VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1

SUMMER 2023

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

We are very happy to introduce the Summer 2023 issue of the *Access* Journal. We continue to work with a team of NABCA volunteers to produce this peer-reviewed journal that addresses the unique conditions of the branch campuses throughout the United States. In this issue, we include some of the projects stemming from the Branch Campus Leadership Institute as well as some original research articles.

We encourage you to consider writing an article for the journal. It can include traditional research, but it can also include essays on topics related to higher education, reviews of relevant books, as well as information about new initiatives on your campus in which other NABCA members may be interested.

Many thanks to our reviewers who helped make this issue possible. We also thank NABCA leadership for their guidance in preparing this issue.

We hope that you find this issue as interesting as we did in its production!

Sincerely,

David Rohall, Ph.D.   Melissa Day
Ohio University Eastern   Director, Berwick and Greater Susquehanna Centers
Dean of Campus and Community Relations   Luzerne County Community College

Co-Editor   Co-Editor

Understanding the Experiences of Post-Traditional, Off-Campus Students

Janie Brazier, MSW
Longwood University
brazirjm@longwood.edu

Nina Huff, EdD
Averett University
nhuff@averett.edu

Pamela Randall, EdD
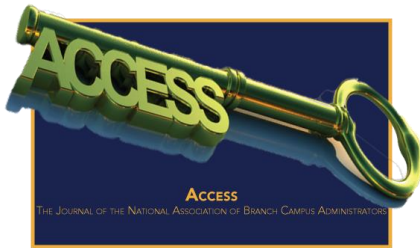Longwood University
randallpp@longwood.edu

Understanding the Experiences of Post-Traditional, Off-Campus Students

By Janie Brazier, MSW, Nina Huff, EdD, and Pamela Randall, EdD

ABSTRACT

Providing rural students with the opportunity to access higher education has always been challenging. This challenge is compounded further when the target population is post-traditional students. Many students who complete an associate degree at the local community college cannot transfer to complete the bachelor's degree due to extenuating circumstances, such as caring for a family, working full-time, or accessing financial aid. This research seeks to investigate the experiences of a group of post-traditional students completing their bachelor's degree in either Early Childhood, Elementary Education, or social work.

Keywords: rural higher education, post-traditional, transfer students

Understanding the Experiences of Post-Traditional, Off-Campus Students
By Janie Brazier, MSW, Nina Huff, EdD, and Pamela Randall, EdD

Addressing the higher educational needs in a rural community is an urgent issue that affects citizens of all ages and socioeconomic classes. In such a community in Southside Virginia, state legislators recognized the need for higher education in the area. This led them to establish a Higher-Ed Center. Because they live in a small rural community, many of the graduates from the community college have to delay bachelor's degree completion due to the cost of continuing their education. The community college was very affordable, usually resulting in Pell Grant or other funding sources, leaving the graduates with little to no debt. The transfer to a four-year program, however, was at a much higher cost and left few options for completion. The students wanted to stay in their community, as most work full time to support their families, resulting in them being older than traditional college students when they transfer.

Yearly in Virginia, there are two jobs listed as the highest in need—teachers and social workers. The Higher-Ed Center began by inviting four-year institutions across Virginia to bring bachelor programs to the area. Longwood University was among the first to establish programs at the Higher-Ed Center and continues to offer programs in education. Their programs are supported by the local community college that provides the 4-year institutions with a pool of potential students once they graduate. These students are prepared to transfer to a four-year university to complete a bachelor's degree, affording them a 2+2 plan.

This program allows the students to earn their associate's degree in two years and then their bachelor's degree at the four-year institution in two additional years. The students must have completed the general education courses through their associate's program so they can start with their major courses in either education or social work upon entering. Both of these fields are in high demand, not just in this rural community but also across the nation. However, the students do not want to move away to work; they are committed to staying in their own hometown. Their journey begins with advising to determine which classes they will be required to take. Sometimes they have to return to the community college for additional courses or to reach the GPA they need in order to be accepted. Each program has an articulation agreement with the local community college and with those that are within an hour's distance. According to Monaghan and Attewell (2015), "Even among these relatively academically successful BA-seeking students at the community colleges, however, only about 60% transfer to a 4-year college" (p. 85) with one obstacle being loss of transfer credits.

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (Sedmak, 2022) states that 39 million Americans hold some postsecondary education, but no degree and are no longer enrolled. In 2018, Virginia alone reported over 900,000 of these students, and statistics show that this post-traditional population continues to grow each year. The American Council on Education (2022) reports that post-traditional students make up nearly 60 percent of undergraduates.

Post-traditional students are diverse not only in who they are, but also with regard to age, marital status, employment, parental/caregiver role, family structure, prior credits earned from a community college or an associate degree, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity (Seale, 2019; Soares et al., 2017; Yavorski, 2019). They are often students who are age 25 or older, may care for dependents, work a full-time job, and in many cases are connected to the military. Seale (2019) states: "More than 47 percent of people entering college are over 25 years old, and 40 percent of those are over 35. Around 4.3 million undergraduate students are parents. About 55 percent of students who are also mothers are single parents, and 44 percent of student-parents also work full time. About 40 percent of undergraduates and 76 percent of graduate students work at least 30 hours a week. Nearly a third (30 percent) of all entering freshmen are

the first in their families to attend college" (para. 2).

Higher education has changed over the last several years and not just due to COVID. It has shifted to students wanting to complete degrees that they started prior to having children or earning a degree in a field about which they are truly passionate. These students are focused and determined to obtain their degrees.

Attending college at an older-than-average age looks much different for these post-traditional students. They "make college-going decisions that are based on a set of adult-life commitments that make their needs and experiences once enrolled very different from traditional undergraduates" (Soares et al., 2017, p. 7). As they return to complete or to obtain a 4-year degree, their "integration into the academic environment is a challenge for adult students; developmental educators must understand the background of adult students and develop a curriculum that addresses their particular needs" (Kenner & Weinerman, 2014, p. 90). Post-traditional students may have a wide time span between college attendance, leaving them with little knowledge of current technology or a limited amount of time during any given day to attend classes.

Post-traditional students, adult learners, or non-traditional students enrolled in an evening and off-campus program are often invisible, misunderstood, and marginalized by those who work in a more traditional campus setting. In many cases, obstacles such as access to campus resources, support services, and inflexible institutional and academic policies can threaten a post-traditional student's pathway to completion.

It is time to recognize that post-traditional students are strong and are ready to complete a degree while also continuing with the lives they have as adults. Educational programs need to adjust schedules for post-traditional students, investigate ways to more effectively recruit them, and provide more opportunities for degree completion. According to Soares et al. (2017),

"People need the ability to learn while they work, provide care, or serve in the military, and that will become more commonplace over time. So, while post-traditional learners may have once been an afterthought, they can no longer be ignored" (p. 16).

This study looks at those post-traditional students who return to college to obtain their bachelor's degrees and seeks to understand and document the obstacles and celebrations of one such group of post-traditional students. As the research suggests: "The first step in facilitating post-traditional learner success is creating insights that map who they are and what they need" (Soares et al., 2017, p. 22) while also assessing what degree they earn from the community college. Since the students here have had to work and take care of families, they also face the challenges of everyday life. Finding time and money to attend college is a struggle, but for those students who do, they are more goal-oriented, self-driven, and motivated to complete their bachelor's degree to improve their lifestyle (Kenner & Weinerman, 2014). Unfolded here are real stories of those students who have beaten the odds and have earned or are working on earning their bachelor's degree in this small rural town in Southside Virginia.

Methodology

University IRB approval was sought and granted prior to data collection. In addition, informed consent was obtained for those who agreed to participate. An initial survey was distributed to all transfer students in the education and social work programs. The instrument included demographic questions as well as an invitation to participate in an interview, which was conducted by one of the three faculty researchers who had not taught the student. Semi-structured interview questions focused on several aspects of students' experiences, including choice of college(s) prior to and including transfer, challenges faced, and personal reflection.

Demographic data was collected, analyzed, and compared to core concepts from the literature. Then interviews via Zoom were scheduled for

those students who agreed to contribute to this portion of the research. The format of the interviews allowed researchers to focus on specific areas of participant experiences while simultaneously providing the opportunity for participants to elaborate and share unique examples. Interview responses were recorded with permission from the participants and transcribed. These were then analyzed across the three themes to identify trends and/or connections among responses.

Results and Discussion

Student Surveys

The demographic survey was distributed to all 30 students in the two programs with a 100% response rate. The following trends are perhaps the most powerful. First, as was expected, the average age of the students attending the program was 30. In addition, 47% of the students had children, and 23% had more than one child. Furthermore, 87% were employed either full- or part-time, and 57% were first-generation students. As can be seen from the literature referenced earlier, these off-campus, post-traditional learners align strongly with what we would expect to find.

Student Interviews

Eleven (37%) of the 30 survey respondents agreed to be interviewed and share their individual stories. The age at which the participants began college ranged from 16— through dual enrollment courses—to 40, with the most common age being 18. One participant initially began college at 19, but did not apply to Longwood until the age of 46.

