshops, and building a sense of belonging to the community, especially the college. These support services are offered under certain support programs at community

colleges with the aim of improving retention and completion rates and helping students to earn college credentials certificates and degrees. The key subthemes reviewed under support services include the Guided Pathways initiative, veteran resource services, Puente, the CalWORKs programs, and EOPS.

Guided Pathways Initiative

Most early studies as well as current research focus on the Guided Pathways (GP) reform in community colleges. Community colleges have committed to implementing the GP model as part of national, state, and regional efforts to increase student completion rates in community colleges (Bailey, 2017; Jenkins et al., 2018). The guided pathways initiative aims to engage educators in activities that will increase retention and completion rates. California's community colleges are directed to reform policies, programs, and services to support student success (Foundation for California Community Colleges, n.d.). This is done in four major practice areas: mapping pathways to student end goals, helping students choose and enter a program pathway, keeping students on the pathway, and ensuring that students are learning (Bailey, 2015; Booth et al., 2013a, 2013b; Jenkins & Bailey, 2017). Similar to the EOPS comprehensive structure, the GP reform is a student-centered approach that can increase the number of students earning community college credentials (Foundation for California Community Colleges, n.d.). The GP model provides structured choice and support while identifying clear learning outcomes. This clarity makes it easier for college students to obtain the help they need at every step of the learning process and also helps colleges provide predictable schedules, form discipline/major-centered support, while it provides frequent feedback to help students remain on track and complete their courses more efficiently (Jenkins et al., 2018). The model also supports students in building skills and knowledge within and across programs that make them succeed in future

education and careers. The GP project has proved to be an effective plan used by colleges to guide students to successfully move into and navigate through a college education.

Research has provided evidence that the GP solution should be implemented for all new and continuing community college students with the selection of program major and pathway to completion as the key focuses. This model is a remarkable step forward in addressing the completion crisis in the Californian community college system. However, the model represents a “one-size-fits-all” approach. As previously noted, because there are many factors that influence student success, some students need more resources than other students regardless of major.

Veteran Resource Center and Services

There are about 90 Veteran Resource Centers in California’s 116 community colleges. These centers serve veterans, active-duty members of the military, and military dependents (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, n.d.-c). The benefits include counselors who are familiar with the GI Bill requirements that are key to keeping veterans on track with their educational goals; access to priority registration; tutoring; basic needs referrals; and more. It is important to note the often-overlooked fact that that many veterans are first-generation college students. Many students join the military with the intention of obtaining a college education at a later point. Therefore, research on first-generation community college veteran students is essential to a comprehensive literature review.

Previous studies by Persky and Oliver (2010) found that the needs of veterans at community colleges may be framed and discussed within five major themes: credit streamlining; streamlining of programs and services; faculty, advisor, and counselor training; difficulties encountered by veterans; and factors that constitute a veteran-friendly campus. This special population requires a high-touch, holistic approach. Similarly, Rose (2009) examined a

comprehensive veteran support program that provided services that went beyond the classroom to address common psychological issues, such as posttraumatic stress disorder. The key concept behind this mental health support program was to handle a complex educational issue in a comprehensive and integrated way. Therefore, the program provided veterans with structure and guidance to assist them in reaching their educational goals. To adequately respond to the academic needs of these students, the program addressed psychological, social, and economic needs in addition to providing knowledge and building skills. Hence, the Veterans' Resource Center and its services are a remarkable step forward in addressing the completion crisis in the community college system. Although certain types of services and interventions can be useful to the general population, others, such as assistance in interacting with the Department of Veteran Affairs, are not. Therefore, this program focuses on veterans and also leaves out the general community college student population.

Basic Need Services

“Basic needs” is a term used by the International Labour Organization as well as other United Nations agencies to refer to the basic goods and services (food, shelter, clothing, sanitation, education, etc.) necessary to maintain a minimum standard of living. Basic needs insecurity has been closely associated with low student retention and completion rates (Goldrick-Rab & Cochrane, 2019). Educators must recognize that not all students have their basic needs met.

To thrive, students require food and housing, clothing, childcare, mental-health care, financial resources, and transportation, among other things. Students' educational journey may include facing challenges in accessing adequate amounts of these or other basic needs resources. Recently, colleges and universities have created support programs and resources that may assist

students in meeting their basic needs and thus promote their academic success. The basic needs programs support students by connecting them to on- and off-campus resources and community referrals.

West Los Angeles College (WLAC) was one of the first colleges in the Los Angeles area to create the Basic Needs Center/West Wardrobe in the 2017–2018 academic year. The program was developed to support students with basic need supports (food, shelter, health and wellness, job-ready skills, etc.) and to link the students to appropriate, available resources in order to foster students' success through their academic journey and to degree completion. The campus created a taskforce that included faculty, staff, students, and administrators. This taskforce soon realized the difficulty students have focusing on their assignments when they are worried about basic survival needs. To assist students, WLAC established the professional West Wardrobe and Food Pantry, supported by donations from the community, local churches, employees, and students. Through this program, WLAC offers several support services that assist students with covering educational and living expenses, while supporting their academic success. In addition, students are also able to use the gymnasium's shower facilities. This is an example of tailored services, where additional supports are created to help disadvantaged students achieve their educational goals.

Similarly, the California Community College Foundation provides basic needs resources to students, in order to enable them to focus their energy on education (Foundation for California Community Colleges, n.d.). The foundation launched the Foster Youth Housing Project, for example, to build houses for California community college students (Foundation for California Community Colleges, n.d.). The foundation works in partnership with advocates and experts in housing to identify opportunities to build housing for students from disadvantaged communities.

The California Community College Foundation also successfully established the Health and Wellness program in 2011 in alignment with a statewide effort to focus on early prevention and intervention strategies aimed at improving the mental health needs of California community college students (Foundations for California Community Colleges, 2022). The WLAC Foundation and similar programs are a remarkable step forward in addressing the completion crisis in the California community college system. However, these programs are not universal because of the way they focus on specific needs. As previously noted, some students need more than other students because of the many factors that influence student success. Although food and housing insecurity affects many students, the college programs addressing those needs often use a social work versus an academic intervention approach. Data related to the identities of the participants are oftentimes kept confidential and thus are not available for research, and their outcomes are not reported.

The Puente and CalWORKs Support Programs

There have been attempts to improve the completion rates and to respond to the workforce demands placed on California's community colleges. The Puente Project is a California and Texas program aimed at increasing the number of educationally underrepresented students transferring to 4-year colleges and universities and earning bachelor's degrees. The state program staff collaborates with English instructors and counselors to implement a cross-functional support network program at community colleges (Puente Project, n.d.). This support service is limited because it is focused exclusively on students transferring to 4-year universities and serving only a few students per semester. As an example, Foothill College (2020) has a cap of 25 students per semester for their English component of the Puente Project.

The CalWORKs program is a categorical support program in California's community colleges that assists recipients as they transition from welfare and earn a vocational skillset certificate, degree, or transfer to a community college. The aim of the CalWORKs program is limited to welfare participant students and is focused on developing job skills and earning certificates or degrees that will increase the participant's chances of gaining employment with a family-sustaining wage and thus no longer requiring government assistance (Pizzolato et al., 2017). The little research that exists on CalWORKs suggests that it decreases dependency on both on governmental aid and on families (Mathur et al., 2004). All recipients of CalWORKs must be a single parent on county cash aid, a population that represents a subset of California community college students.

Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS)

Research into the efficacy of EOPS, most recently the RP Group's Impact Study in April of 2022, has shown that students in this program have higher retention, persistence, and completion rates than their California community college peers (Reyes et al., 2022). Simply put, the program works. What follows is an examination of how EOPS works, and how those interventions contribute to the program's success.

The EOPS program provides educationally and economically disadvantaged California community college students with support that is above and beyond the services already offered by colleges. The goal of EOPS programs is to improve student success as evidenced by higher graduation rates. These programs use interventions such as EOPS counseling, book grants, and priority registration to improve students' educational success (McLean, 2010). The EOPS program was selected for this research because it is designed to address inequalities in educational achievement for students from traditionally marginalized groups. EOPS is inclusive

to all ethnic groups and is the broadest serving program for low-income students. Moreover, EOPS is not limited to students majoring in a specific field, such as the STEM TRIO program (Torres, 2020). Annually, each EOPS program serves 250 to 3,000 students who are educationally and economically disadvantaged and helps these students complete their academic goals. The following section reviews the literature on different EOPS components. The literature review includes the history and benefits of EOPS, discusses various subprograms of EOPS (Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education [CARE] and Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support [CAFYES] also known as NextUp), evaluates EOPS success rates, and reviews previous studies on the EOPS program.

History and Benefits

Senate Bill 164 was written and introduced by Senator Alfred E. Alquist and signed into law by Governor Ronald Reagan on September 4, 1969. Originating from the Civil Rights movement, this bill established the EOPS. It became part of the California Education Code (§ 69640-69696) and subsequently part of the California Code of Regulations Title 5 (§ 56200-56298). EOPS is a state-funded, comprehensive support program for marginalized students in California community colleges. The purpose of EOPS is to serve students who are economically and educationally disadvantaged and who have been historically unrepresented in higher education. The program's approach is holistic, and its goals are to increase retention and completion rates of community college students who are disadvantaged by language and social and economic barriers; to increase university transfer and employment rates; and to improve the delivery of services to participating students (California Education Code, § 69640). Essentially, the program's mission is to help students in need overcome barriers in higher education, succeed academically, and graduate (California Community Colleges Extended Opportunity Programs &

Services Association [CCCEOPSA], n.d.). Thus, EOPS was the original student success and equity program among the California community colleges. The RP Group's six factors contributing to student success are demonstrated in the services provided by EOPS (Booth et al., 2013b):

Directed: students have a goal and know how to achieve it

Focused: students stay on track, keeping their eyes on the prize;

Nurtured: students feel somebody wants to help them to succeed

Engaged: students actively participate in class and extracurricular activities

Connected: students feel like they are part of the college community

Valued: students' skills, talents, abilities, and experiences are recognized. (p. 6)

The program emphasizes comprehensive counseling, educational planning, book grants, priority registration, individual tutoring, guidance, and other support services for educationally and economically disadvantaged first-generation students. Per Title 5 implementation guidelines, EOPS programs have counseling faculty who meet specific minimum qualifications to serve this at-risk population (Title 5 § 56264), administrative support, a program director, and other staff members dedicated to the overall success of its students. EOPS programs are required to provide services above and beyond those offered by the college and are categorically funded outside of the general college apportionment to ensure that their students are served and supported in their academic goals.

EOPS Program Standards

EOPS was begun through state legislation, codified in the California Education Code, and enacted through the California Code of Regulations Title 5 as well as the *EOPS Implementing Guidelines*. In addition, EOPS has its own funding (categorical funding), which is allocated to

the colleges outside of the general unrestricted fund. EOPS also has fiscal restrictions, and annual accountability reports are made to the State Chancellor's Office. The intent is to make sure that EOPS has its own funding, to ensure there is a district match to support of the program, to mandate that categorical and unrestricted general funds not be comingled and that categorical funds not be supplanted, and that there be strict accountability for the program via mandated annual reports to the state. These structures also help ensure that services are provided appropriately and comprehensively. The following is a description of the program's eligibility and services, including outreach, orientation, and registration; counseling and advisement; and additional services. This section also includes EOPS staffing standards, program accountability measures, student limitations, and subprograms within EOPS.

EOPS Eligibility

Pursuant to Title 5 Section 56290, the EOPS program's intent and purpose established priorities in serving community college students in California. The purpose of these priorities is to encourage the enrollment, retention, and completion of students who are economically and educationally disadvantaged.

To be considered economically disadvantaged, a student must qualify for a California Promise Grant (CCPG A or B, formerly called the Board of Governor's fee waiver) or CCPG C with an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of zero determined by the Free Application of Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

To be considered educationally disadvantaged, an EOPS student must meet one of the following criteria: (a) be placed in a math or English course that is not applicable for an associate degree or higher; (b) did not graduate from high school or earn a General Education Diploma (G.E.D); (c) graduated from high school with a grade point average below 2.50 on a 4.00 scale;

(d) was previously enrolled in remedial educational or basic skills course work; (e) other factors such as (a) being a first-generation college student, (b) being a member of an underrepresented group according to district student equity goals, (c) being a student whose primary language spoken at home is not English, or (d) being an emancipated foster youth.

The applicants for the EOPS program must meet all of the following eligibility criteria to qualify for this program. These qualifications include being a resident of California (or meeting AB 540/California Dream Act requirements), enrolling in 12 or more units, not having completed 70 degree-applicable units, and being a recipient of a California Promise Grant (Salas, 2022). There are full-time unit load exemptions allowable for (a) students participating in the Disabled Student Program & Services; (b) CAFYES-NextUp foster youth students, and (c) students enrolled in special vocational programs that have been designated as full-time equivalent, including nursing, X-ray technician, cosmetology, barbering, court reporting, and others (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2008).

As presented earlier in this chapter, California community college students who are educationally and economically disadvantaged according to the criteria stated above have consistently had lower levels of persistence, retention, and completion than students who have been the beneficiaries of higher levels of education (either for themselves or their parents) and greater affluence. Yet EOPS students consistently outperform their community college peers. One reason for this is the scaffolded series of student services that are not only offered to EOPS students but also mandated by the program.

EOPS Outreach, Orientation, and Registration Services

By statute (Title 5 Section 56232), EOPS is mandated to do outreach and recruitment to increase the number of EOPS students at the college. Outreach and recruitment efforts may

include services such as the Summer Bridge program, which assists in providing information and readiness programs to incoming students. Such types of preparedness services also assist in achieving statewide student equity goals. An orientation, also mandated by statute, familiarizes students with college departments and functions and also provides information on the benefits provided by EOPS and the requirements to remain in the program. Such soft skills—emphasized whenever students must meet with their EOPS counselor—teach and reinforce the self-efficacy that students will need in their academic careers (Bandura et al., 1999). Students must also complete a mutual responsibility contract that details the services provided by the program as well as the actions a student must take to remain in the program. This mutual responsibility contract provides both structure and engagement for the student and also serves to increase retention (Braxton et al., 1997).

Districts must provide Tier 1 priority registration for EOPS students. This priority registration must be before other students, such as continuing students not in other programs covered by Title 5 or the California Education Code (CalWORKs, DSPS, foster youth, and veterans). The intent is that EOPS students be provided with the ability to enroll in the courses and/or sections that are recommended by their EOPS counselor(s) and appear on the education plan. This is to ensure students register for the classes they need with the instructors they want before the classes are filled up.

Admission to the EOPS Program and Documentation

In addition to the eligibility requirements related to the economic and educational disadvantages previously referenced, students must also be enrolled in 12 semester units, which is considered full-time status. Students who are in DSPS or NextUp may be admitted into the program with fewer units (Salas, 2022). Research indicates that being enrolled full-time is a

positive factor in completion rates (Kantrowitz, 2021; St. Amour, 2020a, 2020b). Upon the student's admission into the program, the program is required to provide an education plan, and students must sign a mutual responsibility contract. The beneficiaries are also required to attend at least one class session each term to qualify for book grants (Stovall & Fagel, 2021). The EOPS application, mutual responsibility contract, and educational plan must be reviewed, verified, and signed by the appropriate EOPS personnel, such as the EOPS director or EOPS counselor. These documents are to be retained and made available for auditing purposes.

EOPS Support Services

EOPS uses a “high touch” or “intrusive” case management approach with its students. Research indicates that such an approach encourages student engagement, which in turn increases retention (Astin, 1984; Braxton et al., 1997; Hernandez & Simpson, 2019; Zelazek, 2011). The program provides a variety of support services to students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds (Salas, 2022). The program also provides outreach, counseling, and orientation services including a readiness program for new students, peer advising, and transfer and referral counseling services. In addition, personal, academic, and career counseling services are offered to students in the program. Counseling services are designed to identify and remove barriers to eligible EOPS students. Even though EOPS students are entitled to receive these additional support services, they may also obtain counseling services provided by the college through general counseling, transfer center, and pathway counseling.

Pursuant to Title 5 section 56236, EOPS funds must provide counseling and advisement to EOPS students with at least three contact sessions per term for each student: (a) a contact session to interpret any assessment results or guided self-placement and to prepare a student education plan (SEP); (b) an in-term contact session to ascertain a student's progress, determine

whether any additional services or referrals are needed, and make any plan changes to enhance student success; and (c) an end-of-term or program-exit contact session to assess the success of the student, assist in preparing for the following term, including making any changes to a student's SEP, and help the student make future plans for leaving EOPS or the college. It has been demonstrated in the frameworks of the Vincent Tinto student departure theory (1993) and A. W. Astin's (1984) student involvement theory that students are more successful in achieving their educational goals when they have a connection with the college in addition to attending classes. These contacts with EOPS staff and counselors are an integral part of the student's college success (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2008).

Counseling services are designed to identify and remove barriers to eligible EOPS students and may include academic, career, and personal counseling. To remain in the program, EOPS students must complete three contact sessions every semester. The first and the third are always with an EOPS counselor. During these meetings, the students and EOPS counselors develop and review the SEP. Students are monitored throughout the semester to assure that they are enrolled in the classes required to meet their educational goals, to check in on them mid-semester to determine whether they need interventions such as tutoring, and to make sure they are passing their classes and enrolling in the upcoming term.

The first meeting is a contact session with the goal of preparing a student's educational plan and specifying what programs and services the student may receive and what the student is expected to accomplish. The SEP, one of the basic foundations of the EOPS program, is comprehensive and addresses the specific needs of educationally disadvantaged students. The comprehensive SEP should include a long-term sequence of courses, from the time the counselor sees the student to the time the student completes his/her academic goals at the college. It

includes both a list of courses and also a sequenced road map of all classes necessary to meet the student's educational needs and goals and to be agreed upon by the student and the counselor.

The first contact session each term with an EOPS counselor is used to create, review, and revise the SEP.

The second session is an in-term contact session to ensure the student is succeeding adequately, to confirm that programs and services are being provided effectively, and to plan changes as needed to enhance student success. To support student retention, programs have a mid-semester check-in, that helps to ensure an early detection of challenges students may be experiencing as well as implementing any interventions recommended to increase student success. This contact is an evaluation to determine intervention measures that address any adverse academic performance. This second contact may be done by a paraprofessional unless the student is not doing well. In that case, a referral is made to an EOPS counselor for a counseling intervention.

The third contact is a term-end or program-exit contact session to assess the success of students in reaching the objectives of that term and the success of the programs and provided services in meeting student needs to assist students in preparing for the next term and to make future plans if students are leaving the EOPS program or the college. The constant monitoring and engagement offered by the contact sessions build rapport between the student and EOPS counseling and staff, which fosters retention and completion. Building that connection and having an advocate gives students a single point of contact for seeking support, services, and referrals, whether the student is having issues with instructors or family, or if the student requires basic needs assistance.

EOPS services always include book service, which may involve a grant covering the purchase of required books in the college bookstore, obtaining electronic access for certain textbook components, and subsidizing a book loan program. Moreover, additional EOPS support services may include specialized one-on-one tutoring, career services, basic needs support, cash grants, workshops, academic regalia for graduation, and transfer services as well as other supports which are over and above those which the college provides and to which they are already entitled.

Staffing Standards

The operating standards for EOPS cover operations, financial, and staffing standards (Stovall & Fagel, 2021). Program operations are spearheaded by a full-time EOPS director tasked with managing and coordinating daily operations. The director is also responsible for supervising and coordinating staff assigned to deliver EOPS activities. Pursuant to Title 5 Section 56262, the EOPS director must meet the minimum qualifications for a student services administrator and have six units of coursework as well as experience working with ethnic minorities or persons handicapped by language, social, or economic disadvantages. These requirements are in place so that directors have familiarity and experience working with the EOPS population.

Pursuant to Title 5 Section 56264, EOPS counselors must meet more stringent minimum qualifications than those required for general or pathway counselors, or counselors working in Puente, veterans' centers, or CalWORKs. These additional minimum requirements include a minimum of nine semester units of college course work or six units of counseling practicum or field work predominantly relating to ethnic minorities or persons handicapped by language,

social, or economic disadvantages, plus 2 years of occupational experience working with this population.

Accountability

Community college efforts to retain students require funding, and often, unrestricted general funds are not used for that purpose. Because retention and completion for low-income and educationally disadvantaged students are primary purposes for EOPS, the program receives categorical funds. Such funds must not be comingled, and supplanting is strictly prohibited (Title 5 Section 56295). Colleges may use EOPS funds only for programs and services that are over, above, and in addition to the services that are the district's responsibility as defined by Title 5 Section 56294. A district contribution to the program is mandated by Title 5 so that the district and the college can demonstrate their commitment to serve underrepresented students. Having such strict regulations and a financial commitment from the district and college to match a percentage of the state's EOPS program allocation may contribute to the success of the program and EOPS students because college administrators cannot use the funds to offset college budgets or use funds for other non-EOPS services. Thus, EOPS continues to be able to fund its services to its students and has not become an unfunded student success program mandate.

EOPS is not a financial aid program. Instead, EOPS provides a scaffolded approach to student support with the intent of providing wraparound student services (Title 5 Section 56298). EOPS has strict guidelines of how the program's funding can be spent, ensuring that the program funds are used toward student support. Some examples of allowable EOPS expenses include EOPS services as specified above, EOPS personnel (as defined in Title 5 Sections 56260 and 56264), textbooks, meal tickets, child care assistance, graduation caps and gowns, bus passes, campus parking permits, gas cards, student fees (such as health fees and computer lab fees),

school supplies, supplies required by the major (e.g., uniforms), college book rental fees, honor society fees, EOPS grants based on unmet need, and EOPS emergency loans based on unmet need. These forms of aid assist retention insofar as it is part of an overall effort to support students (Bailey, 2009; Booth et al., 2013a, 2013b; Cooper, 2010; Hudley et al., 2009; Karp, 2011; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014; Sommerfeld & Bowen, 2013; Wilkins, 2014).

Program accountability involves the submission of reports and plans to the State Chancellor's Office (Title 5 Section 56270 and 56274). This annual program plan is an evaluation of both the program's effectiveness and its compliance with the EOPS Implementing Guidelines (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2008). The State Chancellor's Office may also conduct compliance audits, on-site operational reviews, and measurements of the success of students in achieving their educational objectives. Such measures not only help to ensure compliance with program requirements, lest they risk funding, but also provide valuable data on student retention and completion, helping to inform decisions related to resource allocation. The support services are detailed to ensure EOPS students meet milestones on their postsecondary educational journeys.