With regard to factors that inspired the participants to begin college, they cited a variety of driving forces covering 3 major areas: personal passion, desire for a fulfilling career, and influence of others. One participant indicated that she had always envisioned her career path, while others described their initial goal as focused on obtaining a degree, with some hoping that the college years would assist in their identifying an ultimate career path. Interestingly, one participant pursued multiple career and educational paths before returning to school some 30 years later, but an early experience with helping a child who was struggling in math ignited her love for teaching. Two participants highlighted the impact of family and friends on their early college decisions. For example, parents expressed concerns about their child having a better life than they themselves had and making enough money to support a future family.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Students Who Completed the Initial Survey

30 Students Surveyed	Overall Average	Social Work	Elementary Education	Early Childhood Education
Male	10.0%	14.3%	11.1%	0.0%
Female	90.0%	85.7%	88.9%	100.0%
Black	23.3%	42.9%	11.1%	40.0%
White	76.7%	57.1%	88.9%	60.0%
First-Generation	56.7%	57.1%	50.0%	80.0%
Married	33.3%	14.3%	38.9%	40.0%
Divorced	6.7%	14.3%	5.6%	0.0%
Employed	86.7%	71.4%	88.9%	100.0%
Children	46.7%	42.9%	38.9%	80.0%
More than one Child	23.3%	28.6%	16.7%	40.0%
Average Age	30	28	29	39

Another shared the impact of a first-grade teacher who never allowed "I can't" in her classroom. One participant explained that others had suggested a specific career goal based on the characteristics they saw in him, and he is actually in the program to pursue that career.

Decisions related to participants' first choice of college experience were based on aspects such as degree options, proximity to home, parents' attendance or role at a specific school, price, and reputation. One participant shared that she was taking care of a parent when she began college, so location was a key factor for her. For another participant, location was related to a personal hesitation to leave home. One explained that in addition to location, she received a substantial tuition discount because her mother had spent her entire career at the institution.
When discussing their transfer choice of Longwood, participants again cited location, with one focusing on convenience since he already holds a position at the Higher Ed Center, and another sharing that she works nearby. Other factors included ease of the transfer process, strong program reputation, positive pre-application interview with the director and effectiveness of the hybrid/evening course model for those with jobs and families.

Findings

Obstacles. All of the participants identified challenges they have faced during their college experiences. One focused on tuition, indicating that he had two jobs and earned scholarships to pay for his first degree, while his current program is being financed totally through grants and scholarships. His wish is that there will be an increase in the number of scholarships available for all students. Two participants shared that although there are many benefits to the evening meeting times for courses, there can also be a great deal of difficulty in finding time to complete assignments because there are so many other responsibilities involved, but one added that being a model for her nephew was key to her dedication. In addition, student teaching and internships can be hard to schedule. Many participants cited personal challenges,

such as lack of knowledge regarding technology—an issue that was heightened during the COVID pandemic and virtual learning. Others noted struggles with self-confidence, especially for those with a large time gap between early and current educational programs. Time management, inability to separate school and personal life, and navigation of state requirements associated with their degrees were additional challenges.

Supports. In addressing these challenges, participants identified several areas of support, both from others and within themselves. One shared that he and his family prepared for the expense by saving money and making careful financial decisions, but he attributes the majority of his success to his faith, saying, "If I'm supposed to do this, I'll find a way." Another participant noted that although technology can be a barrier, experience and a willingness to learn and reach out for support make all the difference. One participant extended the concept of personal growth, explaining that her increasing maturity and dedication to her family have provided the strength she needs to remain committed and balance her responsibilities. Others focused on improving time management, identifying and using the tools available, and leaning on friends and family to reignite motivation. When asked what factors most impacted their ability to successfully handle challenges, their responses fell under two main themes: support and personal dedication. Specifically, participants mentioned support from family, supervisors, church and local community, and Longwood advisors as being an integral part of their success. In terms of their personal roles, they shared the importance of staying positive and keeping their goals in the forefront of their minds. As one participant said, "It's about how bad you really want it."

Reflection. Participants had very mixed feelings about whether they would have changed their path in any way. Although some said they wished they had begun the process sooner, they still appreciate the experiences that led them to this point and helped to clarify and shape their decisions. They also hope they will serve as an

inspiration to those who may be considering a degree later in life. Other participants indicated they are happy with their choices because they provided them the time to truly identify their passions. The participants' journeys offered a wealth of opportunity for reflection and personal growth. Some responses focused on participants learning more about themselves as students and handling the pressures associated with balancing school and life. Several emphasized their developing sense of confidence, as well as the value of perseverance. One said that although she often doubts her abilities, her efforts lead to continued success and further motivation. Other responses related to a stronger understanding of the value of education and how the lessons learned will impact their future roles. One participant shared her joy at having her children work with her in the evenings and stressed that being older and more mature has impacted her perspective regarding education, and another noted the importance of collecting *moments* rather than "things."

Results from our research aligned closely with those of previous literature. A majority of the students were over age 25, worked full-time while attending school, and many had children (Seale, 2019). Post-traditional students face a variety of unique challenges (Kenner & Weinerman, 2014; Soares et al., 2017), so it is essential for colleges and universities to consider their unique needs (Kenner & Weinerman, 2014). Especially powerful in the current study data was students' focus on how important their support system was to the success of their attaining a degree, not just logistically, but emotionally and spiritually as well.

These students' experiences provide both insight and inspiration, and they serve as a reminder that higher education must continue to investigate ways to be flexible and accessible for all students, including those that may not take a traditional path. It is hoped that further studies conducted with this population will encourage more universities to develop, support, and advocate for the post-traditional student population on their campuses and beyond.

Declaration of Interest Statement: *The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.*

References

American Council on Education. (2022). *Post-traditional learners*. https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/Student-Support/Post-Traditional-Learners.aspx

Kenner, C. & Weinerman, J. (2014). Adult learning theory: Applications to non-traditional college students. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, *41*(2), 87-97.

Monaghan, D.B., & Attewell, P. (2015). The community college route to the bachelor's degree. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *37*(1), 70-91. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373714521865

Seale, S. (2019). *Not your traditional student: Changing demographics on campus*. Higher Ed Connects. higheredconnects.com

Sedmak, T. (2022). *More than 39 million Americans have some college, no credential, according to new research* [Press release]. National Student Clearinghouse. https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/blog/more-than-39-million-americans-have-some-college-no-credential-according-to-new-research/

Soares, L., Gagliardi, J. S., & Nellum, C.J. (2017). *The post-traditional learners manifesto revisited: Aligning postsecondary education with real life for adult student success*. American Council on Education. https://www.acenet.edu

Yavorski, K. (2019). *Your typical college student has changed—Why haven't college policies*? Higher Ed Connects. higheredconnects.com

Regional Campus Undergraduate Research: The Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory at the University of North Georgia- Oconee

J. Gary Adcox, EdD
University of North Georgia- Oconee
gary.adcox@ung.edu

Susan Brantley, MS
University of North Georgia- Oconee
susan.brantley@ung.edu

Regional Campus Undergraduate Research: The Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory at the University of North Georgia-Oconee

By J. Gary Adcox, EdD and Susan Brantley, MS

ABSTRACT

The Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory at the University of North Georgia- Oconee project is an active gardening and education program designed to integrate the current sustainable food production and nutrition education provided by the UNG Oconee Community Garden into the Biology 1260L, Environmental Science lab courses. The content in this course complements many of the target goals of the garden providing a unique opportunity to develop a close partnership between this laboratory course and the Oconee Community Garden through assignments and activities for students. The original goal of the Oconee Campus Community Garden was simply to grow fresh produce to donate to the UNG Oconee food pantry and other food pantries in the area. Through the work of campus administration and faculty, the project has developed into a unique undergraduate research opportunity that supports the strategic mission of the university's Biology Department and the College of Science and Mathematics through the scholarship of engagement, supporting student service-learning, leadership development, and building community partnerships that encourage the growth of students in STEM.

Keywords: community garden, science lab, regional campus

Regional Campus Undergraduate Research: The Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory at the University of North Georgia- Oconee
By J. Gary Adcox, EdD and Susan Brantley, MS

Background

Oconee County is one of the wealthiest counties in Georgia, with 46.3% of the households in the county earning over $100k per year (Mealoki, 2022). Yet an underestimated segment of the population there can still feel the effects of rural poverty. Through organizations like the Oconee Area Resource Council, programs such as the Oconee Food for Kids and Oconee Summer Food for Kids programs ensure economically disadvantaged elementary and high school children are provided much-needed nutritional support. The Oconee Food for Kids Program provides over 160 children in grades K-12 with a bag of healthy food to take home every Friday. The Oconee Summer Food for Kids Program had equally positive results serving 48 families. Through the summer program, both children and adults receive weekly boxes of food during the 10-week summer program (OARC, 2022). According to the Hope Center for College, Community and Justice's recent findings, 45% of college student survey respondents reported they were food insecure in the previous 30 days (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, Looker, & Williams, 2019). These trends can also be seen on the UNG Oconee campus with an increase of students taking advantage of the UNG Oconee food pantry, Nigel's Nest, in recent years. Since it opened in 2018, the food pantry has seen a nearly fourfold increase in the number of student visits in 2021.

Introduction

The Oconee Campus Food Pantry, Nigel's Nest, has been serving students, faculty, and staff with issues of food insecurity since 2018. Based on the lack of fresh vegetables donated to the food pantry, a LEAP grant funded the start of the campus' Community Garden with the primary goal of filling the gap of fresh produce available through the food pantry with the simple hope to use a community garden to engage students in stocking an on-campus food pantry with fresh foods while learning about sustainable food production and nutrition. Interest in the garden has grown with students, faculty, and staff alike and the garden has been able to make contributions to other food banks in the Oconee County area.