Student Limitations

The EOPS legislation was formulated to provide services to students in community colleges to attain their educational goals (Salas, 2022; Title 5 Section 56226). In its formulation, the program placed limitations on the length of time and number of college units completed to remain in the program. Students who have completed six consecutive semesters or more than 70 degree-applicable units are automatically exited from the program. However, this 70-unit cap excludes basic skills, ESL, and remediation classes. Moreover, the State Chancellor's Office may permit students with more than 70 degree-applicable units to remain in EOPS if the students are

enrolled in high-unit majors such as nursing, automotive, and similar CTE majors. A comprehensive list of such majors has been developed by the State Chancellor's Office.

EOPS Subprograms

There are two additional programs under EOPS: the CARE program and CAFYES (also known as NextUp) program.

Cooperative Agencies Resource for Education (CARE)

This program serves only those EOPS students who are single parents, head of household, and receiving public assistance. The CARE program provides such students with additional grants, school supplies, transportation assistance, childcare assistance, special workshops, and food vouchers. These services are in addition to the services provided to other EOPS students and are intended to provide greater support to single parents so that they might complete their educational and career goals and become more economically self-sufficient.

Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support (CAFYES)/NextUp

The CAFYES (also known as NextUp) program is a supplemental component of the EOPS program that provides additional support and resources to current and former foster youth. The legislation that established CAFYES/NextUp was intended to provide the scope and funding for California community colleges to support the higher education success, health, and well-being of some of the nearly 13,000 currently and formerly fostered youths enrolled in California's community colleges. As is the case with the CARE program, CAFYES/NextUp provides additional benefits to those that other EOPS students receive. Those benefits include additional book and supplies grants, transportation assistance, tutoring, and assistance for students with food and housing insufficiencies.

EOPS Success Rates

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office maintains a repository of data related to EOPS for all 116 California community colleges. Although persistence, retention, and completion rates vary somewhat among the colleges, the California Community College RP Group's EOPS Impact Study 2.0 revealed that EOPS retention rates are in the 85th percentile and that EOPS participants were 1.8 times more likely to earn a certificate and/or degree within 3 years compared to non-EOPS students (Reyes et al., 2022). Approximately 10% of all California community college students meet EOPS eligibility requirements and participate in the program. Given the number of EOPS participants, the program's effect on retention and completion rates, and the longevity of the program, EOPS has proven itself as an exceptional supporter of student success.

Previous EOPS Studies

Studies of EOPS students are well documented, and it is also acknowledged that EOPS students have better outcomes than non-EOPS students. In 1973, 4 years after the passing of the legislation that instituted EOPS, research began on studying its effectiveness. This research indicated that EOPS students had higher retention and completion rate percentages than non-EOPS students (Preising, 1979). McLean (2010) explored the relationship between student retention and the persistence of African American students enrolled at Los Angeles City College who participated in EOPS. The results of the study revealed that EOPS students performed better academically than their peers who were not in EOPS and argued that the support services and program activities of EOPS contributed to the students' persistence. Crawford (2008) also discovered higher persistence rates among EOPS students who were more involved, integrated, and connected with the college than their peers. Bradford's (2004) study also concluded that

EOPS students had a higher completion rate, defined by the attainment of certificates and associate degrees, than the non-EOPS student population. EOPS students also showed a higher retention rate (46.5%) than the non-EOPS student population (23.5%).

Prior research from the Center for Student Success of the Research and Planning (RP) Group for California Community Colleges studied about 14,500 people with bachelor's degrees who started their education in California community colleges (Blash et al., 2012). The study emphasized that nursing and engineering students who made use of EOPS completed their community college work and transferred to 4-year institutions faster than students who did not use the program (Blash et al., 2012). Several studies suggest the positive effect of the EOPS program by comparing EOPS participants to comparable nonparticipants on key student outcomes (Willett et al., 2012).

The following outcomes were selected for comparison between EOPS and non-EOPS students in the EOPS Impact Study 1.0 (Willett et al., 2012): 1-year retention, 2-year retention, degree or certificate earned within 3 years, transfer to a 4-year college or university, completion of a transfer-level English class within 3 years, transfer math success within 3 years, and the number of transferable units completed within 3 years. The research reviewed both quantitative and qualitative evidence of EOPS program impacts and determined that EOPS students were higher than non-EOPS students on all outcomes except for the category of "transferred in 3 years." For those who did transfer, EOPS students were more likely to transfer to an in-state public university (i.e., California State University or University of California) while non-EOPS comparison students were more likely to transfer to an in-state private university (including for-profit institutions) or an out-of-state university. Although results appear consistent with prior research demonstrating that EOPS students outpace their peers in success metrics even though

they are economically, educationally, and linguistically disadvantaged and are underrepresented in higher education, no study to date has examined which specific support service variables contribute to the EOPS student outcomes.

California Community College Research & Planning Group's EOPS Impact Studies

The Research and Planning (RP) Group for California Community Colleges drove further research development into the subject of EOPS by investigating the program's statewide success student outcomes for over 50 years with the EOPS Impact Study 1.0 (Willett et al., 2012) and EOPS Impact Study 2.0 (Reyes et al., 2022). The RP Group's role is to improve effective policy and practice based on data and evidence in California community colleges. The goal is to bridge gaps for all educators to improve student outcomes. They looked at previous EOPS research, particularly Preising's (1979) EOPS study in San Jose City College and Wurtz's (2011) study in Crafton Hills College, which found that EOPS students were more likely to have higher GPAs, retention, and completion rates than their counterparts who were not in the program.

The EOPS Impact Study 2.0 (Reyes et al., 2022) also demonstrated higher persistence, retention, and completion rates for EOPS students compared to non-EOPS students. The data suggests that EOPS students have a greater likelihood of completing transfer-level English and math courses compared to their non-EOPS peers. EOPS students also achieve higher GPAs, stay in school, and earn college credentials at higher rates than nonparticipating students (Reyes et al., 2022).

According to the study's impact report, a comparison of student outcomes between EOPS and non-EOPS students reveals that EOPS students have higher 1-year and 2-year retention rates, standing at 85% and 72% respectively, compared to 64% and 48% for non-EOPS students. Additionally, the completion rate for certificate or degree awards within 3 years is higher for

EOPS students (43%) compared to non-EOPS students (32%) within 6 years. The study also reported higher transfer rates within three and 6 years for EOPS students compared to non-EOPS students. Specifically, 36% of EOPS students successfully completed transfer level English within their first year, compared to 25% of non-EOPS students. Within 1 year, the transfer level for math completion was 17% for EOPS students and 11% for non-EOPS students (EOPS Study Impact, 2022). Overall, the support services provided by EOPS programs contribute to a higher rate of positive student outcomes for EOPS students compared to non-EOPS students.

The RP Group acknowledged the significant growth and success of the EOPS program since its inception. To study its impact, the group examined a cohort of 707,113 first-time college students who started their education in fall 2004, fall 2005, fall 2006, and fall 2007. These students were selected from 60 participating college districts representing 97 colleges and tracked for a period of 3 years. The study used data from the California Community College Chancellor's Office Management Information System to identify EOPS participants and a comparison group of non-EOPS students to analyze outcome and control variables. Both the initial EOPS Impact Study (Willett et al., 2012) and the subsequent EOPS Impact Study 2.0 (Reyes et al., 2022) assessed the differences between EOPS students and non-EOPS students, revealing a higher increase in retention, completion of transfer-level English and math courses, and unit completions among EOPS students. The EOPS Impact Study 2.0 confirmed the ongoing improvement in participant outcomes over a 10-year period (Reyes et al., 2022).

However, neither EOPS Impact Study 1.0 nor EOPS Impact Study 2.0 determined the specific EOPS support services that contribute to these significant student outcomes (Reyes et al., 2022; Willett et al., 2012). To address this research gap, this study examines the usage and helpfulness of the EOPS support services from the perspectives of the students and EOPS

professionals in the program. This is the first step toward identifying the specific EOPS services that may positively influence retention and completion rates.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study draws from Tinto's (1993) student departure theory and Astin's (1984) student involvement theory. Tinto's theory explores how student engagement, both directly and indirectly, impacts student retention in higher education institutions (Braxton et al., 1997). The current study, in comparison, examines how the quality of interactions experienced by students in the EOPS program contributes to higher retention rates at community colleges. The EOPS program provides formal support, such as structured counseling contacts and personalized tutoring, as well as informal interactions, such as peer-support groups for specific student populations. These interactions and support services are hypothesized to contribute to retention rates, aligning with Tinto's departure theory.

Similarly, Astin's (1984) involvement theory emphasizes the correlation between students' achievement and their interactions with friends, faculty, and the academic program (Astin, 1984). This study posits that the quantity and quality of a student's involvement in the EOPS program directly relate to learning and personal growth. The literature review section explored comprehensive support programs and services, illustrating the impact of EOPS support services on student interactions, leading to improved retention and completion rates.

Given the emphasis on student interaction and involvement in programs and colleges in the literature review, it is crucial to consider a program evaluation model. Christie and Alkin (2013) developed the evaluation theory tree, which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and navigating evaluation theory and practice. The tree consists of three roots: systematic social inquiry, social accountability, and epistemology. These roots support the

development and sustainability of evaluation research. The evaluation theory tree ensures social accountability in programs like EOPS, guiding evaluations and informing decision-making processes.

This study focuses on 14 EOPS programs in community colleges in the Los Angeles area. The evaluation approach uses the evaluation theory tree, incorporating social accountability, systematic social inquiry, and epistemology. This approach facilitates a reflection on what needs to be known, why it is important, and how the findings should be used. By identifying the interventions in EOPS programs that fostered student success, EOPS directors and educational practitioners can maximize retention, especially for marginalized community college students.

EOPS is a categorical, state-funded program. As such, various types of reports and accountability measures need to be submitted to the California Community College Chancellor's Office on an annual basis. The evaluation theory tree's trunk of accountability aligns with these state accountability measures. Because low completion rates among community college students have been a crisis in California, it is important to identify successful strategies for student retention and completion with the intent that they be replicated throughout the system. The evaluation theory tree's trunk related to the social inquiry can better inform legislators as they develop and revise budgets for public education and better assist educational leaders and other stakeholders in making informed decisions concerning the EOPS program's service practices to address California community college completion rates.

Summary

The review of existing literature has revealed that marginalized students encounter multiple barriers that prevent them from achieving educational success (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Santos & Haycock, 2016). Multiple studies have shown a low rate of college retention and

completion for low-income students compared to their counterparts of high-income status (Cahalan & Perna, 2015; Educational Advisory Board, 2019; St. Amour, 2020a, 2020b; Vlasova, 2022). These findings suggest that, in general, marginalized students have more difficulty completing college than other students, especially at the university level. Due to these barriers and others, most first-generation, low-income students enroll in community colleges to obtain the support services needed to succeed in their education. Ma and Baum (2016) found that community colleges serve a higher percentage of nontraditional students—those who have learning, physical, or developmental mental disadvantages, low-income students as well as students from marginalized ethnic minorities. Kezar and Holcombe (2018) reported that support programs have progressed in assisting disadvantaged students in higher education. The EOPS program is offered in California community colleges to support students from low-income families in achieving educational success (CCCEOPSA, n.d.). It provides services that go beyond those offered by the college and are categorically funded outside of the general college apportionment. This funding ensures that EOPS students are served and supported in pursuing their academic goals (McLean, 2010).

Although many EOPS studies have been conducted, none have focused on identifying how marginalized students view specific EOPS support services and how specific services relate to college retention and completion. This study helps address that gap. It examines the use of specific EOPS support service variables (three counseling contacts per semester, rapport with EOPS faculty and staff, comprehensive counseling, educational planning, book grants, priority registration, individual tutoring, guidance, and other support services) and the association between usage of these services and student satisfaction.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

California community colleges face a significant completion crisis; over 70% of students fail to graduate (Chen, 2021). This rate increases to 90% for low-income, first-generation students (Foundation for California Community Colleges, n.d.). Given that community colleges serve as gateways to higher education and crucial avenues for social mobility for marginalized students, educational leaders, particularly administrators, must identify effective support services that promote student retention and completion. Although existing research in Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) has focused on retention and completion for the most disadvantaged community college students, it has yet to determine which program support services contribute to these successful outcomes. This study aimed to identify effective support services to assist practitioners and educational leaders in advocating for additional resources, thereby ensuring the success of even the most disadvantaged and marginalized students.

The primary objective of this study was to examine the usage of EOPS support services and student satisfaction with those services. The approach involved analyzing the phenomenon of EOPS student success directly. Data were collected through a questionnaire administered to EOPS students and staff across 14 community colleges in the Los Angeles area, namely Los Angeles City College, East Los Angeles College, Los Angeles Trade Technical College, Los Angeles Valley College, Los Angeles Mission College, Los Angeles Pierce College, Los Angeles Southwest College, Los Angeles Harbor College, West Los Angeles College, Glendale Community College, Pasadena City College, Santa Monica College, Compton College, and El Camino College. This chapter outlines the methods employed to study the EOPS program model, including research design, site location, population, sample selection, access, and data collection

instrument. The chapter concludes with a discussion of data analyses, positionality, ethical considerations, reliability, validity, credibility, and trustworthiness.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What services do EOPS students from community colleges in the Los Angeles area report using? Does the usage of services differ across campuses and among different racial/ethnic student groups?
2. What are the reasons why EOPS students do not use specific services? Do these reasons vary across campuses and among different racial/ethnic student groups?
3. To what extent do students perceive each EOPS service as helpful or beneficial? Do these perceptions differ across campuses and among different racial/ethnic student groups?
4. To what extent do EOPS directors, counselors, and staff perceive each service as helpful or beneficial? Do these perceptions differ from their students? Do these perceptions differ across campuses?

Research Design

This study on the EOPS program surveyed EOPS students served in 14 community colleges in the Los Angeles region to explore effective support services leading to retention and completion outcomes. The study consisted of three phases: (a) reviewing retention data of EOPS students in the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD), (b) conducting an EOPS student survey, and (c) conducting an EOPS staff survey.

A descriptive survey design was used in this study to collect data from participants for analysis (Siedlecki, 2020). A survey questionnaire was administered to EOPS students and staff respondents to gain insights into EOPS program support services in the Los Angeles region.

Additionally, retention rates of EOPS students in LACCD were reviewed as preliminary data and background information for the study. The study also analyzed patterns of results to determine whether they could be generalized to wider EOPS populations.

Rationale

This study utilized a descriptive survey instrument that incorporated both closed and open-ended questions to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data. This approach allowed the researcher to move beyond mere statistics and gain an understanding of the underlying significance of specific EOPS support services in community college retention and completion.

The survey was administered to both EOPS students and staff, ensuring a consistent review and analysis of responses across the 14 community colleges included in the study. The research focused on variables such as student satisfaction and usage of specific EOPS support services. By examining these variables separately, the study aimed to provide data that could inform decision making regarding resource allocation for support services by practitioners and policymakers because previous studies did not specifically explore EOPS student satisfaction and service utilization.

The goal of this research was to enhance understanding of the retention and completion phenomenon, elucidating the nature of the relationship between specific EOPS support services and student outcomes. Furthermore, the study sought to offer insights that could potentially predict future outcomes. Although primarily quantitative, future research could consider incorporating a qualitative approach, such as focus groups, to gain a further understanding of the impact of specific support services and interventions.

Due to time constraints, qualitative data collection was conducted through open-ended questions in the survey questionnaire rather than separate interviews or focus group discussions. Conducting additional interviews or focus group discussions would have required more time for data collection and analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). However, future studies based on the findings of this research could combine qualitative interviews or focus groups with quantitative surveys to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of EOPS support services in enhancing college retention and completion among marginalized community college students.

Obtaining data on student retention from the LACCD was not challenging as EOPS programs are required to submit such data to the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges through a centralized Management Information System (MIS). As an academic administrator at one of the LACCD colleges, the researcher had access to this data. However, acquiring data from the colleges regarding the usage of the support services under study proved difficult due to incompatible databases and potential errors in data entry (e.g., the use of Excel spreadsheets and other in-house student tracking systems that are not integrated with the MIS). Moreover, requesting EOPS directors for support service usage data in their programs could have been perceived as external scrutiny of their programs, given the researcher's role as the EOPS regional coordinator.

All the colleges included in this study were situated in the greater Los Angeles area, with students residing in both urban and suburban areas. LACCD, being the largest community college district in California, provided a substantial sample size for measuring student satisfaction, service usage rates, and access to student retention data. The colleges and their EOPS programs varied in size and funding, with different student population sizes and annual

budgets ranging from 200 EOPS students with a \$700,000 budget to 2,000 EOPS students with a \$4 million budget. While small rural colleges were not included in this study, the survey sample provided data that could be applicable to EOPS students in small to large programs/colleges in urban and suburban settings.

Surveys were chosen as the primary method of data collection due to their ease of analysis with a large sample size. This ensured that the obtained data were consistent, precise, and reliable. Quantitative methods were employed to quantify the aspects of EOPS supports that students used and valued, as well as to review and compare retention data.

Site Selection

The survey encompassed EOPS students and employees from a total of 14 colleges in the greater Los Angeles area. These colleges include nine from the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) and five neighboring one-college districts: Los Angeles City College, East Los Angeles College, Los Angeles Trade Technical College, Los Angeles Valley College, Los Angeles Mission College, Los Angeles Pierce College, Los Angeles Southwest College, Los Angeles Harbor College, West Los Angeles College, Glendale Community College, Pasadena City College, Santa Monica College, Compton College, and El Camino College. The Los Angeles region serves the largest number of EOPS students in the state of California.

The objective of the study was to gather a significant number of responses and determine whether there were variations among the colleges and different student racial/ethnic groups. Surveying students from only one college would not have provided a representative sample of the statewide EOPS student population and may not have yielded sufficient data to address the research objectives. Because the eligibility requirements and program guidelines for EOPS students are consistent across the state, the large sample size of EOPS students in Los Angeles

represented the overall statewide demographics. The 14 colleges included in the study had approximately 12,000 students enrolled in EOPS in the 2021–2022 academic year. Surveying students from these 14 colleges provided the necessary data to examine the utilization of student support services and evaluate the level of satisfaction with those services. The data were analyzed separately to determine which services were most valuable, regardless of the specific college.

Study Participants

Two groups of participants were recruited for the survey: EOPS students and EOPS program staff, including directors, assistant directors, counselors, classified staff, and student workers, hereafter referred to as EOPS staff. The first sampling frame consisted of college students enrolled in the EOPS program at the 14 aforementioned community colleges in the Los Angeles region. The second sampling frame comprised EOPS staff from the same community colleges. The insights provided by EOPS staff were compared with the responses of the students.

To involve the EOPS directors in the Los Angeles region, an email invitation was sent, requesting their participation in the EOPS Program Study by distributing two sets of surveys: the student survey and the EOPS staff survey. The directors were asked to share the EOPS student survey link with their students and the EOPS staff survey link with all the staff members in the program.

EOPS Students

The EOPS student survey was distributed to students who received services in the EOPS program during the 2021–2022 academic year and were listed in the Management Information System for the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. The distribution took place at their respective campuses during the start of the fall 2022 semester when book vouchers/grants

were disbursed. It was assumed that the 2021–2022 EOPS students had either used or been exposed to all the EOPS support services available at their local EOPS programs, allowing them to make a fair assessment of the support services offered.

EOPS Staff

The EOPS staff survey was distributed to EOPS directors, assistant directors, counselors, and staff members. This group was surveyed because of their firsthand experience with the EOPS program and their experiential knowledge of students' needs, effective strategies, and service usage. It was presumed that listening to the insights of EOPS staff could enhance engagement, inspire positive change in the EOPS programs in the Los Angeles region, and have a positive impact on the performance of EOPS student outcomes. EOPS directors can review and analyze the survey results to make informed decisions regarding resource allocations based on the findings of the study.

Access

The researcher has been employed by the LACCD since 2005, spending 13 years at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College (LATTC) as an EOPS counselor and director, and the past 4 years at West Los Angeles College (WLAC) as the Dean of Student Services. Throughout her career, the researcher has demonstrated a strong commitment to the EOPS program. Since 2013, she has served as the EOPS regional coordinator, working closely with regional and state EOPS directors, the California Community College State Chancellor's office, and the statewide EOPS Association. In 2015, she also participated in the EOPS State Chancellor's Office Allocation Taskforce, which aimed to create a revised funding formula for EOPS programs statewide. Building on her expertise and experience, she has developed strong working relationships and partnerships with EOPS program directors, counselors, and staff members throughout California,

earning their trust in her dedication to the program's best interests. Regular meetings with EOPS directors in Region 7, other regional coordinators, the State Chancellor's office, and the EOPS Association have further facilitated collaboration and the exchange of ideas.

Participation in the EOPS survey was voluntary and anonymous, ensuring the privacy of EOPS students and staff. Individual responses were treated with confidentiality, and reporting was conducted in a manner that protected the identity of individuals and campuses, including their roles on campus. The research proposal and site authorization underwent review by the University of California Los Angeles Institutional Review Board (IRB) to obtain approval for conducting the study. Additional site approvals were obtained from the local district administration to allow for student and staff participation in the survey. Given that the study involved accessing student information and retention data, full IRB approval was required at all nine colleges within LACCD. To gain support for the study, the researcher initiated preliminary discussions with most of the local EOPS directors. Once the study's findings were published, they were made available and shared with EOPS directors and the statewide EOPS Association, aiming to provide valuable data for program improvement and better resource allocation decisions.

Data Collection

The data collection process consisted of three phases: (a) the review of retention data for EOPS students in the LACCD district, (b) the EOPS student survey, and (c) the EOPS staff survey.

For Phase 1 of the study, the LACCD retention data was provided from the LACCD and WLAC offices of Institutional Effectiveness. For Phases 2 and 3, the researcher collaborated with EOPS directors, counselors, and staff in the Los Angeles region to categorize the programs'

support services into 15 categories for designing the survey instrument. These categories include book vouchers/grants, CARE single parent support, cash grants, EOPS counseling, EOPS support staff, foster youth support, gift cards, graduation assistance, priority registration, referrals, school supplies, student education plan (SEP), transfer services, tutoring, and workshops/events. A copy of the student questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

Surveys are commonly used to measure satisfaction, and in this study, EOPS students and staff provided feedback through multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions (Bhat, n.d.; Qualtrics, n.d.). The survey design allowed EOPS students to indicate which support services they used and rate their helpfulness on a five-point scale ranging from highly unhelpful to highly helpful. The skip logic feature was implemented in the survey, adjusting the subsequent questions based on respondents' previous answers, ensuring they only answered relevant questions.