In 2020, again through the help of a LEAP grant, the Community Garden was transformed to a component of the Environmental Science Lab (Biology 1260L). During this initial phase, the garden added a large pollinator section and research area for students to conduct biology laboratory experiments. This project provided great opportunities for math, journalism, and biology classes to use for a variety of hands-on learning experiences and labs. A large number of journalism students have sharpened their skills through class assignment interviews with the principles of the community garden. A small group of volunteers (staff, faculty, and students) tend to the garden and explore additional ways to share their work with the community. The pollinator research project established the first ever UNG-Oconee pollinator-friendly garden, using native plants, butterfly/bee habitats, and hummingbird feeders. An estimated 75% of food crops depend on pollinators therefore, pollinators are important in the prevention of food insecurity (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2018).

Environmental Science students participate in assignments that address learning objectives that include (1) providing service to the community, (2) basic understanding of systematic methods of inquiry, and (3) applying those principles and procedures to investigate problems. This project provides students with an opportunity to contribute to their community and increase their critical thinking skills through hands-on learning. The inclusion of trail cameras enables the collection of data on the organisms found in the garden during non-observation periods.

Students take part in pollinator surveys each semester for the class and the Great Georgia Pollinator survey in the fall. The Great Georgia Pollinator Survey is a "citizen scientist" program that collects pollinator data throughout the state of Georgia. Sticky traps are used to further investigate the types of pollinators present in the garden. Collecting this data long-term will allow students the ability to graph pollinator numbers and observe changes over time.

The Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory project at the University of North Georgia - Oconee connects student leadership development and civic engagement to address hunger through focused actions on food insecurity, sustainable food production, and pollination. The objectives of this project include providing a hands-on experience for students to learn about food insecurity in our community, native plants, and pollinators.

There are two main classroom assignments associated with this project, a food insecurity investigation, and a pollinator research project. The purpose of the food insecurity investigation is to expand students' perspectives by exploring the issue of community food insecurity. Pollinator counts and data collection are the focus of the pollinator research project, with the goal of learning data analysis techniques.

In 2021, the Oconee Campus' Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory project received an UNG Presidential Innovation Incentive Award that provided the essential resources necessary to ensure the successful operations and expansion of the project. The financial investment in this initiative allowed for the expansion of the Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory and enabled a critical component of faculty recruitment to take place over the summer by the lead faculty researcher. During the summer semester, the lead researcher interacted with other faculty members, developing an interest in using the Pollinator Research Garden as part of their course development, and mentoring these faculty through the process. The Presidential

Innovation Incentive Award acknowledged the research garden as an active part of the Oconee campus learning experience for years to come and established it as truly worthy of the course development investment and aided the goal of expanding its use by faculty in other academic departments such as math, environmental science, and social science. The Pollinator Research Garden also aided in the facilitation of undergraduate research as well as publication and presentation opportunities for students at the Oconee campus. Additionally, the Pollinator Research Garden provided students, faculty, and staff members a tranquil setting for reflection and stress relief from what can be the hectic and often stressful environment of higher education.

Project Description

The Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory project objectives included providing a hands-on experience for students to learn about food insecurity in our community, native plants and pollinators, and methods of increasing crop yields in an environmentally friendly way. As part of the pollinator project, data was collected for both short and long-term research with the long-term data collected over the course of several semesters for the potential publication of the results.

The two main classroom assignments associated with the project:
- Food Insecurity Investigation, and
- Pollinator Research Project.

The goal of the Food Insecurity Investigation is to expand students' perspectives. This assignment specifically addresses the Biology 1260L learning objective of participating effectively in groups engaged in the identification, exploration, and solution of problems.

The meaning of food insecurity, food landscapes, and food deserts are a central part of this discussion. Students view parts of the film *"A Place at the Table,"* which examines hunger as experienced by millions of Americans. After

the film, students are divided into groups. Each of these "families" are given the specifics of their family members, age, dietary restrictions, and health issues. Students in these families will produce a meal plan for the entire family for one week using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. A written report on their findings is required at the conclusion of this assignment.

The second assignment associated with the Pollinator Research Project is the establishment and continued maintenance of the pollinator-friendly garden, using native plants, butterfly/bee habitats, and hummingbird feeders. The specific Biology 1260L learning objectives this assignment addresses include providing service to the community, a basic understanding of systematic methods of inquiry, and applying those principles and procedures to investigate problems.

The assignment provided students with an opportunity to contribute to their community and improve their critical thinking skills through hands-on learning. Students worked in groups to develop a research question(s) to investigate. Research questions centered on native plants and pollinators with students developing a hypothesis based on their research question(s), supported by observations made during their time in the garden. Questions include experimentation with placement and type of native plants, water sources, and weather influences. At the conclusion of the data collection, the groups presented their research to the class with a focus on discussion.

Project Innovation

The Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory at the University of North Georgia - Oconee addresses a very important need for the students at the University of North Georgia. The objectives of the project include providing a hands-on learning experience for students to learn about food insecurity in their community, native plants, and pollinators. In addition, the project calls for the collection of long-term data

with pollinator undergraduate research projects over the course of several years.

The students participate in the continued development of the pollinator-friendly garden, using native plants, butterfly/bee habitats, and hummingbird feeders. These assignments provide students with the opportunity to contribute to their community and improve their critical thinking skills through hands-on learning. A trail camera was set up to assist in data collection on the organisms found in the garden. Standardized pollinator censuses were also conducted and sticky traps were used to monitor pollinators. Students developed research question(s) to investigate pollinator counts and then analyze the data.

This project connects new knowledge discoveries to action steps through engaging students in the solution of real-world problems of hunger, emphasizing personal and social responsibility, community engagement, data analysis, and problem-solving. The Pollinator Research Garden at the University of North Georgia - Oconee project was designed to implement key essential learning outcomes (ELO), described in College Learning for the New Global Century (AACU, 2007).

- **Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world.** The assignment focuses on engaging the questions of food shortages, social impacts, and histories of neglect and poverty.
- **Intellectual and practical skills, including inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written communication, and teamwork and problem solving.** Students work together to solve a problem involving food insecurity and then learn to effectively communicate their results in a written report.
- **Personal and social responsibility, including civic knowledge and engagement.** Students develop an awareness of what food insecurity is

in the community and think about ways to address this need in society.

- **Quantitative literacy and oral communication.** Students employ critical thinking skills to develop and test a research question(s), collect data, and give a presentation on the results.

Environmental Science students participate in the care of the Community Garden that supplies produce for Nigel's Nest and local food pantries and develop hypotheses and collect data on pollinators. This project experience improves the knowledge base of students while supporting and encouraging greater engaged citizenship. Principles of Excellence, the framework of ELOs, highlighted by both the Food Insecurity Investigation project and the Pollinator Research Project included developing the art of inquiry and innovation through immersing all project students in analysis, discovery, problem-solving, and communication. Students discussed and addressed issues of social responsibility, shared values, cultural differences, economic challenges, and human dignity.

Community Engagement

The Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory aided the regional campus in ensuring that UNG continues to fulfill its mission by confirming its commitment to providing a culture of academic excellence in a student-focused environment that includes quality education, service, research, and creativity. This commitment is accomplished through access to a comprehensive academic and co-curricular program that aids in the development of students as leaders in the global society.

The Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory fosters the intrinsic link between healthy living, knowledge acquisition, hands-on science exploration, and problem-solving. The initiative features collaborative efforts focused on enhancing academic learning communities, knowledge acquisition, ecosystem preservation,

community resources, and wildlife habitats. The activities incorporated in this project are based on best practices for student success and achievement of academic outcomes. Additionally, community outreach and engagement are vital parts of this project. Through the use of effective civic engagement, the Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory has provided educational opportunities for local elementary school students, providing advice and guidance to other educators, and provides opportunities for community partners to enjoy the butterfly habitat.

Why Undergraduate Research?

According to the AACU, LEAP the Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory has aided the Oconee regional campus respond to "contemporary demands for more engaged and informed citizens" (AACU, 2007). Environmental Science students participated in not only the care of the Community Garden that supplies produce for Nigel's Nest and local food pantries but also researched and developed data affecting sustainable food production and food insecurity among the community's economically disadvantaged. This project experience improved the knowledge base of our students while supporting and encouraging greater engaged citizenship.

Through the development of project teams, students researched, collected, and analyzed data, developed an understanding of cultural and social impacts on hunger, developed a shared purpose to effect change, raised community awareness of the issue, and engaged community members in creating solutions.

Additionally, six environmental science classes have been involved in pollinator surveys in the garden. Students worked in groups and selected a section of the garden for their research. The area was observed for a period of time and the diversity and abundance of the pollinators observed were recorded. Students found a diverse range of insects from four different orders. Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies),

Hymenoptera (bees and wasps), Coleoptera (beetles), and Diptera (flies) are all integral pollinators in the ecosystem and have been recorded in the garden.

Research supports the widely held belief that undergraduate research benefits the student, the institution, and society at large. Undergraduate research aids students in achieving their academic and career goals through these experiences by developing and sharpening their critical skills (CUR, 2021). The Council on Undergraduate Research believes that research in close collaboration with a faculty member is the best way to create enthusiasm for an academic discipline and increase student interest (CUR, 2021). A study conducted between 2003 and 2005 involving almost 15,000 respondents reported that interest in STEM careers often increases based on students' involvement in undergraduate research (Russell, Hancock, and McCullough, 2007) as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1
Interest in STEM after Undergraduate Research
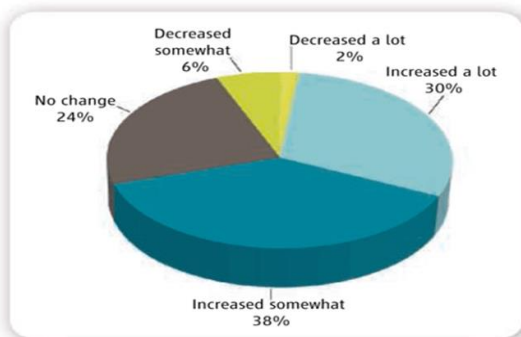
The outcomes reported as part of this study revealed an increased understanding of how to conduct research (88%), confidence in research skills (83%), and awareness of what graduate school is like (73%). Respondents also reported (29%) that they had a new expectation of obtaining a doctoral degree (Russell, Hancock, and McCullough, 2007).

Some of the overall benefits of undergraduate research reported by the Council on Undergraduate Research are:
- Enhanced student learning

- Increase retention and graduation
- Increase enrollment in graduate education
- Development of critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and intellectual independence
- Understanding of research methodology
- Promotes innovation-oriented culture
- Development of career-readiness competencies (CUR, 2021)

Additionally, a study conducted by the Tennessee Board of Regents on the impact of undergraduate research on student outcomes at Tennessee's community colleges found that participation in undergraduate research was associated with higher final GPAs (0.43 point increase) and a higher probability of graduation (21 pp.), university transfers (14 pp.), overall and after earning a credential, and a lower probability of departure (-31 pp.). The study also revealed that students that took part in undergraduate research were found to be less likely to drop out than their non-undergraduate research peers, departure of undergraduate research students decreased by 65% (TBR, 2021).

Research Results

The Community Garden and Pollinator Research Laboratory has served as a teaching garden for Biology 1260L, Environmental Science, lab students. Classes of twenty-four students, working in groups of three or four, pick an area measuring 4'X4' of the garden marked with an orange flag. The orange flags are used so that approximately the same spots in the garden are used each year. The date (all sampling occurred in the month of August), time of day (mid-morning), and weather (sunny and mostly clear days) are recorded by students on their data sheets. For fifteen minutes, students counted pollinators landing on the plants in their area. Students tabulate totals in the categories of Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths), Hymenoptera (bees, wasps, ants, and sawflies), Diptera (flies), and "other" insects. This data has been collected by students in both sections of the Environmental Science lab classes and

compiled from the past three years. In total, six classes of students have collected data during the fall semesters of 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Figure 2
Abundance for the Orders of Lepidoptera and Hymenoptera through from 2020-2022
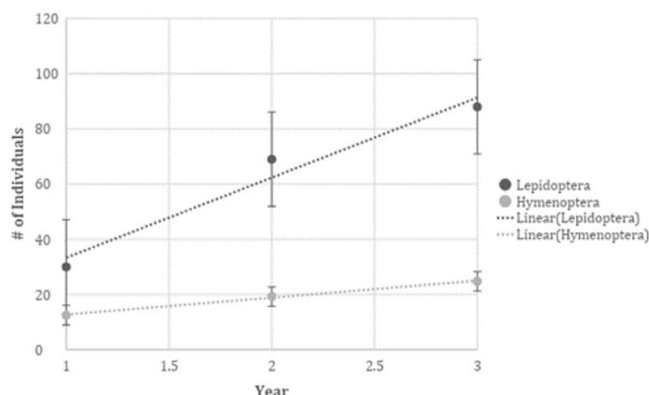
The data show an increase overall for pollinators in the orders of Lepidoptera and Hymenoptera; refer to Figure 1. Very few individuals in the order Diptera were counted and sometimes no individuals were counted at all.

We plan to continue data collection in future semesters with students in the Environmental Science lab classes. The pollinator garden samplings are part of a significant learning experience, incorporating application and integration (Fink 2013) with the goal of having students achieve mastery in this subject area (Ambrose et al. 2010). Having students participate in a study of long-term data collection creates a connection that allows students to feel like they are part of something bigger than just what is happening in their individual class. As the plants in the pollinator garden become larger and more established, we expect to continue to see an increase in the abundance of pollinators present in the garden.

Other Notable Accomplishments of Research Project

Over the past four years that this project has been in place at the Oconee Campus significant accomplishments have been marked through student learning and community engagement as well as notable recognition for the community garden and pollinator research laboratory. The first accomplishment was being recognized by and included on the Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail (June 2020). Later, the garden and pollinator research laboratory was notified that it had been awarded a Certified Monarch Garden from the North American Butterfly Association (April 2021). Shortly thereafter, the garden was honored with the Certified Wildlife Habitat from the National Wildlife Federation (July 2021).

Declaration of Interest Statement: *The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.*

References

Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M.W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. E. (2010). *How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2007). *College Learning New Global Century.* Washington, D.C. Available from: www.aacu.org

Council on Undergraduate Research (2021). *CUR Issues Updated Definition of Undergraduate Research*. Washington, D.C., Available from: https://www.cur.org/council_on_undergraduate..

Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating Significant Learning Experience: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. New York, NY (2018). *Why Bees Mater; The importance of bees and other pollinators for food and agriculture.* Available from: https://www.fao.org/3/i9527en/i9527en.pdf#:~:text=Bees%20and%20other%20pollinators%20have%20thrived%20for%20millions,fruits%2C%20vegetables%2C%20nuts%2C%20seeds%20and%20oils%20we%20eat.

Goldrick-Rab, S., Baker-Smith, C., Coca, V., Looker, E., & Williams, T. (2019). *College and University Basic Needs Insecurity: A National #RealCollege Survey Report.* The Hope Center.

Mealoki. (2022). *Top 10 Richest Counties In Georgia*. Richest Insure, Available from: https://mealoki.com/richest-counties-in-georgia/

Oconee Area Resource Council. (2022). *Summer Food For Kids.* Available from: https://www.oconeeconnection.org/programs/summer-food-for-kids/

Russell, S., Hancock, M., & McCullough (2007). *Benefits of Undergraduate Research Experiences.* Science, Vol 316, Issue 5824, pp. 548-549.

Tennessee Board of Regents (2021). *The Impact of Undergraduate Research on Student Outcomes: Examining High Impact Practices in TBR community colleges.*

Summer 2023

Residential Life at the Ohio State University Lima Campus: Why It is So Important for the Campus and How It Can be Developed with a Reduced Budget

Mark Kleffner
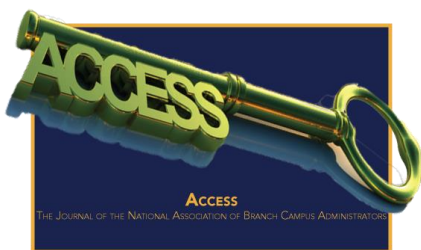The Ohio State University- Lima
kleffner.1@osu.edu

This article is available in *Access: The Journal of the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators*. Follow this and additional works at: https://www.nabca.net/access_journal.php

Residential Life at the Ohio State University Lima Campus: Why It is So Important for the Campus and How It Can be Developed with a Reduced Budget

By Mark Kleffner

ABSTRACT

There has never been a residential life option for Ohio State Lima students as Ohio State Lima has been a commuter campus from its beginning in 1960. A residential life option at Ohio State Lima is something that faculty, staff, and students of OSU Lima, as well as members of the OSU Lima Advisory Board and the Lima community, have long desired. Reports by a Regional Campus Advisory Council assembled by the OSU Office of Academic Affairs in 2016, a Regional Campus External Review in 2021, and the 2022 Ohio State Regional Campuses, A Vision for the Future summary report all concluded that regional campuses should offer a vibrant student life with opportunities to live on campus, participate in learning communities, and benefit from a full range of student services. Many studies, including recent ones, provide evidence for the importance of residential life. In addition to studies documenting the importance of residential life, there are several specific reasons why residential life would be beneficial for Ohio State Lima. Despite the conclusions of recent reports, evidence documented in recent studies, and reasons specific to Ohio State Lima, a residential life option is still only aspirational at Ohio State Lima, due primarily to the operating budget for the campus. The Lima campus has simply never had the funds needed for building on-campus housing and all the other infrastructure costs associated with residential life. A plan that is greatly influenced by the residential life practices of Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) of Ontario, Canada, makes it possible to develop a residential life option for Ohio State Lima with a reduced budget. Two key features of the WLU practice, which make it possible are: leasing the on-campus housing and not having dining facilities or a meal plan. The recommendation of this case study is that a residential life option should be available to Ohio State Lima students by 2030. An action plan is outlined to provide that option to at least 100 students as early as the 2024-2025 academic year.

Keywords: residential housing, regional campus

Residential Life at the Ohio State University Lima Campus: Why It is So Important for the Campus and How It Can be Developed with a Reduced Budget
By Mark Kleffner

Introduction and Background

The Ohio State University Lima campus is a regional campus of The Ohio State University, which was established as a land grant university in 1870. Ohio State Lima is the regional campus located the greatest distance from Columbus (~90 miles). It began in 1960 with Ohio State offering evening courses at Lima Senior High School. By 1966, the community had raised funds to purchase 565 acres and open the first building on campus: Galvin Hall. Similar to all Ohio State regional campuses, Ohio State Lima is co-located with a two-year technical college, originally founded in 1972 as Lima Technical College and now identified as Rhodes State College (RSC). RSC is independently governed, Higher Learning Commission accredited, and has essentially become a community college, offering two-year associate degrees as well as technical education programs. Since Galvin Hall opened in 1966, nine buildings have been added to the campus. Three are exclusively OSU Lima buildings, three are totally occupied by RSC, and four are shared with RSC. However, none of those buildings is a residential hall. Most students commute to campus, with a small number living in apartments near the campus. There has never been a residential life option for Ohio State Lima students, unlike two other Ohio State regional campuses, OSU Newark and OSU Mansfield. The lack of a residential life option at Ohio State Lima is something that faculty, staff, and students of OSU Lima as well as members of the OSU Lima Advisory Board and the Lima community have been trying to address for several decades. The OSU Office of Academic Affairs formed a Regional Campus Advisory Council in 2016 composed of faculty and leadership from each campus to assess the state of the regional campuses and identify a plan for the future of the four Ohio State regional campuses. In the final report the Advisory Council released in 2017, one of the goals of that plan was to create the opportunity for a residential experience for every student who wishes to live on or next to a regional campus,

by increasing the availability of on-campus housing. One section of that report, A Vision for the Regional Campuses for 2030 listed: "In our effort to provide access for all, the student life experience at regional campuses is vibrant and lively, with opportunities for students to live on campus, participating in learning communities and with access to a full range of student services." One of the key points of the Regional Campus External Review of December 17, 2021, was a "recommendation that conclusions and recommendations of the 2017 Regional Campus Advisory Council report be revisited for ways to best optimize the potential of the regional campuses. The portion of the report that articulates an explicit vision for the regional campuses by 2030 is particularly worthy of attention." The 2022 Ohio State Regional Campuses, A Vision for the Future, echoed both the 2017 Advisory Council report and Regional Campus External Review of 2021 by stating: "Regional campuses offer a vibrant student life with opportunities to live on campus, participate in learning communities, and benefit from a full range of student services."