To gather student perspectives, an online questionnaire was developed. The EOPS directors and one of the LACCD Public Relations managers distributed the survey link to continuing EOPS students at the start of the fall 2022 semester in the 14 community colleges, with an estimated total of 12,000 students. Based on previous experience, an 85% response rate was anticipated from EOPS students. A survey response rate of 50% or higher is considered excellent in most cases (Chung, 2022). The strong personal relationship between the EOPS program and students, along with their high motivation levels, was expected to contribute to a high response rate. According to PeoplePulse (n.d.), which recorded data from almost 200 online surveys conducted in the United States with over 500,000 invitations sent to potential participants, the median survey response rate was 26.45%, increasing to 41.21% for sample sizes less than 1,000. The majority of responses were received within the first week, with over 50%

arriving on the first day. The ideal time to send surveys was identified as the beginning of the week between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., except for Monday morning. It was noted that the longer the survey, the lower the likelihood of response. Based on past surveys with EOPS students, a high response rate of 17 out of 20, or 85%, was expected for analysis.

EOPS Student Survey

The EOPS student survey comprises 15 questions, including skip logic and follow-up questions. These questions encompass various aspects such as demographics, usage and satisfaction with EOPS support services, reasons for not using specific services, identification of the most significant support service, duration of program participation, and involvement in other support programs, if applicable. Students were asked about their use of EOPS support services and their level of satisfaction with the program's offerings. This facilitated the collection of insights regarding which EOPS support services students found most helpful and valued. Likert scale surveys were employed to effectively measure specific topics, experiences, or opinions (Maniyamkott, 2022). The Likert-type scale questions in this survey enabled the assessment of students' attitudes toward the program's support services. The scale provided students with the opportunity to evaluate the extent to which they valued the services, spanning from highly helpful to highly unhelpful. It captured both positive and negative extremes of students' attitudes, indicating their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the support services.

EOPS Staff Survey

The EOPS staff survey follows a similar format, consisting of eight questions along with additional skip logic and follow-up questions. A copy of the staff questionnaire is provided as Appendix B. EOPS staff respondents were asked about their demographics, role in the program,

length of employment, on-campus services offered, and were given the opportunity to share a best practice.

To ensure content validity, the researcher sought the views of experts in developing the appropriate questions for the study. Input was gathered from EOPS directors, counseling faculty, staff, and members of the dissertation review committee who possess subject-matter expertise. Their feedback was instrumental in evaluating the effectiveness of each question in measuring the intended construct. The questionnaire underwent multiple revisions based on the input received from these experts in October 2021, May 2022, and June 2022. This iterative process led to improvements in existing questions, the inclusion of relevant new questions, and the elimination of irrelevant ones. Furthermore, a field test of the survey questionnaires was conducted to enhance content validity. Through this process, irrelevant and ambiguous questions were eliminated or refined, while new relevant questions were incorporated into the instrument.

The content validity was reinforced by referring to EOPS records on the usage of support services across campuses. Enrollment data from the LACCD colleges were collected for the fall 2021, spring 2022, and fall 2022 semesters. The LACCD Management Information System provided information on services such as book grants and counseling contacts. The district census data at the beginning of the fall 2022 semester served as the collection date for enrollment data. The study aimed to collect data on the type and extent of EOPS service usage, variations in service usage among campuses and student racial/ethnic groups, and students' perceptions of service helpfulness and value.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data on students and staff were gathered for statistical analysis to examine disparities in EOPS service usage, the extent of service use, and satisfaction among colleges and

student racial/ethnic groups. The study employed chi-square tests of independence to explore differences in student responses based on campus and race/ethnicity, with Cramer's V used as a measure of effect size. A statistically significant threshold of .05 was adopted for these tests, and the practical effect sizes below .150 were considered negligible. On the other hand, qualitative data obtained from students and staff were thematically analyzed to gain deeper insights into the impact of EOPS support services on student outcomes.

The surveys included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Closed-ended items employed Likert scales (e.g., very helpful [5], somewhat helpful [4], neither helpful nor unhelpful [3], etc.), yes/no responses, or requested the frequency of EOPS service usage. Statistical analysis using SPSS was conducted to identify significant variations in service usage and perceptions of EOPS benefits among different campuses and student racial/ethnic groups. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness at WLAC also provided input to assess the impact of LACCD EOPS programs on college retention rates.

Participants, including students and staff, were requested to rank EOPS support services based on their usage and perceived helpfulness, aiming to evaluate the influence of these services on student retention and identify any services deemed more valuable than others. For Likert scale-like items, scores on each item measuring the support service were summed and averaged. Multiple-choice items were summed to obtain the most helpful support services on student academic performance. Open-ended responses were thematically analyzed to identify relevant themes that could address the research questions. The study also recorded the number of times a particular support service was selected by an EOPS participant along with their perceived level of helpfulness. If a student selected a support service as the most used and rated it as "very

helpful,” it was assumed to have an influence on retention. Conversely, if a service was not used, it was concluded that it had no effect on retention.

Retention data from both EOPS students and non-EOPS students were collected at all nine LACCD colleges. The analysis encompassed overall district EOPS retention data as well as retention data specific to each individual college. For this study, retention was defined as students enrolling from one semester to the next within the same college. The retention data examined spanned the fall 2021 to spring 2022 enrollment period, as well as the spring 2022 to fall 2022 enrollment period, across the nine LACCD colleges.

Positionality/Role of Researcher

The researcher did not directly communicate with the students, and data gathered in the survey were kept confidential and not disclosed to third parties. A survey link was provided to each EOPS director for distribution among their respective student populations. The researcher’s longstanding affiliation with the EOPS program and the professional relationships she had established over the years facilitated access to and distribution of the survey to college students enrolled in EOPS programs. Personal bias was reduced by following a detailed format in data collection and analysis.

To maximize the student survey response rate, the researcher reminded several EOPS directors to distribute the survey and encouraged them to send reminders to students. In the case of LACCD colleges, the survey link was emailed to EOPS students in all nine programs by the WLAC Public Relations Manager. Additionally, at the beginning of the fall 2022 semester when EOPS students received their book vouchers/grants, the survey link was sent to students via short message service (SMS) messages. To increase staff survey response, the survey was designed to

guarantee anonymity, be easy to complete, and communicate the potential value of the results to their program review and to EOPS as a whole (Lattice Team, 2019).

To avoid portraying specific programs in a negative light based on survey responses, the researcher positioned herself as a UCLA graduate research student who shared a passion for serving marginalized students in the EOPS program. By establishing trust with the EOPS directors and emphasizing that the research was conducted under the auspices of UCLA, and identifying herself strictly as a researcher, it was presumed that the EOPS directors trusted that the collected data were solely intended to identify effective services to enhance and support EOPS students, directors, counselors, and staff.

Ethical Considerations

The research process adhered to ethical considerations based on Belmont's principles of approval, respect, justice, and beneficence (Newman et al., 2021). These ethical values guided the research procedures, including seeking approval from sites and institutions, ensuring voluntary participation, obtaining informed consent, guaranteeing participant anonymity and confidentiality, handling data storage and destruction appropriately, and communicating the results in a confidential, private, and respectful manner.

To establish trust, a descriptive statement in the survey informed EOPS student and staff respondents that their participation was voluntary and ensured privacy and confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained by providing information about the data being collected, stored, and used. The research aimed to present results in a fair and unbiased manner, focusing on highlighting helpful and utilized student support services rather than portraying colleges unfavorably.

The researcher completed the University of California Los Angeles Institutional Review Board (IRB) training modules and submitted the study procedure to the UCLA IRB for approval. Data collection commenced only after receiving IRB approval. While UCLA IRB granted an exemption certificate for this voluntary and anonymous satisfaction survey, additional IRB approval was required from LACCD due to the request for EOPS student retention information from all nine colleges. Throughout the research, standard protocols for researching human subjects were followed to minimize harm and risks, respect human dignity, privacy, and autonomy. Special precautions were taken when working with this vulnerable and marginalized community, and efforts were made to distribute the benefits and burdens of the research fairly. Ethical principles were implemented at each stage of the survey research process to protect individual participants, from study recruitment and participation to data collection and the dissemination of research findings.

Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which data collection instruments accurately measure what they are intended to measure (Tasca et al., 2018). To ensure validity and reliability, several steps were taken throughout the research process.

Clear and concise questions were used in the survey to obtain accurate data. The focus was on the EOPS student population because they possess the relevant knowledge base to assess EOPS support services accurately. EOPS directors were recruited to distribute the survey questionnaire to a large number of EOPS participants who had received EOPS services during the 2021–2022 academic year. To increase the student survey response rate, the survey link was emailed to students at the beginning of the fall 2022 semester when EOPS students received their book vouchers/grants. For staff surveys, anonymity, ease of completion, and the potential value

of the results for program review and EOPS as a whole were emphasized to increase response rates.

The survey questions were designed to cover all aspects of EOPS support services used (Strijker et al., 2020). Input from EOPS professionals in the field and the dissertation committee was sought to ensure the questions accurately measured the intended constructs. The questions were formulated to be simple, clear, and direct, aiming for consistent interpretations from students each time they were asked. A field test of the survey was conducted with 17 EOPS students from LATTC and WLAC in November 2021. Additionally, a cognitive interview was conducted with an EOPS student worker from WLAC to gather feedback on confusing or repetitive questions and identify areas requiring revision. Based on this feedback, the survey was streamlined, eliminating redundancies, improving clarity of choices, and enhancing question language to be more direct and student-friendly. Ambiguous questions were removed, and unclear ones were refined to ensure understanding by respondents. Additional questions were added to capture all necessary data related to the research questions. The survey design included skip logic, which dynamically adjusted the questions based on respondents' previous answers, ensuring they only answered relevant questions.

These steps were taken to enhance accuracy and validity in measuring the intended constructs and ensure that the survey instrument effectively captured the required data for the research study.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of data collection instruments in producing the same outcomes in replicated surveys (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). The survey for this study was conducted at the beginning of the fall 2022 semester, targeting continuing students who had

experienced EOPS support services in various modalities (in-person, online, hybrid) during the 2021–2022 academic year. It is important to consider that the reliability of the survey may have been influenced by the students’ experiences with services delivered remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is worth noting that survey respondents often tend to be the most motivated individuals, whether positively or negatively inclined, to respond. Although the survey was distributed to all EOPS programs in the Los Angeles area, the respondents may have been those who were highly motivated, either positively or negatively. This could have influenced the reliability of the survey results.

Conducting a test-retest to assess reliability by administering the questionnaire to the same EOPS students at a later point in time was not feasible for this study. Given the project timeline and the effort required from EOPS directors to distribute the survey to students and staff, such an approach was not practical.

Validity, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the survey measures what it was intended to measure in terms of the helpfulness and usage of EOPS support services. The questionnaire was designed meticulously to ensure that the samples obtained were representative, and efforts were made to improve validity by increasing the number of EOPS programs that distributed the survey.

While it is important to acknowledge the limitations and potential impact on reliability, steps were taken to enhance validity and reliability within the constraints of the study’s practicality and timeline.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

The primary objective of the EOPS research was to evaluate the credibility and trustworthiness of the support services offered and their impact on student retention outcomes. To establish credibility, the survey instrument underwent a rigorous review and revision process involving collaboration with EOPS professionals, including directors, counselors, and staff. This collaborative effort ensured that the survey accurately measured the support services that EOPS students found valuable in their educational journey. The study aimed to identify the support services that were both used and highly valued by EOPS students, with the ultimate goal of improving retention outcomes, particularly for marginalized community college students.

The findings from this research hold practical implications for EOPS programs because they can be incorporated into their annual program plans, which are submitted to the California Community College Chancellor's Office, as well as their college's program review or student area outcomes. Furthermore, the data gathered could assist in resource allocation within the framework of Title 5 and EOPS implementation guidelines, and potentially contribute to the development of legislation supporting California community college students and the State Chancellor's Vision for Success.

Trustworthiness, encompassing the quality of research, relies on confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods employed (Polit & Beck, 2014). To establish trustworthiness, the study implemented precise, consistent, and detailed methods and data analysis techniques (Nowell et al., 2017). Internal validity threats were carefully controlled to ensure that the observed results accurately represented the realities of the EOPS population and were not influenced by methodological errors (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). The data analysis used statistical

test measures, primarily the SPSS statistical software, and retention analysis. These steps were taken to enhance the overall trustworthiness and reliability of the research findings.

Conclusion

This study focused on the EOPS program and conducted a survey among EOPS students from 14 community colleges in the Los Angeles region. The main objective was to explore the effectiveness of support services in contributing to student retention and completion outcomes. The study consisted of three phases: (a) the review of retention data for EOPS students in the LACCD, (b) the EOPS student survey, and (c) the EOPS staff survey.

During Phase 1, the study collected LACCD EOPS student records to examine the demographics and retention rates of a sample within the study. This analysis provided evidence supporting the notion that EOPS students have higher success outcomes than non-EOPS students. Consequently, the data confirmed the assumption and laid a foundation for effectively identifying support services for marginalized community college students.

Phases 2 and 3 of the study involved administering a survey questionnaire to gather data from both EOPS students and staff. These data provided insights into the support services offered by the EOPS program in the Los Angeles region. Quantitative data from students and staff were collected for statistical analysis, aiming to identify differences in service usage, the extent of service use, and satisfaction among campuses/colleges and different student racial/ethnic groups. Students and staff ranked EOPS support services based on their usage and perceived helpfulness, enabling the determination of the perceived impact of EOPS support services on student retention and identifying services of greater value.

In conclusion, this study sought to gain insights into the EOPS support services that students use and value in their academic pursuits. The findings aim to assist educational leaders

and EOPS directors in understanding students' perspectives on effective support services, ultimately enabling them to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation to enhance student outcomes.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the EOPS program study. The analysis and interpretation of data were conducted in three phases. The first phase encompassed an evaluation of EOPS student retention rates within the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD). The second phase involved a quantitative analysis of data collected from the EOPS student questionnaire. Last, the third phase focused on the results of the EOPS staff survey. Throughout these phases, rigorous analysis methods were employed to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and validity of the findings. The results were then carefully interpreted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of EOPS support services and their impact on student retention within the LACCD. The study used the crosstab feature of the SPSS statistical software to investigate whether responses varied across different campuses and among various subgroups. Chi-square tests were performed to determine the p-value for each service, and the results are presented in the findings section.

Study Participants

The study occurred from August to September 2022. Two EOPS groups were surveyed: (a) students in Region 7 who were both enrolled in the fall 2022 semester and had received EOPS services during the 2021–2022 academic year and (b) EOPS staff (directors, counselors, and staff) who worked for EOPS programs in Region 7 at the time of the survey. EOPS programs are divided into regions, and Region 7 comprises the following colleges: Los Angeles City College, East Los Angeles College, Los Angeles Harbor College, Los Angeles Mission College, Los Angeles Pierce College, Los Angeles Southwest College, Los Angeles Trade-Technical College, Los Angeles Valley College, West Los Angeles College (with these nine colleges comprising LACCD), Glendale Community College, El Camino College, Compton College,

Pasadena City College, and Santa Monica College (these latter colleges being single-college districts). All colleges are in the greater Los Angeles area.

The results section in Chapter 4 uses pseudonyms for the colleges involved in the study to maintain their anonymity and uphold ethical practice.

LACCD Retention Data

As Phase 1 of the study, LACCD retention rates were measured. The retention rate represents the percentage of students who return to/reenroll at the same institution from one semester to the next. At LACCD institutions, the retention rate for EOPS students was 83.4% compared to non-EOPS students at 61.6% from fall 2021 to spring 2022. Similarly, LACCD EOPS students had a higher retention rate from spring 2022 to fall 2022 compared with non-EOPS students in the LACCD (82.4% vs. 56.5%). Among all nine individual EOPS programs in the LACCD, EOPS students had higher retention rates than non-EOPS students in the district for both terms (see Table 1).

Student Participants

According to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems Data Mart (n.d.-b), EOPS programs in EOPS Region 7 provided services to 11,781 students in the academic year of 2021–2022. A list was obtained of the EOPS students in LACCD who were both enrolled in classes in the district during the fall semester and had been EOPS program participants during the 2021–2022 academic year. The list included the students' contact information, and in August 2022, each student was sent an invitation via email and text. This group was sent three reminder emails and two text messages. Every eligible LACCD student meeting the research parameters received an email and text from me (6,973 students in total). EOPS directors outside the LACCD send out student surveys to their students; however, it

is unclear whether all survey-eligible students received the invitation. Moreover, given the lower number of respondents from students outside the LACCD, it is possible, even likely, that a number of those students did not receive an invitation.

Table 1

LACCD Retention EOPS Versus Non-EOPS Students by Individual College

College	Fall 2021 to Spring 2022	Spring 2022 to Fall 2022
College 1		
EOPS	83.7%	80.8%
Not EOPS	59.5%	56.1%
College 2		
EOPS	80.1%	81.9%
Not EOPS	49.8%	45.0%
College 3		
EOPS	79.9%	76.9%
Not EOPS	60.5%	57.5%
College 4		
EOPS	69.6%	70.5%
Not EOPS	50.8%	46.7%
College 5		
EOPS	85.3%	85.2%
Not EOPS	59.7%	54.7%
College 6		
EOPS	75.7%	75.6%
Not EOPS	50.1%	42.2%
College 7		
EOPS	76.1%	80.5%
Not EOPS	52.7%	48.6%
College 8		
EOPS	84.3%	81.8%
Not EOPS	56.4%	50.4%
College 9		
EOPS	80.3%	78.8%
Not EOPS	46.9%	40.0%
Districtwide		
EOPS	83.4%	82.4%
Not EOPS	61.6%	56.5%

The number of surveys collected was 3,905. After eliminating the survey responses of students who did not receive services in the 2021–2022 academic year, as well as those respondents who had a survey progress rate of 27% or lower, a total of 1,935 responses were valid for analysis. Therefore, the survey had a final response rate of 1,935/11,781, or 16.4%.

It could not be confirmed whether all 11,781 eligible EOPS students served in 2021–2022 had been invited to participate in the study. There were five colleges surveyed outside the LACCD, comprising 4,808 students; given the low number of student respondents outside the LACCD compared to the number of survey-eligible students at those colleges, it is possible that EOPS directors did not send the email survey invitation to all students, and it could not be confirmed in what form students outside the LACCD were contacted by those directors. For example, there were only six responses from EOPS students at College L. Because not all EOPS students at all of the colleges had an equal opportunity to receive and return the survey, an equal weight cannot be placed on each response. Due to these survey distribution difficulties, no claims can be made for all EOPS students in the region; especially in the case of students outside the LACCD, it cannot be claimed that survey participants represent entire campus populations (see Table 2).

Colleges Represented

The colleges represented were comprised of the nine colleges within the LACCD as well as the other community colleges within EOPS Region 7, which serves the greater Los Angeles area. There was a greater response rate from EOPS students within the nine colleges in the LACCD in comparison to other Los Angeles-area community colleges outside the LACCD. Because the researcher had direct email and text access to students within the LACCD, she distributed the surveys to those students. She contacted the EOPS directors at Region 7 colleges

outside the LACCD and requested that they distribute the student survey to their EOPS students. All Region 7 EOPS directors were sent emails inviting them to participate in the survey and requesting that they distribute the staff survey to their EOPS staff.

Table 2

Student Participants and Participation Rate, By Campus

College	Study participants		Eligible students		Participation rate (%)
	#	%	#	%	
A	13	0.7%	336	2.9%	3.9%
B	301	15.6%	1062	9.0%	28.3%
C	36	1.9%	1229	10.4%	2.9%
D	62	3.2%	1731	14.7%	3.6%
E	356	18.4%	1636	13.9%	21.8%
F	101	5.2%	483	4.1%	20.9%
G	152	7.9%	624	5.3%	24.4%
H	143	7.4%	659	5.6%	21.7%
I	263	13.6%	777	2.0%	33.8%
J	83	4.3%	239	6.6%	34.7%
K	230	11.9%	894	7.6%	25.7%
L	6	0.3%	901	7.7%	0.7%
M	38	2.0%	611	5.2%	6.2%
N	151	7.8%	599	5.1%	25.2%
14 campuses	1,935		11,781		16.4%

Age of Respondents

The age distributions of the sample and Region 7 EOPS students are presented in Table 3. According to the table, 39.8% of the participants were aged 18-24, 24.9% were aged 25-34, and 35.3% were aged 35 or older. These percentages generally reflect the age range of the student population in the EOPS programs.

Table 3*Age of Student Participants (N = 1,935) and Eligible EOPS Students (N = 11,781)*

Age	Study participants		Eligible students	
	#	%	#	%
18-24	769	39.7%	6,450	54.57
25-34	481	24.9%	2,442	20.7%
35 or older	683	35.3%	2,516	21.1%
Prefer not to answer/unknown/missing	2	0.1%	105	0.9%
Total	1,935		11,781	

Note. Characteristics of study participants obtained from questionnaire responses. Characteristics of eligible students obtained from Management Information Systems DataMart, by California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, n.d.-b (https://datamart.cccco.edu/Services/EOPS_CARE_Status.aspx).

Gender of Respondents

A preponderance of the respondents identified as female (71.2%), while 26.1% identified as male. A smaller proportion of respondents identified as nonbinary or preferred not to answer/unknown/missing (1.1% and 1.7% respectively). The sample closely resembles the population of EOPS students, as shown in Table 4.

Race/Ethnicity

As can be seen in Table 5, most of the respondents were Hispanic/Latino (51.2%). This very closely matches the systemwide Hispanic/Latino population (52.9%). There were slightly higher percentages of African American/Black and Asian EOPS student respondents than represented systemwide (13.6% v. 10.8%, and 8.9% v. 7.8%, respectively), and fewer White respondents (15.2% v. 22.8%).