Recent Studies Provide Evidence for Why Residential Life is Important

Many studies have concluded that residential life is beneficial for students. A recent study by the Association of College and University Housing Officers that included more than 75,000 students from 76 residential campuses reached that same conclusion, living on campus has a clear and profound positive effect on student persistence and engagement, with first-year students and sophomores who lived on campus more likely to persist than those who did not (Graham et al., 2021). Gonyea et al. (2019) showed that on-campus sophomores persisted at the highest rates of all living distances from campus. Graham et al. (2018) determined that living on campus compared to living farther than walking distance from campus resulted in a small positive effect on engagement in discussions with diverse others, a small to medium positive

effect on student-faculty interaction, and a medium positive effect on collaborative learning. Another beneficial feature of many residential life programs are living-learning communities (LLCs). An LLC is a group of students with common academic, cultural, or lifestyle interests who live together on the same residence hall floor. Graham et al. (2021) found that students who participated in LLCs were more engaged in effective educational practices and were even more likely than others living on campus to return to school the following year.

Reasons Why a Residential Life Option is Needed for Ohio State Lima

There are numerous reasons why there is seemingly unanimous agreement that a residential life option should exist for all Ohio State regional campuses, including OSU Lima. The first sentence following the Residential Experience heading in the section on campus living on the Ohio State Office of Student Life web page is "Core to Ohio State's legacy and success is our residential experience." Ohio State University has had residence halls in Columbus since early in its history, and there are also residence halls on its Mansfield and Newark regional campuses. Ohio State believes so strongly in the benefits of residential life that all unmarried, full-time students within two years of high school graduation must live on campus, unless exempted, space is no longer available, or they are living with family. Ohio State established a two-year on-campus housing requirement in 2016 because a study commissioned on second-year student success found students had higher two-year retention and graduation rates when they lived on campus their second year than those that did not.

Students who are admitted to Ohio State's Columbus campus as first-year students are chosen through a selective admission process and are among the best of the students at each of their high schools. Students who start on the regional campuses of Ohio State are mostly students taking advantage of the open-admission practice of the land-grant mission of Ohio State

which makes it possible for all high school graduates throughout Ohio to begin their higher education at Ohio State, regardless of their class standing in high school or scores on standardized tests, and include a significantly higher percentage of First-generation and Pell-eligible students compared to students who start on the Columbus campus. Students who start at Ohio State Lima would surely benefit from a residential life experience at least as much if not even more than those who start on the Columbus campus.

All regional campuses of Ohio State, including the Lima campus, share their campus location with a community college. Ohio State Lima is co-located with Rhodes State College. Rhodes State started out as Lima Technical College (LTC) and offered mostly courses in technical education. However, over time that institution developed first and second year courses and received approval to award two-year associate degrees. Ohio State Lima and Rhodes State are both commuter campuses. The missions of the two institutions are not the same, but as long as Ohio State Lima remains exclusively a commuter campus, without a residential life option for its students, the difference between the two institutions, at least in years one and two, will not be as evident as it would if Ohio State Lima featured a vibrant student life experience which included on-campus housing. Ohio State Lima expanded its recruitment territory to include students in bordering Indiana counties in 2016 and began offering in-state tuition to students residing in 28 Indiana counties under a new Tuition Reciprocity Agreement, effective July 1, 2017. Only nine students from Indiana have enrolled on the Lima campus as first-year students since that agreement became effective. Four of those nine withdrew after one semester and one after two semesters. Only four students from Indiana have been enrolled for three or more semesters. A residential life option on the Lima campus would make it much easier for students in those 28 Indiana counties to attend Ohio State Lima, which would help increase overall enrollment on campus.

Autumn Semester 2020 Ohio State Lima introduced a brand-new four-year engineering technology degree developed by the College of Engineering that is only offered on regional campuses of Ohio State. The absence of a residential life option on the Lima campus makes it less likely that many students from west-central and northwest Ohio and the aforementioned 28 Indiana counties interested in enrolling on the Lima campus to earn that degree would be able to do so due to time required for commuting. Two of the biggest competitors for high school students who reside in the Lima campus service region that want to attend college in Ohio are the University of Cincinnati and Bowling Green State University. Both of those public universities offer residential life options, which are attractive to the many high school students who live in the Ohio State Lima service region who do not want to live at home while attending college.

Reason for Lack of a Residential Life Option at Ohio State Lima

With abundant evidence as to why residential life is so important, and all the reasons listed previously for why it is needed at Ohio State Lima, why is a residential life option still aspirational for Ohio State Lima? The biggest reason is the operating budget of Ohio State Lima. The Lima campus simply never had the funds needed for building on-campus housing and all the other infrastructure costs associated with residential life. Ohio State Lima essentially operates on a responsibility center management budget model. The campus receives all its own revenues and income, including tuition students pay and subsidy awarded by the state for their students' enrollment, retention and graduation rates, and pays Ohio State University for a portion of expenses incurred by the university's general operations. For nearly three decades, the tuition students pay to attend regional campuses of Ohio State is about 30% less than that students pay to attend the Columbus campus. The Lima campus has not had substantial savings at any time during the past three decades; for at least the last decade, the campus has had no savings. The few years during the

past decade when there was a modest annual surplus, that surplus was used to pay off debt accrued in previous years. The Ohio State Lima budget situation has not drastically changed for the better. Therefore, to be able to bring a residential life experience to Ohio State Lima, it will require doing it with a reduced budget.

Development of Ohio State Lima Residential Life Option with a Reduced Budget

Ohio State Lima is greatly limited in its ability to create a residential life option using only the funds available in the normal operating budget, and as previously mentioned, there are no savings currently available to use for that purpose. The plan that follows is greatly influenced by the residential life practices of Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) of Ontario, Canada, and specifically how that institution developed residential life on the campus they established in 1999 in Brantford, Ontario, a 50-55-minute drive from their Waterloo, Ontario, campus. There were 39 students enrolled at WLU Brantford during its first year of existence in 1999, all of them commuter students. WLU Brantford first provided a residential life option in 2000, and 20 of the 120 students enrolled that year chose that option. WLU Brantford did not build a student dormitory or student apartments for those 20 students to live on campus, nor were dormitories or apartments built for the 300 students who lived on campus of the 750 enrolled at WLU Brantford in 2003. In fact, WLU Brantford has never built any student housing of any kind. The plan WLU Brantford has followed to develop a residential life option on a reduced budget is one that could also be implemented by Ohio State Lima. The investment required to bring residential life to Ohio State Lima would be modest enough that there should be a much greater possibility of attracting and securing a combination of internal funding from Ohio State University and external funding from the community to bring a residential life option to Ohio State Lima.

WLU Brantford did not have the budget to be able to afford to build student housing when the campus was first established. Their campus is

located in downtown Brantford, so they leased apartments available in buildings that already existed within close walking distance to where classes were being offered. That worked so well that WLU Brantford continues to lease apartments in existing buildings rather than build their own student housing. All of the apartments offer the same features: single or double (shared) bedrooms, two to eight students per apartment, furnished bedrooms, living room and kitchen, shared bathroom(s) in apartment, Residence Learning Communities and Clusters, common community spaces, laundry facilities, secure, controlled access, with the availability of mixed-gender housing. WLU Brantford provided residence life in all of the buildings they lease, which is an important factor in the success of their leasing program. Another reason their leasing program has worked so well is that even though WLU Brantford has no traditional dining facilities for students living on campus, they arranged with local restaurants and food markets for Brantford students to use a card for purchasing meals or groceries at an agreed-upon discounted rate. WLU Brantford students who live in on-campus housing have the option of cooking meals in the kitchen in their apartment or dining out. A First Choice Decline Survey of students who chose not to attend WLU Brantford showed that the lack of a meal plan due to not having traditional dining facilities was a reason very few students listed (only 4%) for not choosing to attend.

Ohio State Lima could follow both of those practices. There is an existing private apartment complex designed for student housing for approximately 100 residents with all the features offered by WLU Brantford apartments, with the exception of Residence Learning Communities and Clusters, located within a short walking distance from the Lima campus that could possibly be leased. The possibility is likely a strong one, as the company that owns the complex offered to sell it to Ohio State Lima within the past two years. Ohio State Lima was not able to raise the funds to purchase it at that time. There are reports that the complex requires extensive maintenance and repairs, which would need to be addressed by the owners if Ohio State

Lima were to lease the complex. If the owner of the complex would not agree to resolve those issues before leasing the facility, then the expense of the maintenance and repairs required for the apartment complex to be suitable for use for Ohio State residential life would make it not worth leasing. However, even if it would not be sensible or possible to work out a lease agreement for that apartment complex, there would still be another way to bring residential life to Ohio State Lima, although it would not be possible to do it as quickly.

The other way would be to provide land on the Ohio State Lima campus for a very minimal cost (perhaps even free) to a company who would build an apartment complex for students. The typical lease agreement that WLU Brantford has with building owners is for three years, with the option to extend the lease for an additional year twice. That would work well for a lease agreement between Ohio State Lima and the existing apartment complex, should that apartment complex be in suitable condition and possible to lease. If it is not, perhaps a land lease of 25 to 50 years in duration with an owner who would build a student housing complex on land donated by Ohio State could be a possibility. The housing complex would revert to university ownership at the end of the land lease. Ohio State Lima would lease the student housing complex from the owner throughout the duration of the land lease, providing a residential life experience on par with that in student housing on the Columbus campus.

Like WLU Brantford, since Ohio State Lima is located within three miles of numerous restaurants and food markets, it could also work out agreements with all those businesses for students to use a card (BuckID card, which can be used in that manner by students on the Ohio State Columbus campus with off-campus merchants) to purchase meals and groceries at an agreed-upon discounted rate.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The evidence supporting the benefits of residential life and the documentation of

the many reasons why a residential life option is needed for the Lima campus are in complete agreement with a conclusion in the final section, "A Vision for the Regional Campuses for 2030," of the report the Regional Campus Advisory Council released in 2017, which was also lauded by the Regional Campus External Review of December 17, 2021, and repeated in the 2022 Ohio State Regional Campuses, A Vision for the Future suggested that, "student life experience at regional campuses is vibrant and lively, with opportunities for students to live on campus, participating in learning communities and with access to a full range of student services." All Ohio State students, regardless of the campus they are enrolled on, should have the opportunity for a similar vibrant student experience with a residential life option.

Ohio State Lima should make it possible for students attending the campus to have that opportunity by 2030, if not sooner. The process previously described for how to develop a residential life option on a reduced budget could be implemented with a three-year pilot program that could possibly start as early as Autumn Semester 2024, if the private apartment complex with capacity for 100 residents within close walking distance of the campus addresses the extensive maintenance and repairs required to restore that facility to one that meets the standards of Ohio State student housing prior to that time and be also possible to lease. If neither of those conditions could be met or be possible, then a pilot program might not be possible, but a residential life option could still be developed on a reduced budget by working out a land lease agreement with a company to build a student housing complex with capacity for 100 residents on donated campus land, which Ohio State Lima would lease from the company for the duration of the land lease agreement, with the student housing complex reverting to Ohio State Lima ownership at the end of the land lease.

Regardless of how Ohio State Lima acquires student housing, Ohio State Lima should work with The Ohio State University Office of Student Life to provide a residential life experience in the newly created on-campus

student housing that is consistent with the vision, mission, and core values of Ohio State residential life. There would be a resident assistant on each floor, as well as living learning communities (LLCs). LLCs are an important feature of residential life at Ohio State campuses with on-campus housing, because all Ohio State LLCs offer a direct connection to the classroom experience, special events and opportunities for residents, and dedicated staff members to ensure the success of the students within the community. LLCs would be especially beneficial for many groups of Lima students, including those that are in the many major programs and those that are First-Generation.

Finally, even before student housing is in place, Ohio State Lima should begin working out agreements with nearby restaurants and food markets for students to use their BuckID card to purchase meals and groceries at an agreed-upon discounted rate. The next step for developing residential life on the Ohio State Lima campus is following an action plan that could potentially result in achieving the goal of residential life in time for students enrolled during 2024-2025.

Action Plan

The action plan that follows is one that would potentially result in bringing residential life to Ohio State Lima in the most expedient fashion, without requiring the construction of on-campus housing. The plan will only be successful if the already existing private apartment complex is in a condition suitable for use as an Ohio State housing facility and possible to lease. The first step of the plan is to contact the company that owns/manages the private apartment complex to learn if it would be possible to lease the complex. If they are willing to lease the apartment complex, Ohio State Lima should immediately begin to negotiate a three-year lease, like the ones described previously that WLU Brantford has developed with building owners. The Ohio State University Office of Legal Affairs should be consulted to assist with working out a lease agreement, perhaps using a lease agreement shared by WLU Brantford as a template. When a lease can be successfully

negotiated, The Ohio State Office of Student Life, Residential Experience should be contacted, so that planning can begin to create the same residential life experience as previously described that exists in on-campus housing on the Ohio State Columbus campus for Ohio State Lima students in the leased apartment complex. At the same time that the Office of Student Life is helping to create the residential life experience, Ohio State Lima Student Life staff would be working out agreements with nearby restaurants and food markets for students to use their BuckID card to purchase meals and groceries at an agreed-upon discounted rate, so that there is no need for a dining facility or cafeteria with regular food service. Students living in Ohio State Lima campus housing can either eat out, bring food back to eat, or prepare meals in the kitchenettes.

Acknowledgments

Declaration of Interest Statement: *The author reports there are no competing interests to declare*.

References

Graham, P. A., Hurtado, S. S., & Gonyea, R. M. (2018). The benefits of living on campus: Do residence halls provide distinctive environments of engagement?. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *55*(3), 255-269.

Graham, P. A., Gonyea, R. M., Fosnacht, K., & Fassett, K. T. (2021). The case for campus housing: Results from a national study.

Gonyea, R. M., Fosnacht, K., Fassett, K., & Graham, P. (2019). The relationship of sophomore living arrangements on engagement and perceived outcomes. ACUHO-I Annual Convention and Expo.

Office of Academic Affairs, The Ohio State University. (Dec. 2017). Regional campus vision and goals: Advisory Council report.

Clear Student Data for Campus Success

Amy Wong
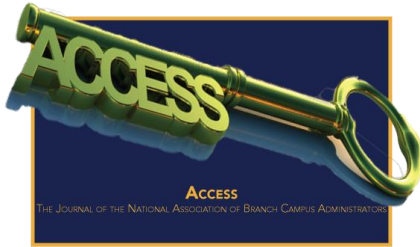Texas State University- Round Rock Campus
amy.wong@txstate.edu

Recommended Citation
Wong, A. (2023). Clear student data for campus success. *Access: The Journal of the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators*, *viii*(i), Article 4. Retrieved from https://www.nabca.net/access_journal.php

Clear Student Data for Campus Success

By Amy Wong

ABSTRACT

We live in a data-driven society regarding decision-making in business and organizations. Student data have become increasingly important in facilitating many decisions that impact student success and institutional success in higher education. For colleges, universities, or university systems that manage branch campuses, campus-specific student data require attention and a clear understanding to help identify both challenges and opportunities for campus administration and operations. Campus-specific student data impact all aspects of campus life and are crucial for campus success. This study takes a deep dive into the Texas State University Round Rock Campus student data. The findings from this study are meant to call for university and university system leadership as well as local campus leadership to look at campus-specific student data and the processes of how specific data are collected for a branch campus. This case study also contributes to the branch campus research in public higher education in enrollment management practice.

Keywords: enrollment, student data, campus success, branch campus, decision-making, organizational structure

Clear Student Data for Campus Success
By Amy Wong

Location Profile

Texas State University Round Rock Campus is located in the city of Round Rock, Texas, about 50 miles north of the university's main campus in the city of San Marcos, Texas. Based on the information published on the City of Round Rock website (2022), the city was predicted to have an estimated population of 124,614 in 2022 and is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. Texas State University is a public research university located in Central Texas. As Wikipedia cites (2023), it is currently the second largest university in the Greater Austin metropolitan area and the fifth largest in the State of Texas. The Round Rock Campus expands the university's presence in the North Austin area on 101 acres of land.

Since the campus opened in 2005, the Round Rock Campus has grown over the years and currently has three academic buildings in addition to a student services building. The fourth academic building is scheduled to break ground in 2024 with an estimated completion in 2025.

The Round Rock Campus primarily offers junior and senior level undergraduate and graduate courses. At the time of this study, students can enroll in classes across 14 bachelor's degree programs, 22 master's degree programs, and one doctorate program with a combination of taking in person classes on campus and online classes to complete their degrees. Based on Fall 2022 university enrollment data, the Round Rock Campus student headcount is 1,301, with almost an even split between graduate and undergraduate level students.

Situation Overview

Six academic departments and various administrative and support services teams are housed on the Round Rock Campus. Campus-specific student data directly impact campus success of all campus constituents. For academic departments, student data are used to track program enrollment and monitor student success in retention and graduation. For administrative and support services teams, student data serve as a reference for event planning to maximize participation and engagement. The Administration Office on the Round Rock Campus constantly receives inquiries about the campus-specific student data but is not directly involved in managing or reporting the data.

Enrollment management is centralized at Texas State University under an Associate Vice President who reports to the Provost. The Registrar's Office is under the AVP for Enrollment Management and plays a vital role in class schedule creation, registration, enrollment, and maintenance of student academic records. The Registrar's Office also works closely with an IT team that manages the university's student information system as well as the data analytics tool. The Office of Institutional Research carries institutional data analysis and reporting functions and relies on the student information system and the analytical data to compile institutional reports. All of these key offices involved in data management and reports are located on the main campus. They do not communicate regularly or directly with the Round Rock Campus Administration Office or student support teams on the Round Rock Campus.