Table 4*Gender of Student Participants (N = 1,935) and Eligible EOPS Students (N = 11,781)*

Gender	Study participants		Eligible students	
	#	%	#	%
Female	1,378	71.2%	8,048	68.3%
Male	502	25.9%	3,607	30.6%
Nonbinary	22	1.1%	21	0.2%
Prefer not to answer/unknown/missing	33	1.7%	105	0.9%
Total	1,935		11,781	

Note. Characteristics of study participants obtained from questionnaire responses. Characteristics of eligible students obtained from Management Information Systems DataMart, by California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, n.d.-b (https://datamart.cccco.edu/Services/EOPS_CARE_Status.aspx).

Table 5*Race/Ethnicity of Student Participants (N = 1,935) and Eligible EOPS Students (N = 11,781)*

Race/Ethnicity	Study participants		Eligible students	
	#	%	#	%
African American, Black	263	13.60%	1267	10.8%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	11	0.6%	14	0.1%
Asian	172	8.9%	924	7.8%
Hispanic/Latino	991	51.2%	6232	52.9%
Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	7	0.4%	20	0.2%
White	295	15.2%	2690	22.8%
Two or more races	73	3.8%	290	2.5%
Other	64	3.3%	0	0%
Prefer not to answer/unknown/missing	59	3.0%	344	2.9%
Total	1,935		11,781	

Note. Characteristics of study participants obtained from questionnaire responses. Characteristics of eligible students obtained from Management Information Systems DataMart, by California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, n.d.-b (https://datamart.cccco.edu/Services/EOPS_CARE_Status.aspx).

Academic Goals

Student participants were asked to identify their academic goals from a list of five options. 1,923 students answered this question. Of those respondents, 61.9% identified their goal as transferring to a 4-year college or university, 50% as obtaining an associate's degree, 19.2% as obtaining a certificate, and 12.2% as career advancement. Only one individual selected Other; this respondent identified "learning new skills" as a goal. Note that the information here is also presented in Table 6.

Length of Time in EOPS

Student respondents reported participating in EOPS for four or more semesters ($N = 725$; 41.5%). However, many students had been in the program for two and three semesters ($N = 365$, 18.9%, and $N = 432$, 22.3%, respectively).

How Students Heard About EOPS

Students were asked how they became aware of the EOPS program. There were 1,748 responses to this question, and students were able to select all that applied. Of all respondents ($N = 711$), 40.7% had been aware of EOPS through classmates, family, and friends. It is particularly interesting to note that students had heard about EOPS through "word of mouth." Slightly less frequently, students had found out about EOPS through the campus website ($N = 675$, 38.6%). The third most frequently occurring method was through promotional material emailed directly from the program ($N = 366$, 20.9%). Although email is reported to be not used by many community college students, more recent forms of communication such as text ($N = 100$, 5.7%) and social media ($N = 59$, 3.4%) were not reported as frequently occurring ways in which students were made aware of the program. Such data have the potential to inform methods for outreach and recruitment for EOPS.

Table 6*Characteristics of Student Survey Participants (N = 1,935)*

Student characteristic	#	%
Academic goals (N = 1,923)		
Transfer to a 4-year university	1,191	61.9%
Earn an associate degree	986	51.3%
Earn a certificate	369	19.2%
Career advancement	235	12.2%
Other (new skill)	1	0.1%
How many semesters did you participate in the EOPS program? (N = 1,747)		
1 Semester	192	11.0%
2 Semesters	365	20.9%
3 Semesters	432	24.7%
4 or more semesters	725	41.5%
Other/unsure	33	1.9%
How did you hear about the EOPS program? (N = 1,748)		
Classmates/friends/family	711	40.7%
Campus website	675	38.6%
Email promotion of EOPS	366	20.9%
On-campus events (college orientation, events, other departments, etc.)	293	16.8%
Physical EOPS flyer/ newsletter/ brochure	187	10.7%
Classroom presentation	145	8.3%
Text messages from the EOPS program or campus	100	5.7%
Social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	59	3.4%
College personnel (counselor, instructor, or staff)	48	2.7%
Off-campus personnel (high school, case worker, etc.)	16	0.9%
Other	13	0.7%
In the past 12 months, which other support programs did you participate in? (N = 1,011)		
CalWORKs	372	36.8%
Disabled Student Programs & Services (DSPS)	272	26.9%
Dream Resource Center	95	9.4%
TRIO	63	6.2%
Umoja/Black Scholars Union	55	5.4%
Puente	30	3.0%
Veteran Resource Center	19	1.9%
Other	278	27.5%

Participation in Other Support Programs

All students in the sample who received EOPS services in the 2021–2022 academic year were asked whether they had participated in any other (non-EOPS) support program during the past year. There were 1,011 responses to this question, and students could select from all applicable options. However, students did not have the option to state that EOPS was the only program in which they were participating. Because the Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education program (CARE) is part of EOPS for single parents who are head of household, have at least one dependent child under the age of 18, and are recipients of California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKS) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) services, it is unsurprising that respondents chose this option. Of the other support programs in which EOPS students participated, CalWORKS ($N = 372$; 36.8%) was the most frequently occurring. It is noteworthy that 27.5% selected the Other option, with over 51% of those respondents writing in that EOPS was the only program they participated in, and another 14.7% selecting Other but leaving it blank. This survey instrument did not provide the option for respondents to state that EOPS was the only program in which they were participating. Future studies should include this response option.

Staff Participants

Each EOPS director at the 14 Los Angeles-area community colleges received a staff survey and was requested to distribute Qualtrics links to the EOPS staff at their respective colleges. The staff consisted of directors/administrators, counseling faculty, and classified staff. The number of surveys returned by each college varied from 0 to 15. There were 101 surveys collected. After eliminating the survey responses of staff who had a progress rate of 27% or lower on the survey, which included the ranking of the EOPS support services, a total of 83

responses were valid for analysis. Although the greatest number of student responses came from students within the LACCD, most of the staff responses came from outside the LACCD. Of note are the number of respondents from College C ($N = 13$), College D ($N = 10$), and College L ($N = 10$). Reasons for that discrepancy are open to speculation but are not due to the relative size of the programs (see Table 7).

Table 7

EOPS Staff Survey Participants by College (N = 83)

Campus	#	%
A	8	9.6%
B	2	2.4%
C	13	15.7%
D	10	12.0%
E	4	4.8%
F	8	9.6%
G	1	1.2%
H	0	0.00%
I	1	1.2%
J	1	1.2%
K	1	1.2%
L	10	12.0%
M	9	10.8%
N	15	18.0%
Total	83	

Race/Ethnicity

Among the EOPS staff members who took part in the survey, 40% identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino, 15.3% identified as White, 11.8% identified as African American/Black, and 10.6% identified as Asian. The distribution of race/ethnicity among the EOPS staff respondents is summarized in Table 8. Notably, the ethnicity distribution of the EOPS staff respondents closely resembles the ethnicity distribution of EOPS students systemwide.

Table 8*Characteristics of Staff Participants (N = 83)*

Staff characteristic	#	%
Race/ethnicity		
African American, Black	10	12.0%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	0.0%
Asian	9	10.8%
Hispanic/Latino	34	41.0%
Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1	1.2%
White	13	15.7%
Two or more races	3	3.6%
Other	3	3.6%
Prefer not to answer/unknown/missing	10	12.0%
Gender		
Female	55	66.2%
Male	16	19.2%
Nonbinary	0	0.0%
Prefer not to answer/unknown/missing	12	14.4%
Length in EOPS career		
Less than a year	7	8.4%
1-4 years	23	27.7%
10-14 years	5	6.0%
20 years or more	17	20.4%
5-9 years	15	18.0%
15-19 years	8	9.6%
Missing	8	9.6%
Role in EOPS Program		
EOPS director	9	10.8%
EOPS assistant director	4	4.8%
EOPS/CARE/NextUp classified staff	29	34.9%
EOPS/CARE/NextUp counselor	24	28.9%
EOPS/CARE/NextUp student worker	11	13.3%
Other	1	1.2%
Missing	5	6.0%

Gender

The majority of staff respondents were female, accounting for 64.7% of the total. Male respondents made up 18.8% of the sample, and 16.4% either preferred not to answer or did not complete that particular data field.

Length of EOPS Career

A significant number of staff respondents are relatively new to EOPS, approximately 27.1%, had relatively new experience in the EOPS program, ranging from 1 to 4 years. Around 20% of the staff respondents had extensive experience with EOPS, with 20 or more years of service. Additionally, 17.6% of the respondents had 5 to 9 years of experience in the program. Furthermore, 9.4% of the staff respondents reported having 15 to 19 years of experience, while 5.9% of the respondents had 10 to 14 years of experience working in the EOPS program. These findings reflect the varied levels of experience among the staff members who participated in the survey.

Role in EOPS Program

From of the 14 colleges represented, nine EOPS directors responded to the survey (10.6% of the respondents), and four (4.7%) of the assistant directors responded to the survey. The majority of responses came from classified staff (34.1%) and EOPS counseling faculty (28.2%). Furthermore, there were 11 student workers (12.9%) who also provided their responses to the survey.

In the following section, the findings for each research question are presented. Results from the student survey address the first three research questions, and results from the staff survey address the fourth question. Tables and figures will be presented to illustrate the overall

number of responses for each research question. Additionally, separate tables and figures are provided to display the percentage breakdown of colleges and ethnicity/race within the sample.

Findings Related to Research Question 1

Students were asked the following question: “In the past 12 months, how many times have you used the following EOPS support services?” The responses were analyzed for all participants and for subgroups based on campus and race/ethnicity. In summary, the survey revealed that the most commonly used EOPS support services among students were (a) EOPS counseling, (b) book vouchers/grants, (c) student educational planning, and (d) priority registration. On the other hand, the services with the lowest usage rates were (a) foster youth support, (b) the CARE program for single parents, and (c) graduation assistance (refer to Tables 9 and 10).

The following section provides a detailed overview of specific services offered by colleges and their corresponding usage rates.

Summary of Overall Service Usage

A summary of reported usage by service is shown in Table 9. EOPS counseling was the most used service. This study found that 93.8% of the student respondents reported that they had used EOPS counseling at least once in the last 12 months. The results indicated that out of 1,816 student respondents who used EOPS counseling in that timeframe, 1,305 (67.4%) reported that they had accessed EOPS counseling three or more times within the year. The study found that book vouchers/book grants ranked as second most used by survey respondents in the academic year 2021–2022 (1,751, or 90%), and educational planning, a component of EOPS counseling, ranked third (1,541, or 80%). Priority registration ranked fourth (1,429, or 73%). The services

that respondents reported to have used the least were graduation assistance (19%), CARE support services (18%), and foster youth support (8%). The results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

EOPS Support Services Used During the 2021–2022 Academic Year (N = 1,935)

EOPS service	Never		1-2 times		3+ times	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
EOPS counseling	119	6.1	511	26.4	1,305	67.4
Book vouchers/grant	184	9.5	945	48.8	806	41.7
Student educational planning	394	20.4	786	40.6	755	39.0
Priority registration	506	26.1	636	32.9	793	41.0
School supplies	689	35.6	732	38.0	503	26.1
EOPS support staff	700	36.2	630	32.6	605	31.3
Cash grants	901	46.6	600	31.0	434	22.4
Workshops/events	991	51.2	589	30.4	355	18.3
Tutoring	1,193	61.7	442	22.8	300	15.5
Gift cards	1,225	63.3	421	21.8	289	14.9
Transfer services	1,316	68.0	335	17.4	273	14.2
Referrals to other resources	1,335	69.0	362	18.7	238	12.3
Graduation assistance	1,558	80.5	242	12.6	124	6.4
CARE	1,591	82.2	177	9.1	167	8.6
Foster youth support	1,775	91.7	60	3.1	100	5.2

Note. Services are listed in decreasing order based on any use (combined 1-2 and 3+ times).

Differences in Service Usage by Campus

For service usage by college, most services showed a statistically significant difference across campus (based on $p < .05$; see Table 10 and Figure 1). However, most of these differences were very small in practical terms. Only four services (gift cards, graduation assistance, school supplies, and workshops/events) showed differences that were both statistically significant ($p < .05$) and practically significant (effect size $\geq .150$). Overall, approximately 37% of students

reported using EOPS gift cards at least once. However, there were four colleges (A, G, I, and L) with significantly higher rates of usage, at 59% and above. Graduation assistance was used by 18.9% of students, but College G had a substantially higher usage rate of 41%. Similarly, school supplies were used by 64% of students, but three colleges (A, C, I) had a much higher usage rate, at 81% and above. Workshops were used by 49% of students, but two colleges (F, M) had a usage rate of 81% and above.

Table 10

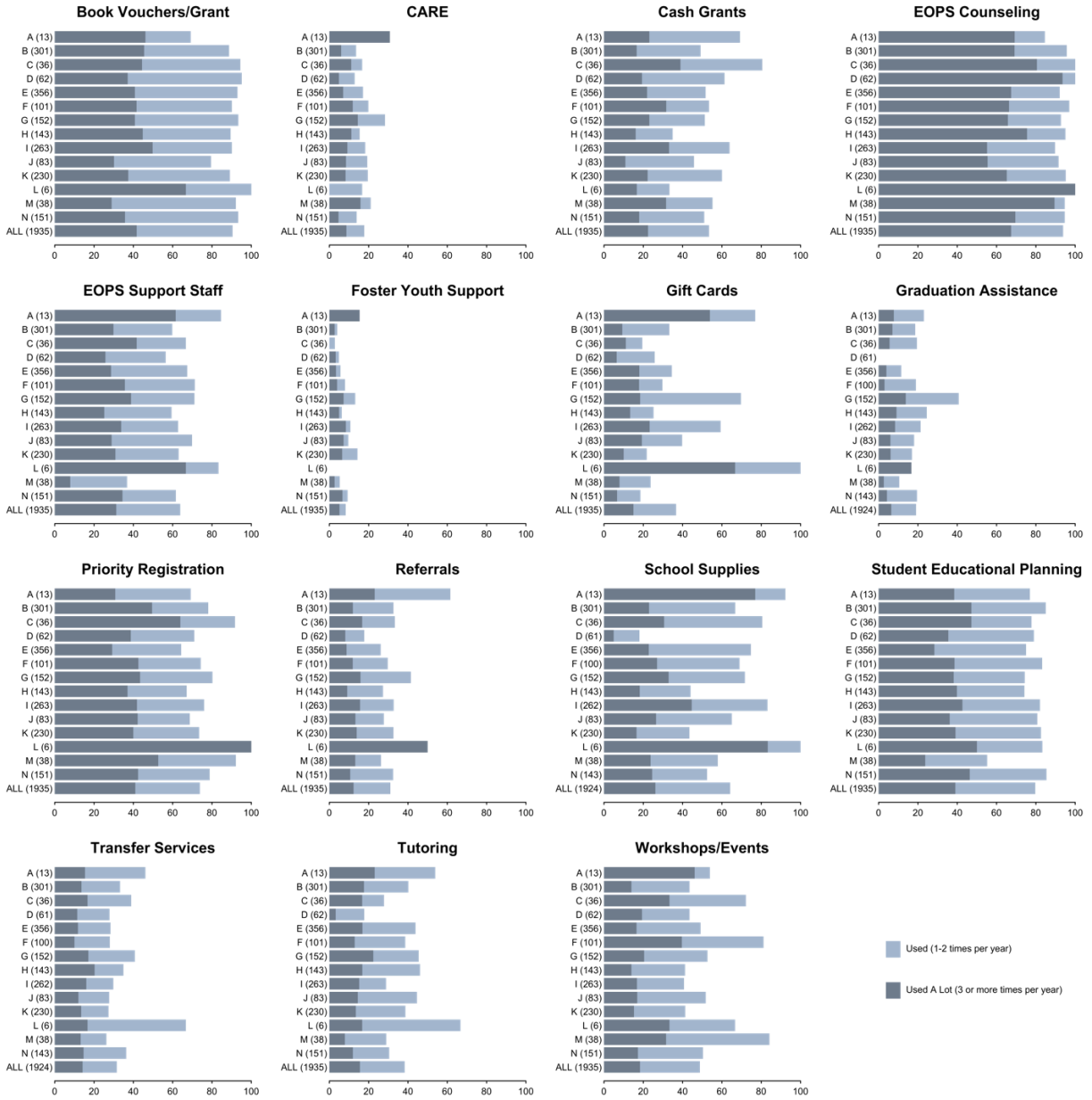
Chi-Square Tests of Independence: Service Usage by Campus

EOPS service	<i>N</i>	Effect size	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> value
Book vouchers/grant	1,935	.119	54.7	26	< .001
CARE	1,935	.105	42.9	26	.020
Cash grants	1,935	.149	86.3	26	< .001
EOPS counseling	1,935	.140	76.3	26	< .001
EOPS support staff	1,935	.116	52.3	26	.002
Foster youth support	1,935	.115	51.1	26	.002
Gift cards	1,935	.262	265.7	26	< .001
Graduation assistance	1,924	.152	88.6	26	< .001
Priority registration	1,935	.135	70.9	26	< .001
Referrals to other resources	1,935	.104	41.6	26	.027
School supplies	1,924	.265	269.5	26	< .001
Student educational planning	1,935	.124	59.6	26	< .001
Transfer services	1,924	.091	31.5	26	.209
Tutoring	1,935	.124	59.0	26	< .001
Workshops/events	1,935	.170	112.3	26	< .001

Note. Services are ordered alphabetically. Effect size is Cramer's *V*.

Figure 1

EOPS Service Usage by Campus



Differences in Service Usage by Student Race/Ethnicity

For service usage by race/ethnicity, 11 of the 15 services showed statistically significant differences based on student race/ethnicity. However, the sizes of these differences were small (all services had effect sizes $<.150$; see Table 11 and Figure 2).

Table 11

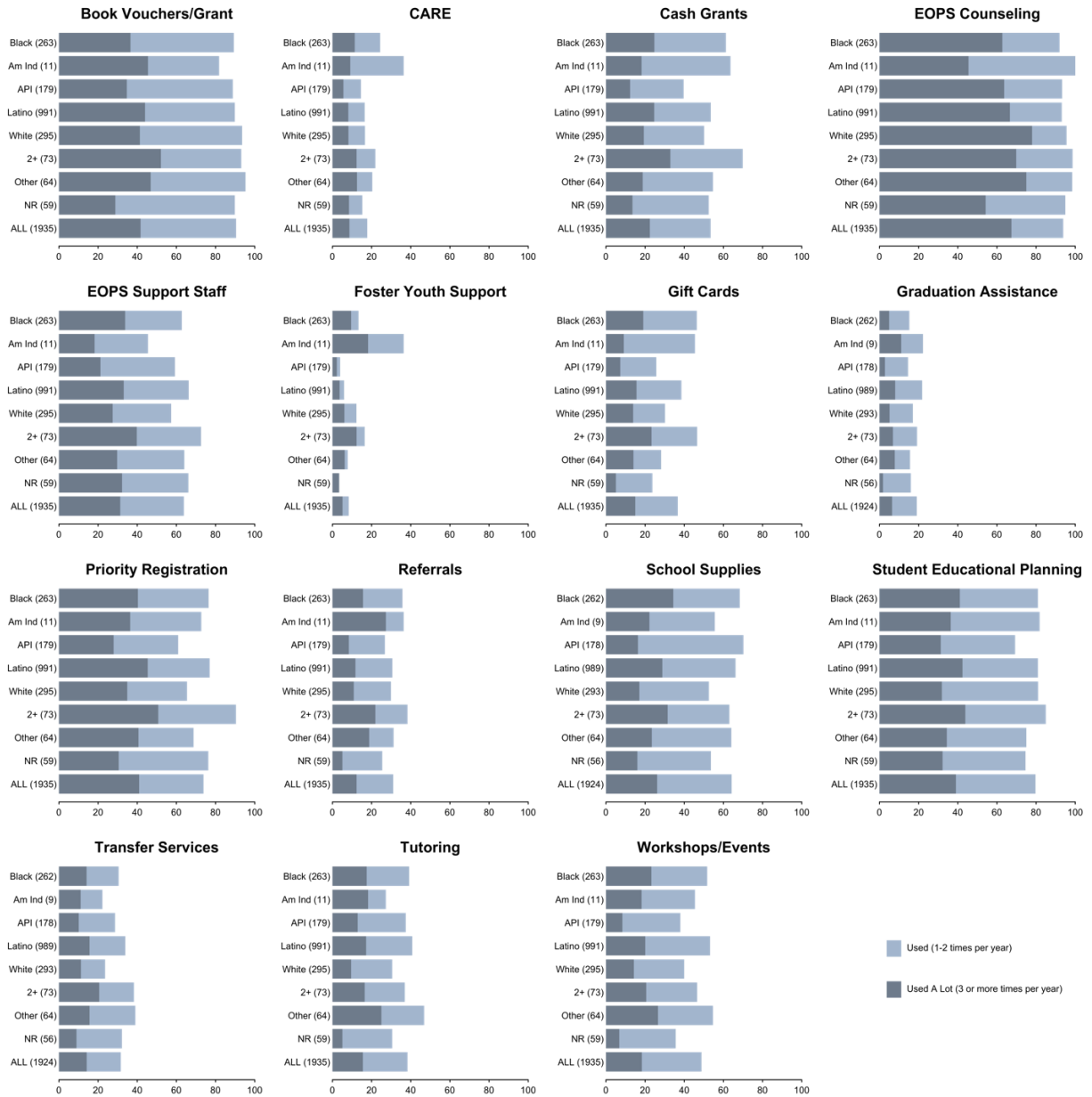
Chi-Square Tests of Independence: Service Usage by Race/Ethnicity

EOPS service	<i>N</i>	Effect size	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> value
Book vouchers/grant	1,935	.080	24.6	14	.039
CARE	1,935	.070	18.9	14	.168
Cash grants	1,935	.105	42.3	14	$< .001$
EOPS counseling	1,935	.098	36.9	14	$< .001$
EOPS support staff	1,935	.078	23.8	14	.049
Foster youth support	1,935	.120	55.5	14	$< .001$
Gift cards	1,935	.107	44.0	14	$< .001$
Graduation assistance	1,924	.067	17.1	14	.250
Priority registration	1,935	.121	56.6	14	$< .001$
Referrals to other resources	1,935	.076	22.3	14	.074
School supplies	1,924	.125	60.3	14	$< .001$
Student educational planning	1,935	.090	31.3	14	.005
Transfer services	1,924	.074	21.2	14	.096
Tutoring	1,935	.082	25.9	14	.026
Workshops/events	1,935	.108	44.9	14	$< .001$

Note. Services are ordered alphabetically. Effect size is Cramer's *V*.

Figure 2

EOPS Service Usage by Student Race/Ethnicity



Review of Most Used Support Services

The usage of EOPS counseling services, EOPS book voucher/grants, priority registration, and student educational planning exhibited statistically significant differences across colleges

and racial/ethnic groups. However, these differences were relatively small in practical terms. Despite the variations, the majority of respondents from each racial and ethnic group reported using these EOPS services. Most students used EOPS counseling services three or more times per year, except for the American Indian/Alaskan Native group, which mostly used it one to two times per year. The usage of book voucher/grants varied, with many students using it one to two times or three or more times per semester. Priority registration was widely used, particularly among African American, Hispanic/Latino, and two or more races respondents, while Asian respondents tended to use it less. Student educational planning was used by the majority of respondents, particularly among African American, Hispanic/Latino, and two or more races students. Please refer to Figures 1 and 2 for visual representations of these findings.

Findings Related to Research Question 2

Students who indicated that they did not use a specific service were asked to provide reasons for not using it, and their responses can be found in Table 12. While all 15 EOPS support services were used, Figure 3 illustrates the reasons for nonuse for each service by college. Table 12 provides detailed information regarding why students did not use particular services.

Across all services, the most common reasons given for not using a service were that students were unaware of the service (38%) or did not require the service (33%). It is important to note that there is variation among colleges and race/ethnic student groups, which are highlighted in this section. Additionally, the results for the least used services are presented.

The services with the lowest usage rates were foster youth support, CARE, and graduation assistance. Only 8.3% of respondents used the foster youth support service while 91.7% did not. Among those who did not use this service, 48% stated that they did not require it, which aligns with the small number of EOPS students identifying as foster youth.

For the CARE program for single parents, 17.8% of respondents used the service, while 82.2% did not. Among those who did not use the service, 39% stated that they did not need it, and another 32% mentioned that they did not qualify for it.

Regarding graduation assistance services, 19.5% of respondents used the service while 80.5% did not. Among those who did not use this service, 45% stated that they did not require it, and an additional 23% mentioned that they were unaware of it.

These findings highlight the reasons for the nonuse of specific services and shed light on the least used services within the EOPS program.

Table 12

Students' Reasons for Not Using EOPS Services (N = 1,935)

EOPS service	Never used		Reason given for not using EOPS service					Other
	#	% of total	#	Did not know	Did not need	Did not have time	Did not qualify	
EOPS counseling	119	6.1%	106	37.7%	28.3%	18.9%	3.8%	11.3%
Book vouchers/grant	184	9.5%	165	30.9%	23.6%	17.6%	6.1%	21.8%
Student educational planning	394	20.4%	356	56.2%	20.8%	8.1%	5.1%	9.8%
Priority registration	506	26.1%	456	59.2%	21.7%	7.7%	3.7%	7.7%
School supplies	689	35.6%	616	55.7%	25.6%	6.2%	5.0%	7.5%
EOPS support staff	700	36.2%	631	41.4%	30.9%	18.7%	2.1%	7.0%
Cash grants	901	46.6%	817	71.0%	6.4%	2.4%	12.6%	7.6%
Workshops/events	991	51.2%	898	37.3%	20.0%	35.4%	1.2%	6.0%
Tutoring	1,193	61.7%	1,093	21.9%	46.7%	24.3%	1.1%	6.0%
Gift cards	1,225	63.3%	1,113	73.3%	8.7%	2.7%	8.5%	6.7%
Transfer services	1,316	68.0%	1,206	36.6%	41.0%	6.8%	9.2%	6.5%
Referrals to other resources	1,335	69.0%	1,217	52.9%	32.3%	7.9%	3.5%	3.4%
Graduation assistance	1,558	80.5%	1,420	22.8%	44.6%	2.0%	17.8%	12.7%
CARE	1,591	82.2%	1,451	20.9%	38.9%	1.5%	32.1%	6.6%
Foster youth support	1,775	91.7%	1,627	13.0%	47.8%	1.5%	33.9%	3.7%

Reasons for Not Using Services by Campus

For reasons for not using services by college, nine services showed a statistically significant difference across campus (based on $p < .05$; see Table 13). However, most of these

differences were very small in practical terms. Only three services (priority registration, school supplies, and cash grants) showed differences that were both statistically significant ($p < .05$) and practically significant (effect size $\geq .150$). Overall, 59% of students who did not use priority registration reported that this was because they did not know about the service. However, at one college (A), 50% of respondents reported that the service was not used because they did not need it. Similarly, 56% of students who did not use school supplies said this was because they did not know about the service. However, at one college (M), 67% of respondents reported that the service was not used because they did not need it. Overall, 71% of those who did not use cash grants said this was because they did not know about the service. However, at one college (L), 75% of the respondents stated they did not need the service. Refer to Figure 3 for more details.

Table 13

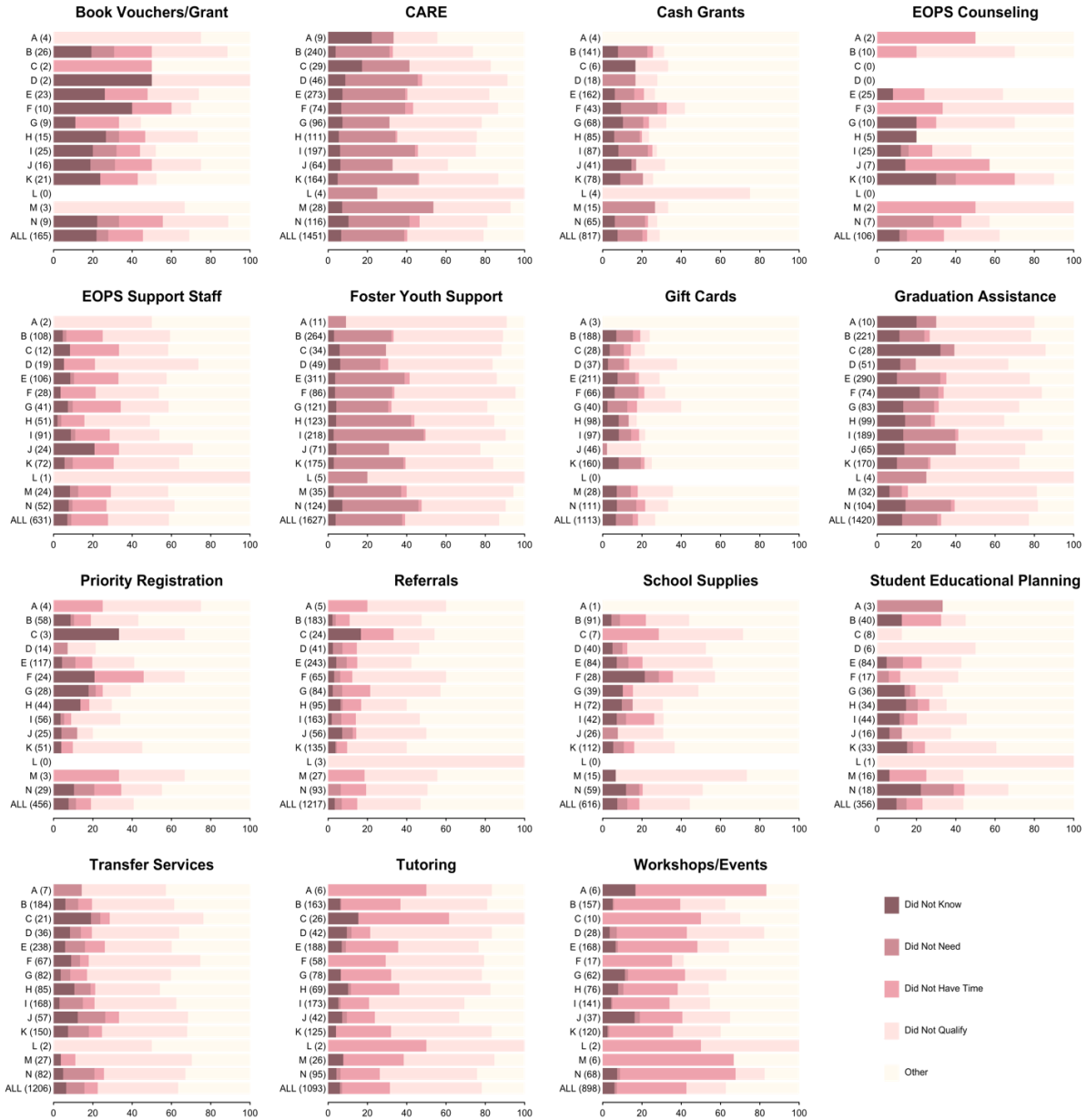
Chi-Square Tests of Independence: Reasons for Not Using Services by College

EOPS service	<i>N</i>	Effect size	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> value
Book vouchers/grant	165	.264	46.1	48	.551
CARE	1,451	.127	93.5	52	< .001
Cash grants	817	.151	74.9	52	.020
EOPS counseling	106	.337	48.0	40	.180
EOPS support staff	631	.115	33.5	52	.978
Foster youth support	1,627	.108	76.4	52	.015
Gift cards	1,113	.126	70.5	48	.019
Graduation assistance	1,420	.124	87.1	52	.002
Priority registration	456	.205	76.8	48	.005
Referrals to other resources	1,217	.133	86.6	52	.002
School supplies	616	.192	90.7	48	< .001
Student educational planning	356	.213	64.7	52	.112
Transfer services	1,206	.113	61.7	52	.169
Tutoring	1,093	.126	69.7	52	.051
Workshops/events	898	.146	76.6	52	.015

Note. Services are ordered alphabetically. Effect size is Cramer's *V*.

Figure 3

Reasons for Not Using EOPS Services, by Campus



Reasons for Not Using Services by Race/Ethnicity

For reasons for not using services by race/ethnicity, seven services showed a statistically significant difference (based on $p < .05$; see Table 14). However, most of these differences were

very small in practical terms. Only one service, tutoring, showed differences that were both statistically significant ($p < .05$) and practically significant (effect size $\geq .150$). Overall, 47% of students who did not use tutoring said this was because they did not need the service. However, among African Americans and Asians, approximately 30% reported not knowing about the service. Please refer to Figure 4 for a visual representation of these findings.

Table 14

Chi-Square Tests of Independence: Reasons for Not Using Services by Race/Ethnicity

EOPS service	<i>N</i>	Effect size	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> value
Book vouchers/grant	165	.218	31.3	28	.304
CARE	1,451	.102	60.9	28	< .001
Cash grants	817	.085	23.6	28	.701
EOPS counseling	106	.279	33.0	24	.105
EOPS support staff	631	.113	32.0	28	.276
Foster youth support	1,627	.116	86.9	28	< .001
Gift cards	1,113	.074	24.4	28	.663
Graduation assistance	1,420	.122	85.1	28	< .001
Priority registration	456	.134	32.5	28	.254
Referrals to other resources	1,217	.102	50.3	28	.006
School supplies	616	.120	35.6	28	.154
Student educational planning	356	.137	26.6	28	.542
Transfer services	1,206	.104	52.1	28	.004
Tutoring	1,093	.154	103.2	28	< .001
Workshops/events	898	.126	56.7	28	.001

Note. Services are ordered alphabetically. Effect size is Cramer's V.

Figure 4

Reasons for Not Using EOPS Services, by Race/Ethnicity



Review of Least Used EOPS Services

The foster youth support service demonstrated statistically significant differences across colleges and racial/ethnic student groups, but the practical significance was small, with most respondents at each college reporting not using the service because they did not need it. College I

had a high percentage of respondents indicating they did not qualify for the service. The majority of respondents from various racial/ethnic groups mentioned not needing the foster youth service except for African American and two or more races respondents, who stated they did not qualify for it. Similarly, the CARE program exhibited statistically significant differences across colleges and racial/ethnic groups with no practical significance as well. The majority of respondents from nine out of 14 colleges reported not using the CARE support service because they did not need it. Racially and ethnically, the majority of African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, two or more races, and “prefer not to answer” respondents stated they did not qualify for the CARE service. However, Hispanic/Latino, White, and Other respondents stated they did not need it. For the graduation assistance service, only statistically significant differences were observed across colleges and racial/ethnic groups. The majority of respondents from all colleges reported not using the service because they did not need it. With the exception of Asian respondents, the majority of respondents across racial/ethnic groups mentioned not using the service because they did not need it, while Asian respondents indicated a lack of awareness about the service. Please refer to Figures 3 and 4 for further details.

Findings Related to Research Question 3

The findings for Research Question 3 are based on student perceptions of how beneficial they considered the EOPS support services they used. They were asked to rate the helpfulness of each service they used. Of the ones they found helpful, they were also asked to rate which service was the most important to them and, in an open-ended question, why that particular service was most important to them. Of the EOPS support services used, the respondents were asked to rate each service on a five-point Likert scale (*very unhelpful, somewhat unhelpful, neither helpful nor unhelpful, somewhat helpful, very helpful*).

Overall Ratings of Helpfulness and Importance

The mean ratings (ranging from 4.56 to 4.89) indicate that all 15 EOPS support services were viewed by the vast majority of those using the services as being very helpful. The EOPS support services that were most frequently identified as most important were the following: (a) EOPS book vouchers/grants (considered most important by 38.4% of respondents), (b) EOPS counseling (22.6%), (c) cash grants (15.6%), (d) student educational planning (6.9%), and (e) priority registration (4.6%). Please refer to Table 15 for more details.

Table 15

Students' Ratings of the Helpfulness and Importance of EOPS Services

Service	Total #	Ratings of helpfulness										M	SD	Service rated most important (n = 1,765)	
		(1) Very unhelpful		(2) Somewhat unhelpful		(3) Neither helpful nor unhelpful		(4) Somewhat helpful		(5) Very helpful				#	%
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%				
Book vouchers/grant	1,634	15	0.9%	10	0.6%	19	1.2%	85	5.2%	1,505	92.1%	4.87	0.53	678	38.4%
EOPS counseling	1,688	14	0.8%	11	0.7%	29	1.7%	141	8.4%	1,493	88.4%	4.83	0.56	399	22.6%
Cash grants	964	10	1.0%	4	0.4%	7	0.7%	42	4.4%	901	93.5%	4.89	0.51	275	15.6%
Student ed planning	1,434	10	0.7%	6	0.4%	24	1.7%	134	9.3%	1,260	87.9%	4.83	0.53	121	6.9%
Priority registration	1,339	10	0.7%	3	0.2%	8	0.6%	93	6.9%	1,225	91.5%	4.88	0.47	81	4.6%
Gift cards	663	5	0.8%	2	0.3%	6	0.9%	32	4.8%	618	93.2%	4.89	0.47	51	2.9%
CARE	316	12	3.8%	5	1.6%	25	7.9%	27	8.5%	247	78.2%	4.56	0.98	42	2.4%
EOPS support staff	1,161	9	0.8%	2	0.2%	21	1.8%	106	9.1%	1,023	88.1%	4.84	0.53	33	1.9%
School supplies	1,149	9	0.8%	1	0.1%	18	1.6%	89	7.7%	1,032	89.8%	4.86	0.50	25	1.4%
Tutoring	688	5	0.7%	3	0.4%	15	2.2%	95	13.8%	570	82.8%	4.78	0.58	23	1.3%
Transfer services	564	5	0.9%	3	0.5%	17	3.0%	51	9.0%	488	86.5%	4.80	0.60	16	0.9%
Foster youth support	151	5	3.3%	3	2.0%	6	4.0%	12	7.9%	125	82.8%	4.65	0.91	10	0.6%
Workshops/events	872	4	0.5%	7	0.8%	28	3.2%	159	18.2%	674	77.3%	4.71	0.61	6	0.3%
Graduation assistance	347	5	1.4%	0	0.0%	6	1.7%	18	5.2%	318	91.6%	4.86	0.58	4	0.2%
Referrals	564	5	0.9%	5	0.9%	27	4.8%	84	14.9%	443	78.5%	4.69	0.68	1	0.1%

Overall Ratings of Helpfulness and Importance by College

For perceived helpfulness by college, three services met the criteria for statistical significance ($p < .05$): school supplies ($p = .028$), tutoring ($p = .008$), and workshops/events ($p = .008$). Among these, tutoring and workshops/events also demonstrated practical significance (Cramer's $V \geq .150$). Please refer to Table 16 and Figure 5 for details.

Overall, approximately 83% of students reported tutoring as very helpful. However, at two colleges (D and M), more than 30% of respondents mentioned that tutoring was somewhat helpful. Similarly, while 77% of student respondents overall found workshops to be very helpful, 36% of respondents at one college (M) reported it to be somewhat helpful. For a visual representation, please see Figure 5.

Table 16

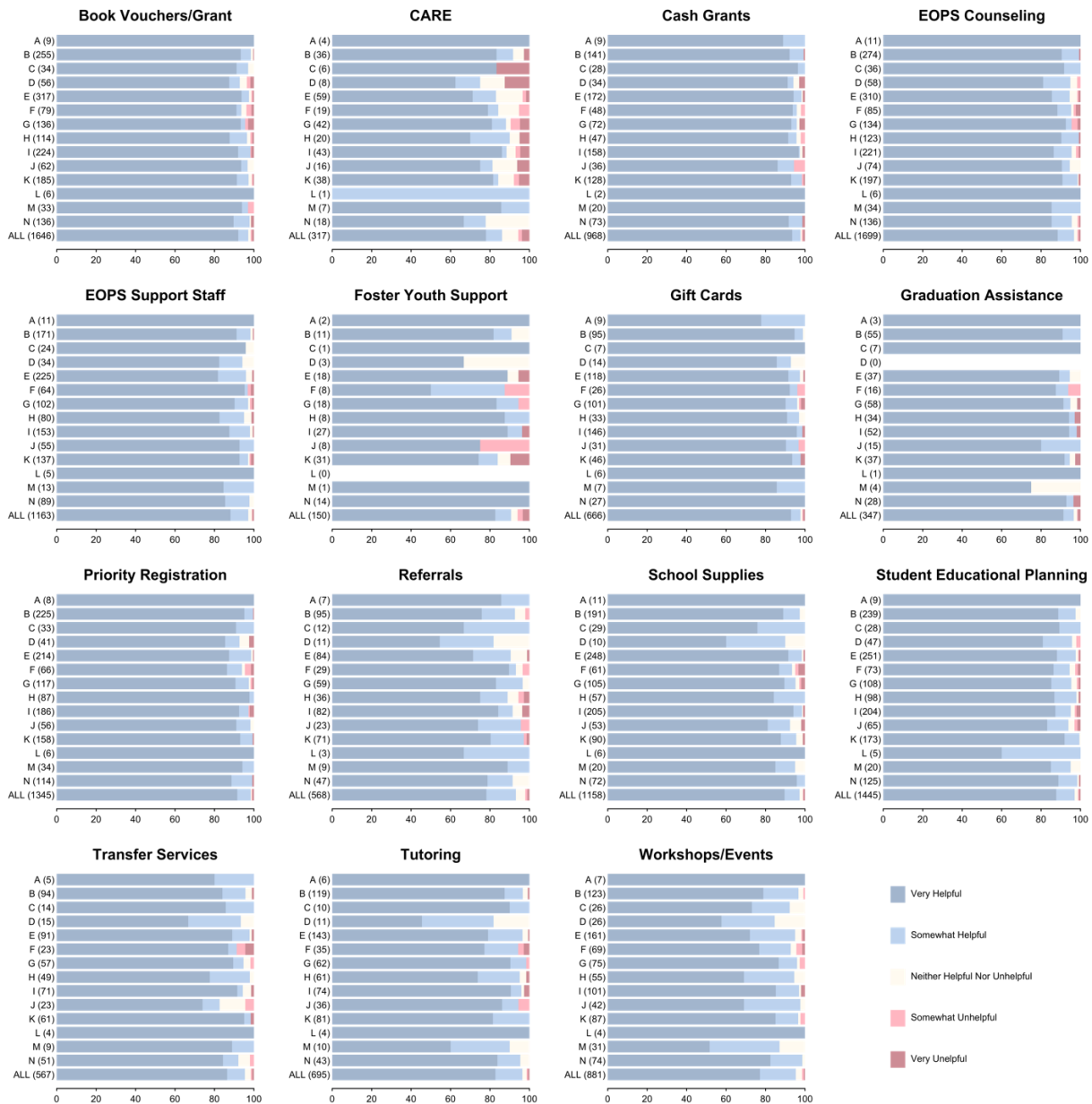
Chi-Square Tests of Independence: Perceived Helpfulness of Services by Campus

EOPS service	<i>N</i>	Effect size	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> value
Book vouchers/grant	1,646	.085	47.6	52	.648
CARE	317	.192	46.9	52	.674
Cash grants	968	.120	55.3	52	.353
EOPS counseling	1,699	.099	66.5	52	.086
EOPS support staff	1,163	.105	51.0	52	.513
Foster youth support	150	.307	56.6	48	.184
Gift cards	666	.127	43.3	52	.801
Graduation assistance	347	.200	55.6	48	.209
Priority registration	1,345	.114	69.7	52	.051
Referrals to other resources	568	.146	48.7	52	.606
School supplies	1,158	.127	74.2	52	.023
Student educational planning	1,445	.080	37.3	52	.938
Transfer services	567	.160	58.4	52	.253
Tutoring	695	.169	79.8	52	.008
Workshops/events	881	.151	79.8	52	.008

Note. Services are ordered alphabetically. Effect size is Cramer's V .

Figure 5

Helpfulness and Importance of EOPS Services by College



Overall Ratings of Helpfulness and Importance by Race/Ethnicity

For reasons for overall helpfulness, eight services exhibited a statistically significant difference across all race/ethnicity groups (based on $p < .05$; refer to Table 17). However, most of these differences were negligible in practical terms. Only one service, graduation assistance,

displayed differences that were both statistically significant ($p < .05$) and practically significant (effect size $\geq .150$).

Overall, approximately 91% of students reported graduation assistance as very helpful. However, among American Indians/Alaskan Natives respondents, 50% indicated that the service was neither helpful nor unhelpful. For further details, please refer to Table 17 and Figure 6).