From a data reporting perspective, although Texas State University reports student enrollment data to its governing body, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) by semester in fall, summer, and spring, the format of reporting does not require the university to report the Round Rock Campus student enrollment separately. In other words, student enrollment is reported with breakdowns by college, department, and major, but not by campus location.

To complicate the situation, the course delivery method has changed for many classes on the Round Rock Campus that were offered in person before the COVID pandemic but now are either permanently online or in a hybrid fashion. During this change, how to calculate the Round Rock Campus students in online enrollment impacts the understanding of the campus student data.

Issue Description

It is clear that the Round Rock Campus student data have become an issue and cannot be effectively used to support campus constituents for various purposes. The inconsistent way of calculating department enrollment and the Round Rock campus enrollment has caused confusion in understanding a campus's total enrollment. In addition, insufficient information on student data breakdowns makes it difficult when support services teams plan activities that target a certain student population.

Campus Data vs. Department Data

Six academic departments are currently located on the Round Rock Campus. Tracking student enrollment data for these departments is relatively easy and transparent based on current reporting format of breaking down enrollment by department, major, level of study, and demographics. However, if students enrolled in online only programs in these six departments, online student headcount is currently not counted towards the Round Rock Campus overall student enrollment, but it is calculated into the enrollment of the departments that are physically located on campus. This calculation method has caused confusion and a data discrepancy in counting the campus total enrollment as the sum of department total enrollment on the Round Rock Campus.

Other than the six on-campus academic departments, multiple academic departments on the main campus offer classes on the Round Rock Campus. For these departments, the current issue resides in the class section campus code that impacts the campus student headcount.

Through the COVID pandemic, if a class section permanently changed its delivery method from in person to online, the campus code was changed to "Off-campus" from "Round Rock Campus". However, some departments decided to keep the Round Rock campus code for various reasons, while a few others simply didn't make the campus code change as an error. Campus code with these academic departments has also affected the accuracy of the campus student enrollment data.

Lack of Data Breakdowns

One historical issue about the Round Rock Campus student enrollment breakdown is that it does not allow the data to be filtered by semester for fall, summer, and spring semesters. Only fall semester enrollment has been reported to fulfill the minimum need of having a general number in student headcount to answer the common question for the campus student enrollment. Lack of semester data prevents program teams from having an accurate reference in spring and summer semesters. In contrast, the institutional enrollment reports have a filter set up by semester that allows activities to be planned more effectively on the main campus.

Another issue with data breakdowns is that the current Round Rock Campus student enrollment does not break down in detail to support services teams to effectively plan and conduct extra-curricular activities, which ultimately affect positive student experience on a branch campus. For example, the campus enrollment does not break down by full-time or part-time enrollment as the university does with its overall institutional student enrollment. As a campus that has transitioned from primarily having part-time enrolled students to having a combination of both full-time and part-time students on campus, the lack of data in breakdown in this category does not help the campus constituents across all functions to understand our student population and the campus dynamics.

Moreover, many new student services initiatives demand enrollment data breakdowns that currently do not exist for the Round Rock

Campus. Enrollment data related to transfer students and first-generation students are good examples. As a campus that only offers upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses, it enrolls many students who transfer from community colleges or other universities. However, it is unclear how many transfer students that the Round Rock Campus has enrolled. When activities such as information sessions and coaching seminars are being considered to support transfer students on the Round Rock Campus, it is not effective to manage event logistics for event or program success towards the targeted student population. The same challenges apply to ensure support for the first-generation student population as well as veteran students on the Round Rock Campus. The lack of student data breakdowns in specific categories has caused frustration and a waste of administrative resources when support services teams are eager to serve the students but struggle to find good data to facilitate their success.

Solutions

To address the identified issues, meetings were conducted with the Office of Institutional Research and the Registrar's Office to discuss solutions. Immediate changes have been made as a result of these discussions, but long-term solutions require a systematical approach with a longer timeline for implementation.

One immediate change has been made to the Round Rock Campus student enrollment dashboard by adding a semester filter. It now allows the student data to be filtered by semester for fall, summer, and spring semesters. Despite how easily and quick this change could be made, it took this study to emphasize the urgency for the change and follow through to complete it. It was also discovered that transfer student data breakdown could be available and compiled for the Round Rock Campus, but it has to be a customized project initiated by a request to the Office of Institutional Research for a report. The validity of such data must be tested and discussed when a report becomes available. Moreover, adding a filter to allow the Round Rock student data with a breakdown for full-

time and part-time status has been determined highly possible. Still, it requires some time to fix specific codes associated with a change implemented by THECB in spring 2022.

The solutions to address the other two issues in this study, including how to treat online student headcount and the inconsistency in campus code for Round Rock class sections, require a holistic assessment and a group meeting with broader stakeholders. These include the enrollment management leadership team, the Registrar's Office, Office of Institutional Research, IT, as well as individual academic departments to discuss the broader impact associated with class section attribute change. This study raised a question and attention for such an assessment to be conducted.

To acknowledge the staff shortage in the Office of Institutional Research to help the Round Rock campus-specific data analysis and reports, a suggestion has been made to the Round Rock Campus leadership that a data analyst position should be created as a solution. This position based on the branch campus will not only help serve as a liaison to the Office of Institutional Research to engage ongoing communications at a technical level, but will also help visualize the campus-specific student data with formats that can effectively communicate to the Round Rock Campus constituents who are a different audience for which the current institutional reports are designed. During the current time when new student initiatives and programs are constantly changing and evolving, this new data analyst position will help quickly respond to change by creating and compiling campus-specific data reports without having to wait for the Office of Institutional Research to respond to custom requests.

Future Actions

To explore the long-term solutions to address the online student headcount and the inconsistency in campus code for Round Rock class sections, meetings should be scheduled with the university executive leadership, the Registrar's Office, and the Office of Institutional Research

for further discussions. It is possible to consider changing the campus code for classes that are offered by the departments physically located on the Round Rock campus from "Off-campus" to "Round Rock Campus". Such change will justify the campus-based resources needed to support these online enrolled students and help boost the campus profile with a higher student enrollment.

However, such change will likely have an institutional-level impact on the campus code for all online classes. Unlike the branch campuses where online programs are administered by one academic unit, most online programs and classes at Texas State University are administered by individual departments. If the campus code for the Round Rock Campus online classes demands for a change, it is reasonable to think the campus code for the main campus online classes should be changed for consistency. A change at this level and magnitude will require the university executive leadership team and the Office of Institutional Research to clarify with the university system's office on reporting requirements at the system level. The Registrar's Office will also need to provide input on the impact of the system configuration change that may affect various internal reports. Before an executive decision is made, a holistic study should be conducted to assess the impact.

To officially propose and seek approval for a new data analyst position on the Round Rock campus requires an initial meeting between the campus leadership and the university president to discuss the campus budget. At the time of writing, the university has announced that the Round Rock Campus will become a new division in the organizational structure and that it will become its own budget unit instead of part of the Division of Academic Affairs. This change presents a great opportunity to request and advocate for additional budget funds to be allocated to create a new staff position. In the event of a budget constraint, the Round Rock Campus leadership should seek partnerships with other divisional or departmental leaders, such as IT or the Office of Institutional Research, to discuss the possibility of creating

this position with a budget split. If a permanent budget is not immediately available, seeking external grants to fund this new position might also be a promising alternative. It will provide a temporary fund to increase operational efficiency while allowing time to explore and harvest permanent budget opportunities. To align the value of this position with supporting student success could be a good strategy in researching and finding appropriate grants.

To continually assess and refine the Round Rock campus student data requires a focus group composed of academic leaders and support services leaders to gather feedback as well as identify needs and concerns from a wide representation of the campus and university constituents. The focus group should be led by the Round Rock Campus leadership team, facilitated by a subject expert such as a data analyst and meet on regular basis to discuss questions and identify solutions.

Benefits

This study is conducted at a critical time when the Round Rock Campus is going through a transformation when campus-specific student data is in high and constant demand by various university constituents. While emphasis is put on generating big ideas, this case study serves the purpose of improving processes to solve execution challenge (Govindarajan & Trimble, 2010) in four areas.

First, this study has raised awareness of the current state of the Round Rock Campus student enrollment data. Close attention to campus-specific data consistency and accuracy will help answer questions related to student enrollment at institutional, campus or department levels to facilitate campus growth and success. In addition, a clear understanding of certain sub-datasets, or lack of them, help initiate conversations at program level to explore possible solutions.

Second, the solutions that have been implemented or will be considered as a result of this study will benefit individual constituents on

the Round Rock Campus by having an effective planning tool with clear student descriptions to understand who comprises the campus student body and allocate support resources accordingly.

In addition, the proposed new staff position in data analysis on the Round Rock Campus revealed a higher level of discussion on organizational structure. On the surface, it acknowledges the importance of having a data analyst role on a branch campus. On a deeper level, it advocates for the distinction in separate job roles and the need to stop the practice of asking branch campus staff to wear multiple hats (Bird, 2014) when critical functions require a dedicated full-time position to provide the best value.

Last but not least, this case study contributes to the academic community in higher education research on branch campus characteristics in understanding multi-campus enrollment and enrollment management practices. Research studies (Bird, 2014; Jacquemin, Junker, & Doll, 2019) indicate that the inherent difficulty in collecting data from branch campuses have left many questions unanswered in higher education relevant to branch campus administration.

Conclusion

When a branch campus is in geographic distance from the main campus, it is often easy to lose track of the current state of certain essential information. The campus-specific student data are at the forefront of campus success as well as institutional success. It cannot be neglected. The issues discussed in this case study have revealed some concerning areas related to student enrollment data on the Texas State University Round Rock Campus. The solutions implemented as the result of this study have brought hope that these issues can be addressed and solved if leadership at both the branch campus and institutional levels pay attention to them, communicate on a regular basis, and provide collaborative support in making changes.