Table 17

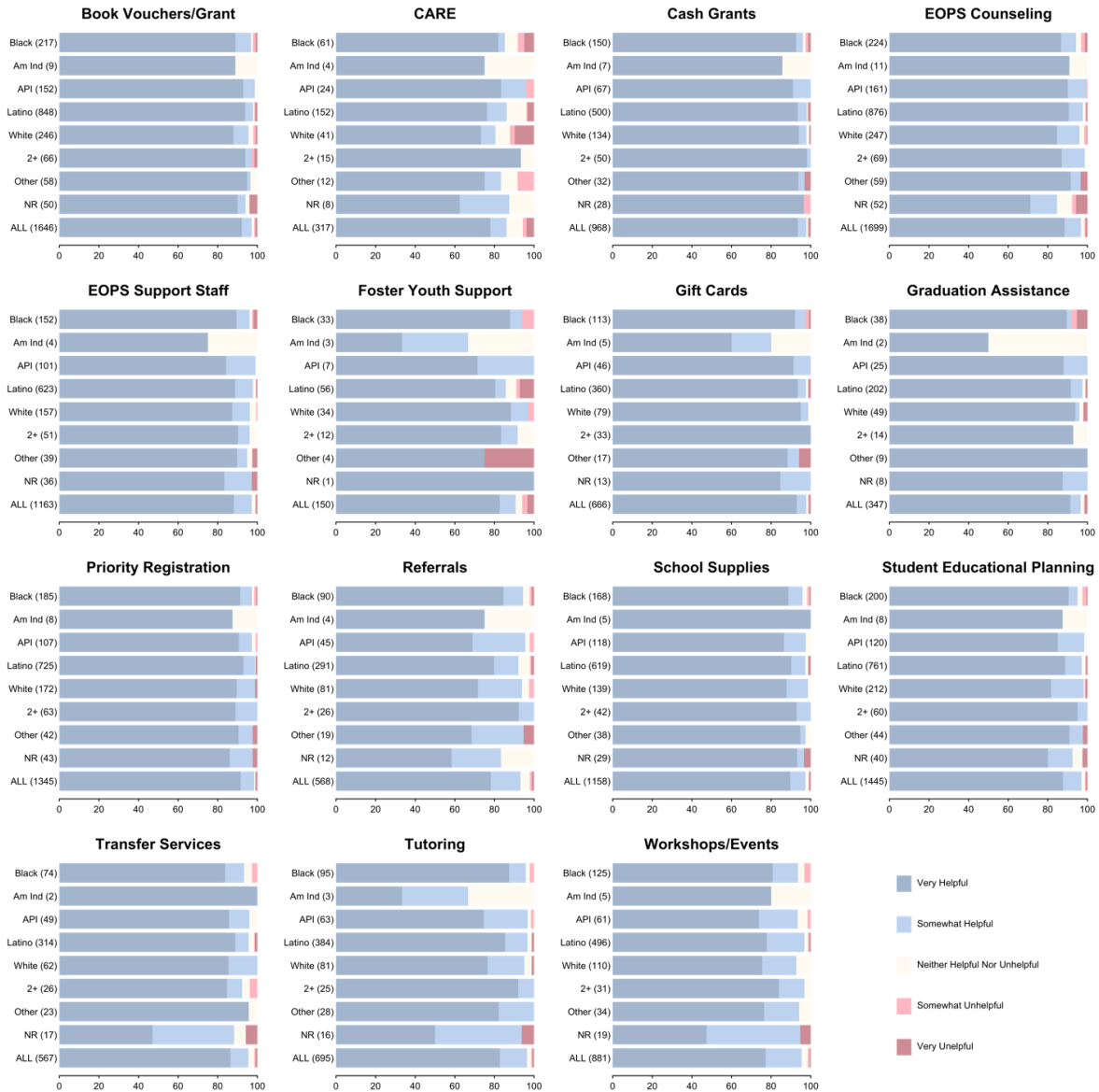
Chi-Square Tests of Independence: Perceived Helpfulness of Services by Race/Ethnicity

EOPS service	<i>N</i>	Effect size	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> value
Book vouchers/grant	1,646	.079	40.8	28	.056
CARE	317	.140	24.9	28	.634
Cash grants	968	.102	40.1	28	.065
EOPS counseling	1,699	.096	62.9	28	< .001
EOPS support staff	1,163	.088	35.9	28	.144
Foster youth support	150	.239	34.2	28	.194
Gift cards	666	.129	44.5	28	.025
Graduation assistance	347	.191	50.6	28	.006
Priority registration	1,345	.094	47.4	28	.013
Referrals to other resources	568	.126	36.2	28	.139
School supplies	1,158	.078	27.8	28	.473
Student educational planning	1,445	.095	52.6	28	.003
Transfer services	567	.148	49.6	28	.007
Tutoring	695	.141	55.5	28	.001
Workshops/events	881	.120	50.3	28	.006

Notes. Services are ordered alphabetically. Effect size is Cramer's V.

Figure 6

Helpfulness and Importance of EOPS Services, By Race/Ethnicity



Most Important Service

Table 18 shows the percentages of students within each of the 14 colleges who identified a particular service as most important. Book vouchers/grants were identified as the most important service provided by EOPS by the largest percentages of students at 10 of the 14 colleges. EOPS counseling was identified as the most important service by the largest

percentages of students at three colleges, and CARE was reported as the most important service by the largest percentage of students at one college. Across all racial and ethnic student groups, book vouchers/grants were most frequently identified as the most important service (see Table 19). EOPS counseling was ranked or tied as the second most important service across all racial and ethnic student groups, except for those who identify as two or more races, who ranked cash grants as the second most important service and EOPS counseling as third.

Table 18

Most Important EOPS Service by College

EOPS service	Campus														Total
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	
Book vouchers/grant	25.0%	38.6%	25.0%	40.4%	48.1%	31.4%	34.8%	30.3%	43.6%	31.1%	27.6%	66.7%	29.7%	49.6%	38.6%
CARE	33.3%	1.1%	5.6%	0.0%	0.3%	2.3%	3.6%	0.8%	3.0%	1.4%	6.7%	0.0%	5.4%	0.0%	2.4%
Cash grants	8.3%	12.1%	16.7%	22.8%	16.5%	15.1%	10.9%	10.6%	21.6%	12.2%	19.5%	0.0%	18.9%	12.6%	15.6%
EOPS counseling	16.7%	23.9%	38.9%	21.1%	14.7%	26.7%	30.4%	37.1%	11.9%	27.0%	27.1%	0.0%	35.1%	16.3%	22.4%
EOPS support staff	8.3%	1.4%	0.0%	1.8%	0.6%	1.2%	6.5%	0.0%	1.7%	4.1%	2.4%	0.0%	2.7%	3.0%	2.0%
Foster youth support	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.7%	0.0%	1.3%	1.4%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%
Gift cards	0.0%	1.1%	2.8%	3.5%	5.3%	2.3%	6.5%	3.8%	3.0%	1.4%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	1.5%	2.9%
Graduation assistance	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.2%
Priority registration	0.0%	8.2%	5.6%	1.8%	2.4%	5.8%	3.6%	6.8%	3.0%	4.1%	3.8%	16.7%	5.4%	5.2%	4.6%
Referrals to other resources	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
School supplies	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	1.8%	1.2%	2.3%	0.0%	1.5%	3.4%	2.7%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	1.4%
Student educational planning	8.3%	8.9%	2.8%	5.3%	6.8%	7.0%	1.4%	6.8%	6.8%	10.8%	7.6%	0.0%	0.0%	8.1%	6.8%
Transfer services	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	1.8%	0.9%	1.2%	0.7%	0.8%	0.4%	1.4%	1.4%	0.0%	2.7%	1.5%	0.9%
Tutoring	0.0%	2.5%	2.8%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.7%	0.8%	0.4%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Workshops/events	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%

Table 19*Most Important EOPS Service by Ethnicity/Race*

EOPS service	Student race/ethnicity									Total
	African American / Black	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Hispanic / Latino	Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	White	Two or more races	Other	Prefer not to answer	
Book vouchers/grant	35.4%	62.5%	45.2%	37.4%	71.4%	38.8%	42.6%	29.5%	51.0%	38.6%
CARE	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	4.1%	1.5%	4.9%	2.0%	2.4%
Cash grants	17.1%	0.0%	12.1%	14.2%	0.0%	20.9%	22.1%	18.0%	10.2%	15.6%
EOPS counseling	17.9%	12.5%	25.5%	24.1%	14.3%	21.6%	13.2%	27.9%	16.3%	22.4%
EOPS support staff	2.9%	12.5%	2.5%	2.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	3.3%	4.1%	2.0%
Foster youth support	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
Gift cards	2.5%	0.0%	0.6%	3.2%	0.0%	3.4%	2.9%	4.9%	2.0%	2.9%
Graduation assistance	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Priority registration	3.3%	0.0%	5.7%	4.7%	0.0%	4.5%	5.9%	4.9%	4.1%	4.6%
Referrals to other resources	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
School supplies	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	1.4%
Student educational planning	10.0%	0.0%	5.7%	7.2%	0.0%	3.7%	10.3%	3.3%	6.1%	6.8%
Transfer services	0.4%	12.5%	1.3%	1.1%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
Tutoring	1.3%	0.0%	1.3%	1.4%	14.3%	0.4%	1.5%	1.6%	2.0%	1.3%
Workshops/events	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.3%

Top Three Most Important Services Open-Ended Responses

Student respondents were given the chance to provide open-ended responses regarding the helpfulness of the EOPS services they found most important as well as explain why they considered that service the most important. This section presents the open text format responses from the students' survey. This provided insights into the reasoning behind their choices, complementing the quantitative survey data.

Book Voucher/Grants

Respondents rated book grants as the most important service. Of the 1,743 students who used the book grant/voucher service, 38% rated the book grant/voucher as the most essential service to them. A common theme from the open-ended response was the hardship of the expense of college books. As one student explained,

Buying a book can range from 50 to 200 dollars, and that adds up with students that aren't receiving financial support from their parents it becomes difficult to afford basic needs for class. By having a voucher, at least the books can be covered.

Another student expressed that this service was most important "because I can't afford the college books, so EOPS makes being a student possible while I'm also a mom. Thank you, EOPS!" Another student noted,

Although some professors provide eBooks, my eyes hurt and blur if I read from the screen for a long time. With the book grants, I can buy books and reread them later for better comprehension. Book grants really helped me with this issue as books are very expensive.

It is important to highlight that a significant majority of respondents from all 14 programs expressed that the EOPS book grant/voucher was extremely beneficial. Additionally, among all race and ethnicity groups, the majority of respondents acknowledged the EOPS book voucher/grant as being highly helpful.

EOPS Counseling

EOPS counseling was ranked as the second most important service used. Of 1,808 student respondents who answered the survey question, "What services did you find helpful in meeting your academic goals?" and selected the EOPS counseling service, 23% rated it as the

most important to them on their educational journey. A common theme that emerged from the open-ended question as to why they selected counseling was the helpfulness of the EOPS counselors, as illustrated in the comments of three participants. One student stated, “EOPS counselors always went above and beyond. Compared to typical counseling services at College K, there was no equal to EOPS. I learned so much about opportunities that would otherwise be unknown to me.”

Another student commented, “Having a more personalized support in a community campus is really a privilege. It being mandatory three times a semester forces me to stay on track, and address my concerns as soon as possible.”

A third participant noted,

I selected “EOPS counseling” to be the most important service because I would have taken more time to graduate. The EOPS counselors helped me find the resources to graduate, and their knowledge helped me keep on track. Without the counselors, I would not have gotten these resources available for students. Thanks to them, I was able to graduate without worrying about how I was going to pay for the books, the gown, and everything else that I needed to graduate.

Among all 14 campuses and across all race and ethnicity groups of respondents, a significant majority from each group expressed that EOPS counseling was an extremely valuable support service. It is worth noting that respondents who selected EOPS support staff as the most important also referred to the helpfulness of their counselor in their open-ended question, which can be further explored in future studies and revisions of the survey.

Cash Grants

Cash grants ranked third place as one of the most essential services used. Of the 1,032 respondents who used the cash grant service, 16% indicated it was the most important service to the participant. A common theme that emerged was the presence of pandemic hardships, which affected service usage. The following are direct quotes from some respondents.

One participant said,

During a time of low income and unemployment due to the pandemic, the grants have kept my family and me afloat and helped to maintain a roof over our heads. I am greatly appreciative of the support received from these programs. They have saved my family's stability and provided an outlet I have never experienced.

Another respondent commented,

During my path to education, I had a couple of hardships and life-changing events that could have prevented me from completing my associate's degree. If it weren't for the cash grants, I would not have completed my first year of college, nor have been able to meet amazing supportive staff or be aware of helpful resources.

Finally, a third participant stated, "Because the grants that EOPS provides help me prioritize school without worrying that I won't have money for educational materials."

It is worth noting that, among all 14 colleges, a majority of student respondents from each college expressed that cash grants were highly beneficial. Furthermore, across all race and ethnic groups, the majority of respondents indicated that cash grants were ranked as extremely helpful.

Findings Related to Research Question 4

Staff surveyed were asked this question: “Which EOPS services do you believe have the greatest impact on students? Please drag and drop the services to rank them in order with “1” being the most impactful.” The results for Research Question 4 are contained in Table 20.

Table 20

Staff Perceptions of the Relative Importance of EOPS Services (N = 67)

EOPS service	Staff ranking of EOPS services															M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
Book vouchers/grant	23	18	13	3	4	1	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4.87	0.53
CARE	1	3	9	14	9	5	5	7	5	3	2	1	1	1	0	4.56	0.98
Cash grants	1	8	7	7	6	8	3	2	3	1	3	0	0	0	0	4.89	0.51
EOPS counseling	29	12	7	4	10	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.83	0.56
EOPS support staff	4	3	4	8	6	13	13	5	4	2	3	2	0	0	0	4.84	0.53
Foster youth support	0	2	2	6	6	7	7	7	4	6	3	1	4	0	0	4.65	0.91
Gift cards	0	2	2	5	1	5	3	4	8	10	7	1	2	0	1	4.89	0.47
Graduation assistance	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	5	10	8	9	9	6	8	2	4.86	0.58
Priority registration	7	4	9	8	6	6	6	7	3	3	4	1	2	0	0	4.88	0.47
Referrals	0	0	2	1	2	3	0	1	6	6	6	14	8	9	6	4.69	0.68
School supplies	0	1	3	1	2	2	5	6	3	8	7	7	4	6	1	4.86	0.50
Student educational planning	2	13	8	8	7	5	6	3	4	2	5	0	1	0	0	4.83	0.53
Transfer services	0	1	1	1	0	5	5	9	3	3	4	13	11	5	3	4.80	0.60
Tutoring	0	0	0	0	7	2	5	4	8	6	2	4	3	10	0	4.78	0.58
Workshops/events	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	5	6	9	10	10	7	14	4.71	0.61

This section summarizes findings from the EOPS staff survey responses. The EOPS staff were asked to rank each service they offered on their campus and which they believed was the most impactful from a rating scale of 1-15, with one being the most impactful and 15 being the least impactful.

Of the 67 responses to the question, 29 (44%) ranked EOPS counseling as the most impactful support service. Book grants/vouchers was ranked second, with 23 (34%) responses,

and priority registration was ranked third with seven respondents (10%). The least impactful services rated by the EOPS staff were foster youth support services, gift cards, and graduation assistance.

The staff ranking of EOPS counseling and book grants/vouchers was directly correlated with student respondent ranking, as were the rankings of foster youth service and graduation assistance as being the least used.

Table 21 compares EOPS staff rankings of most impactful EOPS support services to the rankings of their students. Data indicates that the perceptions are similar for four of the five top-ranked services. The staff ranked EOPS support staff in fourth place, whereas the EOPS students ranked that service in eighth place. The EOPS students ranked cash grants as the third most impactful service, whereas the EOPS staff ranked it in sixth place. This illustrates that the programs are in tune with addressing their students' needs. All other four EOPS support services were aligned with each data set for the two different surveys administered to students and personnel in the EOPS program.

Staff Survey by College

The staff survey on EOPS services across different colleges revealed varying perspectives on the impact and importance of different support services. EOPS counseling was consistently ranked as the most impactful service, except for respondents from College L where priority registration was rated highest. Book grants were highly valued by staff at Colleges A, C, and F while priority registration received mixed rankings across different colleges. Cash grants were ranked lower by EOPS staff compared to student respondents, with varying opinions on their impact. Overall, the staff survey highlighted the diversity of perspectives on the importance and impact of different EOPS services among staff members from different colleges.

Table 21*Most Important/Impactful EOPS Services According to Students (N = 1,774) and Staff (N = 67)*

EOPS service	Students		Staff	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Book vouchers/grant	687	38.4%	23	34.3%
CARE	42	2.4%	1	1.4%
Cash grants	275	15.6%	1	1.4%
EOPS counseling	399	22.6%	29	43.3%
EOPS support staff	33	1.9%	4	6.1%
Foster youth support	10	0.6%	0	0.0%
Gift cards	51	2.9%	0	0.0%
Graduation assistance	4	0.2%	0	0.0%
Priority registration	81	4.6%	7	10.4%
Referrals	1	0.1%	0	0.0%
School supplies	25	1.4%	0	0.0%
Student educational planning	121	6.9%	2	3.1%
Transfer services	16	0.9%	0	0.0%
Tutoring	23	1.3%	0	0.0%
Workshops/events	6	0.3%	0	0.0%

Summary

The findings and recommendations described below are based on the experiences of EOPS students and staff, the research questions and objectives, and the themes emerging from the data analysis. The research questions and corresponding results follow.

With respect to Research Question 1, the study found that the most used EOPS services were (a) EOPS counseling (93.85%), (b) book grants (90.49%), (c) student educational planning (79%), and (d) priority registration (73.85%).

The majority of respondents from all 14 surveyed EOPS programs reported using the EOPS counseling service three or more times per year. This trend was consistent across all racial and ethnic groups, with the majority of respondents in each group indicating their usage of the

EOPS counseling services. The majority of respondents from African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, White, two or more races, other, and prefer not to answer groups used the EOPS counseling service three or more times per year. The exception was the American Indian/Alaskan Native group, among whom the majority (56%) of respondents used the service one to two times per year. Regarding the usage of book grants/vouchers, the majority of student respondents at most colleges reported using the service at least once. Although there were variations in usage, the majority of respondents utilized the book grants/vouchers three or more times. Across all eight ethnic groups identified in the survey, the majority of respondents indicated they used the service at least once. Specifically, the majority of respondents identifying as American Indian/Alaskan Native (45%) and two or more races (52%) reported using the service three or more times per year.

With respect to Research Question 2, the study found that the most underused services were foster youth support, the CARE program for single parents, and graduation assistance. The student respondents indicated that the reasons these services were not used were because students did not need the service, did not qualify for the service, or did not know about the service. Statistically significant differences were observed in the usage and reasons for not using the foster youth support service, CARE program, and graduation assistance service across colleges and racial/ethnic groups. Most respondents at each college reported not using the foster youth support service and CARE program because they did not need it. The majority of respondents from various racial/ethnic groups also mentioned not needing these services, except for African American and two or more races respondents who stated they did not qualify for them. For the graduation assistance service, the majority of respondents from all colleges reported not using it because they did not need it, except for Asian respondents who indicated a

lack of awareness about the service. These findings highlight the variations in usage and reasons for not using these support services among different colleges and racial/ethnic groups.

With respect to Research Question 3, the study found that the most impactful EOPS support services were (a) EOPS book grants (38.4%), (b) EOPS counseling (22.6%), (c) cash grants (15.6%), (d) student educational planning (6.9%), and (e) priority registration (4.6%). The majority of the respondents from all 14 programs and all of the eight race and ethnicity groups indicated that the EOPS book grants/vouchers, EOPS counseling, and cash grants were very helpful.

With respect to Research Question 4, the EOPS staff respondents ranked impactful services as (a) EOPS counseling, (b) book grant/voucher, and (c) priority registration. This finding correlates with the student respondents in terms of services they use: (a) EOPS counseling, (b) book grants, (c) educational planning as well as those they find impactful: (a) book grants, (b) EOPS counseling, (c) cash grants, and (d) educational planning.

Variation in Services Used

All California EOPS programs must adhere to the same Title 5 regulations and implementation guidelines. These guidelines outline certain mandated services, such as book vouchers/grants, counseling, and priority registration. However, other services are at the EOPS directors' discretion and may vary based on the individual program's budget and the specific needs of the college. Furthermore, while Title 5 defines minimum qualifications for directors and counseling faculty, there can be variations in the quantity, quality, and comprehensiveness of services provided among different programs. For example, some directors may be new to their roles and lack sufficient EOPS institutional knowledge and managerial experience to be effective. Similarly, counselors accustomed to a more general counseling approach may not

possess the necessary skills and demeanor required in the EOPS counselor role, which emphasizes case management and a transformative model.

Moreover, California community colleges rely on students self-reporting as foster youth, and this information is recorded in student information systems like California's Management Information System (MIS). However, because there is no independent measure of foster youth, it is challenging to determine the exact number of foster youth enrolled in community colleges. Additionally, because of the potential stigma associated with being a current or former foster youth, whether self-perceived or societal, it is possible that this population is underreported in the MIS.

Furthermore, in this study, foster youth specifically refer to individuals enrolled in NextUp under the CAFYES legislation within the EOPS program. Eligibility for NextUp at the time of the survey was limited to individuals under the age of 26 who were current or former foster youth and had been wards of the court at age 16 or older. Given these criteria, it is unknown whether the NextUp services were underutilized, overutilized, or utilized at average levels by this specific population.

As a result, it remains unclear what percentage of survey respondents would be eligible for certain services. As mentioned, colleges rely on students self-reporting to determine eligibility as current or former foster youth for NextUp services, making it challenging to ascertain the percentage of survey respondents eligible for foster youth services. Moreover, because the study did not accurately inquire about the students' academic goals (certificate, degree, or transfer), the percentage of respondents eligible for transfer assistance is also unknown. Therefore, despite the low raw numbers of students using these services, we are

unable to determine the true usage rates in this survey because of the lack of information on the number of students eligible for them.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future studies are discussed. The conclusions are derived from the survey results based on the study's research questions for students and staff in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) program. Recommendations are based on both the purpose of the study and the resulting conclusions. In addition, LACCD retention data are described.

Summary

Even though the student survey indicated that all support services were very helpful, respondents revealed that of the services they used, the most impactful EOPS support services were, in order of most impactful: (a) book grants (38.4% of respondents), (b) EOPS counseling (22.6%), (c) cash grants (15.6%), (d) student educational planning (6.9%), and (e) priority registration (4.6%). Similarly, the staff, consisting of EOPS directors, counselors, and staff, ranked EOPS counseling (44% of respondents) as the most impactful support service. They ranked book grants/vouchers as the second most impactful service (34%) and priority registration third (10%). The least impactful services rated by the EOPS staff were foster youth support services, gift cards, and graduation assistance. These results indicate that staff hold similar views to their students of the top five most impactful EOPS services.

Such similarity in ranking indicates that students share with EOPS program staff an understanding of what is most impactful and where they might think resources should be directed. The results indicate that EOPS is uniformly seen as operating effectively in their efforts to improve the retention rates of their students.

The study reviewed retention rates of EOPS students versus non-EOPS students at all nine colleges in LACCD. The results indicated that EOPS students' retention rates were over

20% higher than non-EOPS students. These additional results further indicate that EOPS is operating effectively to improve retention rates.

Again, in rank order, student respondents identified the most impactful EOPS support services as (a) EOPS book grants, (b) EOPS counseling, and (c) cash grants. The preference for book grants and counseling over cash grants seems to indicate the priority students have for direct educational support. It is possible that, in the future, book grants may be viewed as less impactful with the increasing use of eBooks and other free online instructional material such as the Open Educational Resources initiative by the State Chancellor's Office.

EOPS counseling was ranked second by students as the most impactful service. As is the case for book grants, the student preference here is for direct support. The response indicates that students prefer more supportive services, such as the multiple wraparound student services provided by EOPS, rather than only the financial aid provided by Pell Grants and other cash-awards-only assistance. EOPS counseling is also intended to provide resources, knowledge, and encouragement, all of which are part of a scaffolded approach to student support. That said, students value direct services more than direct financial aid.

Connections to Prior Studies

The findings of this EOPS program study were consistent with the findings of prior research in that California community college EOPS students outperform their non-EOPS peers who are similarly disadvantaged by language, economics, and education barriers. The results of this study aligned with the comprehensive findings of the RP Group EOPS Impact Study (Willett et al., 2012) and (Reyes et al., 2022) and the more targeted studies by Preising (1979), Perez (1999), Bradford (2004), and Crawford (2008). All demonstrated the benefits of EOPS participation in terms of student retention and completion. More specifically, Crawford (2008)

also underscored the vital role of EOPS in providing infrastructure for the consistent delivery of wraparound student support services. Beyond this general consistency in results, this study differed in numerous ways. One example of that difference was the number of EOPS programs under study.

For example, the targeted studies of Preising (1979), Perez (1999), and Bradford (2004) were limited to single college EOPS programs. This study involved 14 community colleges in the Los Angeles area. A more comprehensive study on the success of statewide EOPS students can be found in the RP Group's EOPS Impact Studies (Reyes et al., 2022; Willett et al., 2012). These RP Group studies reviewed success metrics statewide and thus had a larger scope than this study. However, these previous studies focused almost exclusively on EOPS student outcomes; therefore, research on EOPS support services had remained limited at the time this study was conducted.

Existing research also differed from this study in areas regarding depth and methodology. Previous research from Crawford (2008) could only be considered as a first step toward a more profound understanding of the program's support services. In his study, Crawford distributed surveys at nine community colleges (Cerritos, West Valley, Golden West, Butte, Fresno, Coastline, Vista, Barstow, and Palo Verde) but only gave them to the EOPS directors who then gave the survey to the first 50 to 70 EOPS students who visited the EOPS office, possibly indicating selection bias. Approximately 540 EOPS students received envelopes with the survey questionnaire, and 310 students returned the survey. The study did not discuss whether any of the surveys returned were eliminated due to a lack of student progress or withdrawal from college classes. In addition, there was a significant amount of selection of the participants: The researcher chose only certain directors to distribute the surveys to certain students. The small

sample size, small college sizes, and rural locations, as well as the survey distribution process, would make it difficult to apply the study's findings.

This study was conducted to address such shortcomings, surveying some of the largest EOPS programs in the state of California at 14 colleges that varied from large programs to small. There was also a larger sample size of almost 2,000 respondents. The surveys were not hand-delivered to particular students by directors but emailed. EOPS students served in the 2021–2022 academic year were identified, and the decision to complete the survey was the choice of the students.

Implications

The findings suggest that the EOPS program can significantly contribute to addressing practical issues and challenges related to improving community college completion outcomes. Additionally, these implications can be valuable for educational leaders and policymakers in making well-informed decisions based on the research findings. By explicitly identifying the implications of this research, stakeholders can comprehend the potential consequences of their choices and make more effective decisions that result in higher retention and completion rates in community colleges. Ultimately, these implications should guide policy decisions regarding the allocation of resources to support services that students identify as effective. The study provides detailed implications for EOPS counseling, book vouchers/grants, priority registration, cash grants, belongingness, student and staff alignment, and outcomes, which are discussed in the following sections. Also discussed are larger implications related to identifying the program's strengths and scaling them up for non-EOPS student populations.

EOPS Counseling

The foci of this study were the usage and satisfaction of EOPS services. Relevant and recent research on student services indicates that students in the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) rate EOPS counseling very highly. The LACCD Office of Educational Programs and Institutional Effectiveness conducted a student survey (LACCD, 2023) on aspects including both usage and satisfaction of certain student services, including EOPS. In that survey, student respondents indicated both high usage and satisfaction rates for EOPS. By contrast, although general counseling was highly used, it did not receive high satisfaction rates. The inference is that students both need and use the types of counseling community colleges have. However, respondents rate the counseling received in these two categories—general and EOPS—as qualitatively different. This study is supported by the LACCD study in that the LACCD study showed both high usage and satisfaction rates for EOPS. Counselors in EOPS have higher minimum qualifications than do general counselors (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, n.d.-a); program implementation guidelines require that students meet with their EOPS counselor three times a semester; and the comprehensive student education plan (SEP), which EOPS counselors do for their students includes all classes, referrals, and actions for students, from the time the student meets with the EOPS counselor until completion of the student’s educational goal at the college. EOPS counselors often spend more time with their students in their counseling appointments. The Consultation Council Task Force on Counseling noted that when students have sufficient time with their counselors, students’ satisfaction increases (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, 2003).

The implication is that EOPS counseling is a key component to the success of the EOPS program and should be retained in Title 5 and in the program implementation guidelines. Future

research could further investigate the qualitative differences between counseling in EOPS versus general counseling with the intent of making further recommendations for resource allocation.

Cash Grants

In this study, cash grants were ranked as the third most helpful service by EOPS students. The pandemic may have increased the basic needs of students, so cash grants may have helped, especially during the period in which the student participants were surveyed.

Both the State Chancellor's Office and State Legislature have prioritized basic needs for students, citing statistics about food and housing insecurity. Although it is debatable whether all California community colleges should include student housing as well as the provision of social services and long-term mental health services, the student responses to this survey indicate that they have identified those support services as ones they need and value and which directly impact their retention and completion. Although student support programs such as EOPS must refer students to community agencies for certain resources, the colleges lack the infrastructure and funding to become the providers of those resources.

Priority Registration

Priority registration was ranked fourth by student respondents as the most important service. As enrollment fell during the pandemic, students may have underused this service. Classes were not as full, competition for seats in class was not as intense, and priority registration in turn lost some of its importance. Additionally, students could register themselves electronically and remotely, adding to their lack of awareness and use of this EOPS benefit.

Support for Books

In the open-ended responses, student respondents expressed a preference for printed books versus online material. Given the high price of books, there is an opportunity for collaboration between EOPS and college financial aid offices to leverage resources.

Feelings of Belonging

In other open-ended responses, EOPS counseling support was cited by students as being important to their academic progress. Students referenced feelings of belonging, of being at ease with their EOPS counselor, and of being appreciative of counselors' personalized approach. They also valued the resources that counselors provided as well as their knowledge of college processes. This latter observation is very much in keeping with the fact that EOPS students are also first-generation college students. Title 5 has structured EOPS, so that services to be provided by the program, and by the EOPS counselor in particular, have been identified. This structured "above and beyond" case management approach also helps to establish and build rapport between the counselor and the student, as do the additional minimum qualifications required of EOPS counselors (California Community Colleges Extended Opportunity Programs & Services Association [CCCEOPSA], n.d.).

EOPS Students and Staff Alignment

The study found that both EOPS staff and students were aligned in the identification of the impact of most services, especially in book grants and EOPS counseling. In the open-ended question, EOPS staff cited how proud they were to be working in the program. Such job satisfaction may influence job performance and may also correlate to how students perceive the EOPS program and the professionals who work in the program. In open-ended responses in the EOPS student survey, students gave examples of how their EOPS counselors went "above and

beyond” compared to general counseling. This alignment suggests that the structure of EOPS is recognized and valued by students and practitioners and implies both the practical functionality of the program as well as the wisdom of the original legislation.

Higher EOPS Student Outcomes

As is demonstrated in the LACCD data, EOPS students have higher retention rates, and the RP Group research demonstrated that EOPS students also have higher completion rates. These higher rates not only help the individual student but also the college through additional funding. These results are important for the advocacy needed to maintain funding for this successful program in the state budget and to secure needed resources at the college level.

As was stated in Chapter 2, the California Community Colleges Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) provides funding to colleges based on enrollment, equity, and completion (the number of certificates and degrees that colleges award; California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2021). Although community colleges are often envisioned as 2-year institutions, with the exception of career technical education (CTE) certificate programs, it is likely that students will take longer to complete their academic goals. Students who do not carry a full course load or do not reenroll in their classes from term to term will either take longer to graduate or not graduate at all. The higher retention and completion rates for EOPS students help the individual student and through SCFF and its allocation formula, the college as well. It has been argued that EOPS is an expensive program because of the cost of its multiple student services and interventions. However, EOPS is categorically funded, meaning colleges do not need to use their general unrestricted budget for program expenses except to pay the salary of the EOPS director (district match per Title 5). Because EOPS student completion is counted in

the SCFF, the college benefits by the increased retention and completion rates (Reyes et al., 2022; Willett et al., 2012).

Use of Benefits by Student Demographics

Although it is beneficial to understand which services are used and valued, it is also very important to note which services are not. The greatest differences in this study were seen in a breakdown according to student demographics.

Overall, the demographic breakdown of the respondents was comparable to that of the general EOPS population in the 14 colleges in the Los Angeles region. In terms of ethnicity, the overall diversity in the sample was comparable to that of the EOPS student population in the region, with students identified as African American slightly overrepresented (13.6% vs. 10.75%), and White students underrepresented (15.20% vs. 22.83%). Students in the age ranges of 18-24 and 35 or older responded in the highest numbers. This range was comparable to state data of EOPS students at the 14 community colleges surveyed. The fact that student demographics in this study were comparable to those in the region provides evidence of the validity of the inferences drawn from this study using this variable.

The most used service was EOPS counseling (three or more times) across all 14 colleges and all ethnic groups except for Native American/Native Alaskan respondents (once or twice in the academic year). In the case of this ethnic group, it may be necessary to consider the cultural aspect of counseling because keeping EOPS counseling appointments is crucial for all students to maintain good standing in the program.

The most underused EOPS services were (a) foster youth support, (b) CARE single-parent support, and (c) graduation assistance. Differences in the underuse of these programs were significant when the demographics of the student respondents were reviewed.

Foster Youth

Foster youth support and CARE support focused on specialized populations within the EOPS program. The primary reason African American students and students who identified as two or more races did not use foster youth support services is that they did not qualify for the service. This finding is compared to the other racial/ethnic groups surveyed who indicated they did not use foster youth services because they did not need them. Research suggests the disproportionate presence of African American children in foster care (Knott & Donovan, (2010). Foster youth receive additional counseling as well as services such as meal tickets and transportation assistance. One can posit that students whose stated reason for not using that service is that they do not qualify and were interested in receiving those services but self-selected out of the program when they learned that they did not qualify.

CARE

CARE is similar to CAFYES/NextUp, which serves foster youth, in that EOPS students who meet eligibility requirements for that program receive additional services and counseling. Those students are single parents, heads of households, have at least one child under the age of 18, and are receiving CalWORKs or TANF services. Respondents who identified as Hispanic, White, and Other indicated that they did not use the CARE program because they did not need it. Student respondents in the remaining racial/ethnic categories indicated they did not qualify for CARE. Hispanic and Latinos place a strong value on family (Campos et al., 2008). Similarly, a Nebraska study focused on the significance of family in that ethnic group (White & Brinkerhoff, 1981). Further research can explore the family dynamics with other racial groups.

Graduation

Graduation assistance services are used when the milestone is achieved after students complete their academic goals. The majority of all race/ethnicity groups, except for those who identified as Asian, indicated they did not need graduation assistance. The primary reason that Asian respondents reported for not using the service was that they did not know about it. There may be disparities among ethnic groups regarding how information is disseminated and received. Some groups may not be looking for certain things or may prefer to receive communication in modalities that are different from what the colleges are using. Previous research showed that Asian Americans graduate at far higher rates than other race/ethnic groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), suggesting that graduation assistance may not be needed for other groups. Differing value systems may also be relevant and explored.

The question of the underuse of services is an important one to address to determine whether such programs are being over resourced or whether their benefits are under communicated with the relevant student populations.

Scaling Up

In research on student success, several key themes emerge (Booth et al., 2013a). First, colleges must foster students' motivation. Second, colleges must teach students how to succeed in the postsecondary environment. Third, colleges must structure support to address success factors. Fourth, colleges must provide comprehensive support to historically underserved students to prevent growing equity gaps. Last, it is believed that everyone has a role in supporting student achievement, with faculty taking the lead.

According to the RP Group, there are six categories of success factors that contribute to student success. These include being directed, where students have a goal and know how to

achieve it; staying focused, keeping their eyes on the prize; feeling nurtured, knowing that someone wants to help them succeed; actively engaging in class and extracurricular activities; feeling connected as part of the college community; and being valued, with their skills, talents, abilities, and experiences recognized (Booth et al., 2013b, p. 6).

EOPS Program: Investment and Accountability

Forty-four years prior to the mentioned research, the establishment of the EOPS program played a crucial role in supporting students' academic and personal development. This program focused on helping students identify and achieve their career goals, stay on track toward their academic objectives, foster a sense of belonging and engagement, and access necessary resources through a series of tailored interventions. Although other student success programs in California community colleges have been launched, none have matched the retention and completion rates of EOPS because of factors such as insufficient funding, lack of restrictions, inadequate infrastructure, limited personnel, and accountability.

The longevity of the EOPS program, spanning 53 years and serving the entire state of California, combined with its commitment to supporting disadvantaged students and consistently delivering positive outcomes, emphasizes the importance of closely examining its structure, strategies, and potential for replication. EOPS attributes its success to two essential components: investment and accountability. Investment involves directing resources toward the most impactful areas of service, while accountability ensures that the investment yields the desired outcomes. Unfortunately, many higher education programs and strategies struggle to grasp this simple concept.

EOPS recognizes the significance of integrating personal and academic support to meet students' needs, enhance their engagement, and maximize their success. The hallmark of EOPS

is academic counseling that goes beyond transactional interactions. Students are required to meet with an EOPS counselor twice per semester with an additional contact, totaling three contacts each term. This regularity ensures consistent counseling and allows counselors ample time to address students' academic and personal concerns during the initial contact, known as the student educational plan. The second contact provides an opportunity for students to ask questions, discuss immediate concerns, receive encouragement and motivation, and experience the emotional support of a strong connection. Through these interactions, students establish a special bond with their counselor who becomes their resource, cheerleader, and mentor. EOPS counselors exclusively focus on serving EOPS students, providing them with dedicated and quality attention. Consequently, students have a reliable place to turn to when they are confused, discouraged, or overwhelmed. Counseling in the EOPS program transcends the mere transactional level and adopts a transformative approach, creating a nurturing environment where students feel at home and receive guidance in navigating the challenges and obstacles of academic life.

Expansion: Student-Centered Directors, Counselors, and Staff

To expand the impact of the EOPS counseling standard and reach more students, similar investment and commitment must be made to other counseling areas, particularly general counseling. Nothing can replace the presence of an adequate counselor-to-student ratio. Sufficient counselors should be available to ensure students can make appointments within a reasonable timeframe, especially for the development of their SEP and follow-up sessions. The first step is investing in hiring the right number of high-quality counselors, followed by maintaining their accountability as well as the accountability of students. Counselors should work under the supervision of administrators who can effectively communicate a unifying vision

or mission, fostering consistent and excellent work ethic encompassing knowledge, compassion, and reliability. This requires administrators to go above and beyond by providing reminders, encouragement, and, when necessary, implementing punitive measures. Although time consuming, these efforts create a culture of fairness and excellence, influencing self-regulating habits and team morale.

While standardized student success efforts often focus on policies and procedures, attention should also be given to personnel. Research indicates that students in support programs such as EOPS speak positively and passionately about their counselors, highlighting their supportive and caring attitudes, assistance in navigating the system, and the quality of information they receive. Conversely, students who are not in support programs have a different experience. Therefore, a well-trained and empathetic counseling staff is crucial in fostering student success.

Furthermore, students must be held accountable for using counseling services. In the case of EOPS, students face penalties such as reduced book assistance or services if they fail to meet the requirement of three counseling contacts. Similarly, incentives for engaging with counselors could be provided, such as early registration. By improving access to quality counseling, monitoring the counseling service provided, and incentivizing students to seek counseling through book discounts and early registration, colleges may witness comparable rates of retention and graduation among their non-EOPS students.

The cost effectiveness of investing in a higher counselor-to-student ratio, allocating sufficient time for counseling sessions, and offering incentives for counseling usage can be observed by examining the success of the EOPS program. Additionally, considering the SCFF, California community colleges receive increased funding for students who receive Pell Grants

and for those who complete certificates and degrees. By prioritizing student success programs like EOPS, which serve marginalized students likely eligible for financial aid and demonstrate higher retention and completion rates, colleges can secure higher state apportionment based on SCFF metrics. Arguably, the initial investments made in student success would more than pay for themselves.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are related to several factors, including the methods used, the timeframe during which the survey was distributed, and the survey instrument itself.

Additionally, a corollary limitation is the underrepresentation of student respondents outside the LACCD.

Survey Distribution

One limitation of this study pertained to the distribution of the survey instrument to students and EOPS staff. LACCD students received the survey instrument electronically through both email and text. However, for non-LACCD schools, the researcher relied on the EOPS directors to distribute the student surveys. Similarly, all staff surveys were channeled through the EOPS directors for distribution.

The uneven method of distributing the student survey resulted in a lower response rate among non-LACCD EOPS students. This could be attributed to the possibility that non-LACCD EOPS directors had competing priorities at their respective campuses. As a consequence, the distribution variable could not be controlled for students outside the LACCD, and the parameters used by the directors to select student respondents remain unknown. However, despite this limitation, the research results can still be generalized to EOPS community college students in

both urban and suburban settings. This is supported by the strong sample size and response rate among LACCD students who constituted the majority of respondents in a wide geographic area.

It is worth noting that the return of staff responses was higher in non-LACCD colleges. This suggests that non-LACCD EOPS employee respondents prioritized submitting their survey replies rather than surveying their students. Two observations can be made in this regard: (a) Because the students and employees received different surveys and the results were computed separately, the employees' responses did not have an overall impact on the results and (b) A sufficient sample of LACCD students participated, enabling a certain level of generalization. It is important to mention that the use of Qualtrics ensured the confidentiality of respondents' answers, further adding confidence in the validity of their responses.

In summary, one limitation was the uneven distribution of the survey instrument to students and EOPS staff. Despite the lower response rate among non-LACCD EOPS students, the research results can still be generalized to EOPS community college students in both urban and suburban settings based on the strong sample size and response rate among LACCD students. Additionally, the return of staff responses was higher in non-LACCD colleges, suggesting their active participation.

To address these limitations, it is recommended to develop a more consistent and equitable means of survey distribution that does not rely solely on directors to forward the survey instrument.

Survey Instrument

A second limitation pertains to issues with the survey instrument itself. One problem was the lack of an option to indicate that EOPS was the only student support program in which respondents were participating. Such responses had to be gathered from the Other option, where

students indicated they were only in EOPS and not in another program. Similarly, there was no option for students to indicate whether a particular service was not offered at their specific college.

Another issue may have been the interpretation of the survey questions by the respondents. Although using the same survey instrument for all potential student respondents is necessary to standardize the research experience and minimize extraneous variables, it is possible that respondents, especially students, interpreted the survey questions differently. Because there was no follow-up survey, opportunities for clarification or providing definitions were not available, potentially affecting the accuracy of the responses.

Furthermore, the survey instrument may have introduced educational jargon that was understandable to practitioners but not to students. For instance, the distinction between book vouchers, book grants, cash grants, and supplies grants may have led to varying responses if these terms had been defined in the survey instrument. Additionally, listing EOPS counseling and educational planning as separate services may have caused confusion. Educational planning should be an integral part of every initial EOPS counseling contact, raising questions about how students perceive counseling and the possibility of combining responses related to counseling and SEPs. Moreover, in the open-ended responses, students who identified EOPS classified staff support as the most impactful service included counseling faculty, suggesting that the impact of counseling may have been underestimated by the instrument.

These flaws in the instrument could be addressed by a modified survey instrument as well as through qualitative studies using smaller focus groups.

Self-Selection of Study Participants

Another limitation of the survey is the potential for a self-selection process. It is possible that both students and staff who participated in the survey did so because they wanted to express positive experiences with EOPS. However, because of the nature of the survey instrument and its distribution, it is difficult to determine the extent to which this “halo effect” may have skewed the results. Conducting follow-up research, including qualitative and quantitative studies, could provide better discernment in this regard.

Study Timing

The fourth limitation pertains to the timing of survey distribution. The survey was administered to students who received EOPS services during the 2021–2022 academic year. This time period coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, during which instructional and service delivery modes underwent significant changes. Services were offered in various modalities, and there was a transition toward a greater on-campus presence.

It is noteworthy that a majority of the respondents reported being in the EOPS program for four or more semesters, indicating their participation during a period when California community colleges were transitioning from in-person instruction (spring 2020) to fully remote learning (2020–2021) and eventually adopting a hybrid model (2021–2022). Students may have directly or indirectly experienced adverse effects of the pandemic, affecting their perceptions and expectations of EOPS services. These effects, combined with the evolving nature of service modalities, could have influenced their perspectives on and expectations for the program.

Recommendations

Based on the research and survey results, the following recommendations can be made for EOPS directors and other district/college administrators, policymakers and legislators, and

other stakeholders in higher education across the nation. Directors of EOPS programs may use the data from this study to enhance communication with their students as well as to allocate funds where they can be the most impactful. Similarly, district and college administrators can review service usage rates and student perception of service helpfulness data to bring select services to scale for students who do not meet EOPS eligibility requirements. Similarly, legislators may enact laws and policies to bring the successful strategies of EOPS to scale. Other stakeholders may also use the data in this research to advocate for effective interventions and bring those strategies to identify and serve underrepresented groups.

District/College Administrators and EOPS Directors

Administrators at the district and college levels should prioritize the protection of categorical funds to ensure they are used for their intended purposes. Drawing from the successful aspects of the EOPS model, administrators can replicate certain elements for students who do not meet EOPS eligibility requirements because of income or unit load. The research findings indicate that book vouchers/grants, high-touch case management counseling, and cash grants are both used and are beneficial to students. When faced with limited funding for new student success programs, districts and colleges can refer to this research to make informed decisions about where to allocate the majority of their resources.

Administrators, being responsible for budgets, should allocate funds to programs that are both highly used and impactful. This data-informed approach ensures the efficient use of financial resources. Studies such as this one can provide district and college administrators with valuable data to determine resource allocation and adequately support programs and services that are used and impactful.

Similarly, EOPS directors can use this research to identify successful services and identify areas of underusage. They can adjust their budgets to allocate a significant portion of funding to services that EOPS students find both helpful and useful. Additionally, directors may choose to target specific racial/ethnic groups and services with lower usage rates, such as transfer assistance, to increase usage rates and perceptions of the effectiveness of those services. Targeting services to certain populations, such as transfer, CARE/single parents, and foster youth, can be achieved through relevant student data collection to enable proactive outreach. Student information systems in districts, colleges, and EOPS programs can be programmed to collect such data, and it can then be used to contact students to offer those services.

Results of this research point to the need for better communication about the services that EOPS provides. This finding has implications for outreach and recruitment, EOPS orientations, knowledge of the contents of the mutual responsibility contract to which all EOPS students must adhere, and communication with current students. Services that are underused or completely unused do not provide any benefits to students. If students are unaware of the services available to them, colleges need to improve their communication strategies. Sometimes educational bureaucracies have policies or procedures that make sense to the institution but are not helpful to students. For instance, many districts have policies restricting communication with students to specific modalities, such as their district email. This policy aligns with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) by ensuring that communication is directed to the student and not a third party, thus protecting the college from liability. However, if students are unaware of this preferred communication method or are unable or unwilling to use it, they may miss important announcements about benefits.

Many students reported not knowing about certain benefits, indicating a need for colleges and programs to improve their methods of communicating with students. It is important to clearly articulate and define the benefits of EOPS or other student support programs to ensure students are informed and can use the available resources. Colleges should employ multiple modalities and channels of communication to effectively reach students, recognizing that word of mouth is a significant source of information for many students. This may involve using online platforms, social media, campus events, workshops, and partnerships with student organizations to disseminate information about EOPS services.

By implementing these recommendations, colleges and programs can improve communication with and about EOPS, enhance students' awareness of available benefits, and ultimately promote the usage of support services to benefit a larger number of students.

Although communication holds significant relevance, it is necessary to review another aspect which warrants attention, namely, using the EOPS infrastructure for basic needs. Despite EOPS programs' excellence in providing academic support to increase student retention and completion rates, both EOPS and colleges at large currently lack the necessary infrastructure and emphasis on social services required for basic needs initiatives. Instead of prioritizing resources solely for basic needs initiatives, colleges should allocate their resources to the support services identified in this research as crucial for directly impacting student retention and completion rates.

College budgets have gained greater prominence because of the implementation of the performance-based funding formula known as the SCFF in California community colleges. While the State Chancellor's Office provides additional resources for services targeting low-income students, accountability in terms of students meeting completion metrics and successful

outcomes is required. Thus, educational leaders play a vital role in resource allocation and advocacy for effective support services.

By incorporating these recommendations, administrators can make informed decisions about resource allocation, ensure the usage of impactful services, and enhance student retention and completion rates.

Policymakers and Legislators

Those responsible for creating laws and policies should establish a framework to explore how to replicate the structure and quality of EOPS collegewide without diluting the effectiveness of the EOPS program. Furthermore, identifying effective support services for marginalized community college students not only addresses the completion crisis in California Community Colleges but also assists colleges in helping students successfully complete their academic programs and meet the state's workforce demands. This effective allocation of funds would contribute to the identification of best practices that can be adopted by other student support programs.

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office has been considering the elimination of categorical programs like EOPS and replacing them with block grants. However, accessing such block grants would become competitive, yearly budgets would become unstable, and there would be minimal governmental oversight or accountability. EOPS has thrived because of its strict regulations as a categorical program governed by Title 5. These accountability measures have safeguarded EOPS funds from being redirected by college leaders to address budget shortfalls in the general fund. Additionally, the proposed block funding model lacks the annual student reports required by the state for EOPS. Moreover, without a secure budget,

maintaining program stability, particularly for counseling faculty whose services are valued and used by students, would become challenging.

Similarly, programs should be held accountable for productivity and results. New student success initiatives often lack structure, data, budgetary protection, and accountability, leading to their failure and subsequent replacement with similar initiatives facing the same issues. The Student Success and Student Support Act of 2012 (SSSP and SB 1456) was enacted to ensure that California community college students receive orientation, assessment/placement, and counseling/academic advisement. It provided additional funding to colleges for students who completed this process, addressing the problem of unfunded mandates associated with previous matriculation legislation. Counseling services, identified as a valuable resource by EOPS students in this research, were measured through data collection and received financial support based on those metrics. Colleges received state allocations accordingly. Therefore, legislation that provides funding for case management counseling, similar to what EOPS offers, would benefit all California community college students if it can be inferred that non-EOPS students would also find such counseling helpful.

While EOPS originated from legislation, the program has demonstrated its success through higher retention and completion rates among its students. Recent discussions have arisen regarding revising EOPS and opening Title 5 sections related to EOPS, particularly with changes in EOPS staff at the State Chancellor's Office. However, data, including findings from this research, indicate that EOPS students have higher retention and completion rates and highly value and use EOPS services such as book vouchers/grants and counseling. Therefore, it is crucial for both the State Chancellor's Office and the State Legislature to continue supporting this successful program and avoid revising the Title 5 sections pertaining to EOPS.

Other Stakeholders

The EOPS Association (CCCEOPSA) serves as the representative body for EOPS programs in their interactions with the California Community College Chancellor's Office and the legislature. Essentially, CCCEOPSA functions as the political advocate for EOPS programs. Similarly, the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC) advocates on behalf of its members in Sacramento. Given that this study, along with previous research, indicates that EOPS programs have higher student retention and completion rates, as well as valuable and useful services, these data should guide decisions that uphold the integrity of EOPS. CCCEOPSA could collaborate with FACCC to prevent legislative interference and maintain the current structure of EOPS. Both CCCEOPSA and FACCC can continue to advocate at the state level by identifying underused services and target groups, making recommendations to other EOPS programs.

In 2022, Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill 1705 (Irwin) into law, revising the Seymour-Campbell Matriculation Act of 2012, now Education Code § 78211.5. This legislation essentially prohibits California community colleges from offering mathematics courses below the transfer level. Although there are exemptions for certain students, such as those with disabilities, no such exemption exists for EOPS students. My research revealed that tutoring is an underused service. College EOPS programs could expand tutoring options, both in-person and online, and enhance their communication efforts to effectively convey the benefits of these services to students. Additionally, statewide EOPS partners like CCCEOPSA and FACCC can be more proactive in advocating for EOPS programs and their students when it comes to legislative matters.

Suggestions For Future Research

Suggestions for future research include qualitative approaches to investigate why students used or underused certain services and how much usage was determined by program requirements. Such qualitative studies could use focus groups targeting Native American as well as African American students to research reasons for the underuse of certain services. More widespread research should also be done on why African Americans are underrepresented in California community colleges.

Follow-Up Qualitative Study

A follow-up qualitative study could identify EOPS support experiences and perceptions of EOPS students as well as the meanings attached to this study's findings. In addition to asking why some students underuse the program's services, it could investigate why students use the services initially and whether their reasons change over time. For example, is their use driven by the EOPS program requirements in Title 5? Do students just want to ensure that they are in compliance with the program's requirements? Is it to obtain their book grants? How much is student use driven by positive experiences with their EOPS counselor(s)? Does familiarity with the services encourage student usage? Future research may also explore the difference, if any, between students who do not use a service because they were not qualified for it and students who do not use a service because they did not need it.

Examine Usage Rates Based on the Student's Academic Goal

This research did not disaggregate data according to the student's academic goal—certificate, degree, or transfer. The instrument did not contain that question, and it was also not possible to review EOPS retention rates in the LACCD disaggregated according to academic

goal. Future studies could include this factor to determine whether there are any variations in service utilization rates.

Greater Review of Usage Rates Based on Race/Ethnicity

Another study could review the use of services according to race/ethnicity. Although the same services are available to all EOPS students, results in this study indicated that students from different ethnic backgrounds used EOPS services at different rates, e.g., there is a lower frequency of usage on the part of Native American/Alaskan Native students. A qualitative study to examine why some students used EOPS services more than others would be helpful. For example, was it for compliance, support, or quality? Focus groups could be identified, and follow-up interviews could be conducted with about 25 students at different EOPS programs.

African American Student Population

Related to the student underuse of resources is the underrepresentation of African American students enrolled in community colleges. Even though EOPS began in 1969 as a response to the Civil Rights movement, African Americans are currently underrepresented in EOPS and in the California community colleges. Thus, in a program that had its origin of serving historically disadvantaged students, further research can be done on why African Americans are so underrepresented. The gradual decline of African American students in the community college and EOPS programs (with African American students making up only 10% of Los Angeles region's 14 colleges) is alarming. Future research can further investigate the decline of African American students in community colleges to provide effective strategies to recruit and retain this student population.

EOPS Students With Negative Experiences

The preponderance of the students' attitudes toward EOPS and its services was very positive. However, it would be helpful to find out more about students' negative experiences in the same way that one often learns more from one's failures than one's successes. Focus groups in safe, nonjudgmental environments could be a way to proceed and provide information on how to enhance the student experience.

Conclusion

Although the conclusions of this study can be generalized to a large, urban, metropolitan setting and the retention data underscore the consistency and efficacy of the EOPS program regardless of the setting, the findings can be more broadly applied. Colleges need to communicate with their students in multiple modalities and in the ways in which students wish to listen; advertising is not dialogue. Great care needs to be exercised to make sure that students are aware of the multiplicity of services EOPS provides, that they do not self-select out of those services because of lack of awareness, and that EOPS staff are scrupulous when they determine eligibility.

The intent of this study was to identify the most effective support services in the EOPS program, to determine which services students used and valued, to identify which services EOPS staff thought were helpful, and to examine the impact of the EOPSs program on student retention and completion rates systemwide. A review of the data presented in Chapter 4 and the conclusions and recommendations of Chapter 5 show that this study's objectives have been achieved.

Reflections

Through this study, I hoped to identify effective support services in the EOPS program, to determine which services students used and valued, to identify which services EOPS staff thought were helpful, and to examine the retention and completion rates of EOPS students systemwide compared to their non-EOPS student peers. I feel that my objectives have been achieved.

Some of the findings from this study were unexpected, particularly concerning the utilization of services based on race/ethnicity and the job satisfaction among EOPS staff. One surprising finding was that the majority of American Indian/Alaskan Native student respondents utilized EOPS counseling services proportionately less often compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Similarly, the majority of Asian students appeared to be unaware of the availability of graduation assistance and were the least likely to use the priority registration service. Among Hispanic/Latino, White, and students who identified as Other, the majority reported not using the CARE program because they felt they did not need it. Additionally, the majority of African American students and those identifying as two or more races indicated that they did not use foster youth support services because they believed they did not qualify. While the reasons behind these findings can only be speculative based on the current survey instrument, further research is necessary to understand why certain students do not use specific services. This follow-up research could also help improve communication with students about the availability and effectiveness of EOPS services.

The high level of job satisfaction reported by EOPS staff raises questions about a potential correlation between job satisfaction and work ethic. It also raises the question of whether better service delivery leads to positive student regard for the program and positive

student outcomes. Furthermore, it is worth exploring the factors within the program that contribute to such high job satisfaction among its employees. Further investigation into these aspects can provide valuable insights into the relationship among job satisfaction, work ethic, service delivery, and student outcomes within the EOPS program.

Apart from the responses to the research questions, I gained a greater appreciation for the program in which I work and the students I serve. When I first began working as an EOPS counselor, I was happy to be using the skills that I learned in graduate school and to be helping students who were economically and educationally disadvantaged. When I became an EOPS director, I learned that it was necessary to be vigilant, to protect both the program and its students. Partly based on my time as a faculty director, I realized it was necessary to be an active participant in the academic realms in which decisions are made for the college, and for its students. Thus, I welcomed the opportunity to become an academic administrator, to have a seat at the table, and to have the authority and influence to protect the program.

I still believe in the importance of giving a voice to the voiceless. However, this study has also shown me the necessity of being able to point to and create research that supports that advocacy. As an elected EOPS regional coordinator, I work closely with California Community College Chancellor's office representing 14 EOPS programs in the Los Angeles region. Having a seat at the table provides a direct platform for programs in the region to articulate their concerns and for me to provide greater support and protection for programs that have proven to be successful. It also provides an opportunity for me to advocate for marginalized students. This study has also underscored the value and nuance of data and has made me even more proud to work in this program and more grateful for the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of students.

APPENDIX A: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE



UCLA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & INFORMATION STUDIES

Welcome to the EOPS Program Study!

EOPS students have been shown better success outcomes than non-EOPS students. We need your help to identify what EOPS factors were key in your educational journey in the last 12 months.

We realize how precious your time is, therefore the survey will only take a few minutes.

The survey is voluntary, anonymous and confidential.

Thank you in advance for your help!



UCLA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & INFORMATION STUDIES

Did you receive services from the EOPS program between July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know



If the response was “No” or “I do not know,” then the following message would appear:



UCLA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & INFORMATION STUDIES

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

If the response was “Yes,” then the following message would appear:

Which age group do you belong to?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 or Older



If student response was “Under 18,” then the following message would appear:

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

Which college do you receive EOPS services?

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Compton College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Harbor College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Valley College |
| <input type="radio"/> East Los Angeles College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Mission College | <input type="radio"/> Pasadena City College |
| <input type="radio"/> El Camino College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Pierce College | <input type="radio"/> Santa Monica College |
| <input type="radio"/> Glendale Community College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Trade-Technical College | <input type="radio"/> West Los Angeles College |
| <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles City College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Southwest College | <input type="radio"/> Other (Please specify):
<input type="text"/> |

Which racial/ethnic group do you primarily identify with?

- African American, Black
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or more races
- Other (Please specify):
- Prefer not to answer

Gender:

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Decline to state

What are your academic goals? (Select all that apply)

- Career Advancement
- Earn a Certificate
- Earn an Associate Degree
- Transfer to a 4-Year University
- Other (Please specify):



UCLA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & INFORMATION STUDIES

In the past 12 months, how many times have you used the following EOPS support services?

	Used A Lot (3 or more times per year)	Used (1-2 times per year)	Did Not Use
Book Vouchers/Grant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CARE (single parent support)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cash Grants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EOPS Counseling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EOPS Support Staff (classified, success coach, student worker/peer mentors, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foster Youth Support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gift Cards (grocery, gas, target, Walmart, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Graduation Assistance (cap and gowns, sashes, diploma frames, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Priority Registration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Referrals to Other On- and Off-Campus Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School Supplies (backpacks, notebooks, pens, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Educational Planning (S.E.P.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transfer Services (application fee waivers, campus tours, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tutoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workshops/Events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



If student respondents selected, “Used A Lot” or “Used” then they would rank the helpfulness of the services they used. The following Likert scale would appear for the services they used:



What services did you find helpful in meeting your academic goals?

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Neither helpful or unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Very unhelpful
Book Vouchers/Grant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CARE (single parent support)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cash Grants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EOPS Counseling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EOPS Support Staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foster Youth Support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gift Cards (grocery, gas, Target, Walmart, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Graduation Assistance (cap and gowns, sashes, diploma frames, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Priority Registration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Referrals to Other On- and Off-Campus Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School Supplies (backpacks, notebooks, pens, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Educational Planning (S.E.P.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transfer Services (application fee waivers, campus tours, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tutoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workshops/Events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Of the services they selected as “Very Helpful” or “Somewhat Helpful,” student respondents were asked the following question:

Which service was most important to you?

- Book Vouchers/Grant
- CARE (single parent support)
- Cash Grants
- EOPS Counseling
- EOPS Support Staff (classified, student worker/peer, etc.)
- Foster Youth Support
- Gift Cards (grocery, gas, Target, Walmart, etc.)
- Graduation Assistance (cap and gowns, sashes, diploma frames, etc.)
- Priority Registration
- Referrals to Other On- and Off-Campus Resources
- School Supplies (backpacks, notebooks, pens, etc.)
- Student Educational Planning (S.E.P.)
- Transfer Services (application fee waivers, campus tours, etc.)
- Tutoring
- Workshops/Events



After selecting which service was most important to the student, the following question would appear of the service they selected:



Why did you select "EOPS Counseling" to be the most important service?



If student respondents selected, “Did Not Use” from Usage Scale, then the following questions would appear for the services they did not use:



Please indicate why you did not use CARE - single parent support:

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use cash grants:

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use EOPS book vouchers/grant:

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use EOPS counseling:

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use EOPS support staff:

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use EOPS workshops/events:

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use Foster Youth support:

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use gift cards (grocery, gas, target, walmart, etc.):

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use graduation assistance (cap and gowns, sashes, diploma frames, etc.):

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use priority registration:

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use referrals to other on- and off-campus resources:

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use school supplies (backpacks, notebooks, pens, etc.):

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use student educational planning (S.E.P):

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use transfer services (application fee waivers, campus tours, etc.):

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

Please indicate why you did not use tutoring:

- Did not know
- Did not need
- Did not have time
- Did not qualify
- Other (Please specify):

How many semesters did you participate in the EOPS program?

- 4 or more semesters
- 3 semesters
- 2 semesters
- 1 semester
- Other (Please specify):

How did you hear about the EOPS program? (Check all that apply)

- Campus website
- Classmates/ friends / family
- Classroom presentation
- Email promotion of EOPS
- Physical EOPS flyer/ newsletter/ brochure
- On-campus events (events, other departments, etc.)
- Social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Text messages from the EOPS program or campus
- Other (Please specify:)

In the past 12 months, which other support programs did you participate in? (check all that apply)

- CalWORKs
- Disabled Student Programs & Services (DSPS)
- Dream Resource Center
- Puente
- TRIO
- Umoja/Black Scholars Union
- Veteran Resource Center
- Other (Please Specify):

Please provide any additional comments or statements you would like to share about the EOPS program

APPENDIX B: STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

UCLA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & INFORMATION STUDIES

Welcome to the EOPS Support Services Study!

EOPS students have been shown better success outcomes than non-EOPS students. We need your help to identify what EOPS support services are important in facilitating that success for students.

We realize how precious your time is, therefore the survey will only take a few minutes.

The survey is voluntary and the results will be reported in ways that protect the identity of individuals and campuses

Thank you in advance for your help!



UCLA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & INFORMATION STUDIES

Which college are you employed in?

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Compton College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Harbor College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Valley College |
| <input type="radio"/> East Los Angeles College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Mission College | <input type="radio"/> Pasadena City College |
| <input type="radio"/> El Camino College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Pierce College | <input type="radio"/> Santa Monica College |
| <input type="radio"/> Glendale Community College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Trade-Technical College | <input type="radio"/> West Los Angeles College |
| <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles City College | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Southwest College | <input type="radio"/> Other (Please specify):
<input type="text"/> |



Which EOPS services does your campus offer? (check all that apply)

- Book Vouchers/Grant
- CARE (single parent support)
- Cash Grants
- EOPS Counseling
- EOPS Support Staff (classified, success coach, student worker/peer mentors, etc.)
- Foster Youth Support
- Gift Cards (grocery, gas, target, Walmart, etc.)
- Graduation Assistance (cap and gowns, sashes, diploma frames, etc.)
- Priority Registration
- Referrals to Other On- and Off-Campus Resources
- School Supplies (backpacks, notebooks, pens, etc.)
- Student Educational Planning (S.E.P.)
- Transfer Services (application fee waivers, campus tours, etc.)
- Tutoring
- Workshops/Events



Of the services offered at their campus, EOPS Staff were asked the following ranking question:

Which EOPS services do you believe have the greatest impact on students? Please drag and drop the services to rank them in order with "1" being the most impactful.

- Book Vouchers/Grant

- CARE (single parent support)

- Cash Grants

- EOPS Counseling

- EOPS Support Staff (classified, success coach, student worker/peer mentors, etc.)

- Foster Youth Support

- Gift Cards (grocery, gas, target, Walmart, etc.)

- Graduation Assistance (cap and gowns, sashes, diploma frames, etc.)

- Priority Registration

- Referrals to Other On- and Off-Campus Resources

- School Supplies (backpacks, notebooks, pens, etc.)

- Student Educational Planning (S.E.P.)

- Transfer Services (application fee waivers, campus tours, etc.)

- Tutoring

- Workshops/Events



How long have you worked in the EOPS program throughout your entire career?

- 20 years or more
- 15-19 years
- 10-14 years
- 5-9 years
- 1-4 years
- Less than a year

What is your current role in the EOPS program?

- EOPS Director
- EOPS Assistant Director
- EOPS/CARE/NextUp Classified Staff
- EOPS/CARE/NextUp Counselor
- EOPS/CARE/NextUp Student Worker
- Other (Please specify):



Which racial/ethnic group do you primarily identify with?

- African American, Black
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or more races
- Other (Please specify):
- Prefer not to answer

Gender:

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Decline to state



Please discuss anything that you are doing in your program that you wish to share/highlight



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