Due to time constraints, this study has limitations that will require further studies to discuss. For instance, the focus on student data in this study is centered on student enrollment data. Other student data, including retention and graduation rates are not included although they are key factors in measuring student success and campus success. A further understanding of campus-specific data on both retention and graduation rates will help establish a campus profile and to tell a compelling story when engaging activities in recruitment and marketing.

Declaration of Interest Statement: *The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.*

References

Bird, C.P. (2014). *Out on a limb: A Branch campus life*. Charles P. Bird.

Govindarajan, V., & Trimble, C. (2010). *The other side of Innovation: Solving the execution challenge.* Harvard Business Review Press.

Jacquemin, S. J., Junker, C. R., & Doll, J. C. (2019). The Branch effect: Understanding multi-campus enrollment and student success. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, *67*(1), 1–12. DOI: 10.1080/07377363.2019.1642690

Round Rock Texas. (2022, August 23). *Report: Round Rock population will grow by almost 75,000 over 20 years.* https://www.roundrocktexas.gov/news/round-rocks-population-will-grow-by-almost-75000-people-over-20-years

Texas State University. (2023, February 18). In *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Texas_State_University&oldid=1140030747

Addressing Staffing Issues in Pennsylvania through an Early College Teacher Academy: A Single-Site Case Study

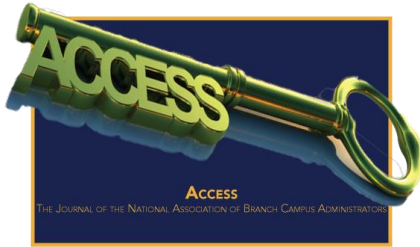Melissa Day, EdD
Luzerne County Community College
mday@luzerne.edu

Addressing Staffing Issues in Pennsylvania through an Early College Teacher Academy

By Melissa Day, Ed.D.

ABSTRACT

School districts throughout the country are faced with staffing shortages, many of which existed prior to the pandemic but were made worse as a result of it. Garcia and Weiss (2019) sounded the alarm citing a 2016 report that showed the gap between available teachers and open positions was expected to exceed 110,000 teachers nationwide in 2017-2018. Even as we move past the pandemic, its impact is being felt in our schools and classrooms. In Pennsylvania, in particular, the number of teachers leaving traditional schools and the profession itself coupled with a decreased number of teaching candidates graduating from college has created a perfect storm for school and community leaders to address. While working conditions and wages continue to be issues for retaining teachers, increasing the number of candidates entering college is essential to strengthening the pipeline. In addition to recruiting future teachers while still in high school, Early College has the potential to increase their rates of degree completion, ultimately leading to more certified teachers in the state.

Given the exponential rise of teachers needed to fill roles in the in the preK-12 sector and relative decline of students enrolling in teaching programs, the expansion of Early College Educational Programs has implications throughout K-16. This case study seeks to define dual enrollment and summarize the problems it may solve. Most importantly, this paper seeks to identify vital behaviors of one Early College program for other high schools and community colleges to replicate the work in their own communities.

Keywords: teacher shortage, early college, dual enrollment, community college

Addressing Staffing Issues in Pennsylvania through an Early College Teacher Academy
By Melissa Day, EdD

Introduction

School districts throughout the country are faced with staffing shortages, many of which existed prior to the pandemic but were made worse as a result of it. Garcia and Weiss (2019) sounded the alarm citing a 2016 report that showed the gap between available teachers and open positions was expected to exceed 110,000 teachers nationwide in 2017-2018. Even as we move past the pandemic, its impact is being felt in our schools and classrooms. In Pennsylvania, in particular, the number of teachers leaving traditional schools and the profession itself coupled with a decreased number of teaching candidates graduating from college has created a perfect storm for school and community leaders to address. While working conditions and wages continue to be issues for retaining teachers, increasing the number of candidates entering college is essential to strengthening the pipeline. One way to do that is by including high school students in programs. In addition to recruiting future teachers while still in high school, Early College Access Programming (ECAP) has the potential to increase their rates of degree completion, ultimately leading to more certified teachers in the state.

In an attempt to blur the lines between high school and college, ECAP, which includes dual and/or concurrent enrollment, allows high school students to participate in post-secondary coursework. As such, participating students not only earn high school credits toward graduation but also get a head start on college credit accumulation. The idea of students taking college level coursework while still in high school is not new. One of the most well-known ways for high school students to earn college credits is through participation in Advanced Placement (AP) coursework. Unlike Advanced Placement (AP) courses, which are often reserved for the highest achieving learners and require participants to score highly on a comprehensive exam to earn college credits, ECAP focus on historically underrepresented students. "The underlying assumption is that

engaging underrepresented students in rigorous high school curriculum, tied to the incentive of earning college credit, will motivate them and increase their access to additional postsecondary education and credentials after high school" (Berger et al., 2014, iii). Beyond the accumulation of credits, ECAP often includes significant academic supports at both the high school and college level and provides financial assistance to participants.

Problem Statement

Given the exponential rise of teachers needed to fill roles in the in the preK-12 sector and relative decline of students enrolling in teaching programs, the expansion of Early College Educational Programs has implications throughout K-16. As such, the Luzerne County Community College (LCCC) partnered with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) for an innovative Early College Teacher Academy for the 2023-2024 school year. With the creation of this mutually beneficial partnership between school districts and local community college, this program benefits the individual student participants as well as the larger educational community. This case study seeks to define dual enrollment and summarize the problems it may solve. Most importantly, this paper seeks to identify vital behaviors of one Early College program for other high schools and community colleges to replicate the work in their own communities.

Partners Involved

Partnerships between high schools and colleges exist already, many of which include community colleges. In fact, participation in ECAP at community colleges is quite common in Pennsylvania. Participation by community colleges is especially important for the students engaged in these programs because they provide an attainable access point to post-secondary education (Calcagno et al, 2008.). Though they are often known for their career and technical programs, community colleges serve students

who intend to transfer to four-year colleges and universities also (Jacobs and Worth, 2019). In many ways, community colleges serve as the conduit between high school and eventual postsecondary degree attainment for students from underrepresented groups. Karp et al. (2010) note that: "Because of their convenient locations, open-access admission policies, and relatively low costs, community colleges tend to enroll students who are more academically, economically, and socially disadvantaged than do other postsecondary institutions" (p. 70). In terms of postsecondary partnerships, community colleges not only provide coursework that is more financially sustainable for districts, but they also encourage greater postsecondary enrollment for students from historically underrepresented groups.

In this case, the Luzerne County Community College (LCCC) partnered with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU). As a regional education service agency, the CSIU serves 17 school districts across Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder and Union counties in central Pennsylvania. LCCC serves all of northeastern Pennsylvania with one main campus in Luzerne County and seven dedicated centers throughout Columbia, Luzerne, Lackawanna, and Northumberland counties.

Within the overlap of service areas, which occurs in Northumberland, Montour, and Columbia counties, LCCC has three dedicated centers—one in Shamokin, Watsontown, and Berwick. The specific site for this case study is the Greater Susquehanna Center in Watsontown. It was selected primarily because both partners, LCCC and CSIU have programs in the same building, which was previously an elementary school. In particular, the Greater Susquehanna Center of LCCC has seven classrooms, two computer labs, and a main office on the south end of the building while the CSIU resides in the north end with its Watsontown Children's Center. Among its classrooms are Head Start, Pre-K Counts, and school-age students receiving emotional support services. The Children's Center is not immune to the staffing problems that exist in local schools. As such, they are

interested in the Early College Teacher Academy to not only strengthen the teacher pipeline but also for hiring these students to help support their work being done in the Children's Center.

Initial conversations of this program began after the Executive Director of the CSIU and the Greater Susquehanna Center Director were invited to attend the PA Needs Teachers Summit in September 2022. This summit brought stakeholders from K-12, government agencies, higher education, philanthropic organizations, and early childhood providers together to learn about the teacher shortage and hear about programs that are underway throughout the state to increase the number of teachers, especially those from underrepresented groups. A follow-up conversation between the GSC Director and the Chief Academic Officer of the CSIU occurred a week later and led to the initial concept of the Teacher Academy, through which Early College students and adult learners take EDU and ECE courses that are aligned with transfer pathways to earn teacher's certifications.

It is important to note that the CSIU Executive Director was directly involved with the placement of the Greater Susquehanna Center in the previous elementary school while he was still Superintendent of the district in which it resides. Additionally, he serves on the Center's Advisory Board and continues to support its expansion of programs in the local community. Because the Center's Director was born and raised in the area before becoming a teacher, she has a shared interest in increasing postsecondary opportunity and access for students in the area. Prior to taking her current position, she worked with members of the CSIU leadership team as a school administrator in two different schools that it serves. These relationships were key to the initial concept and eventual development of the partnership itself.

Situation Overview

Once refined, the Teacher Academy concept was shared with college leadership, including the Early Childhood Education Coordinator,

Humanities Department Chairperson, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the Vice President of Enrollment Management. After an internal discussion to consider potential barriers as well as benefits, the group met virtually with the CSIU Chief Academic Officer to consider the feasibility of the program. Potential courses and times were agreed upon quickly, while conversation surrounding the payment of tuition and minimum enrollment numbers took more time. In an effort to ensure that courses in the pilot year (fall 2023 and spring 2024) would run, the CSIU offered to pay a flat rate for all Early College students to cover the payment of the instructor and center costs. The college business office was included for consideration of the payment required, and an agreement was reached. In order to ensure that no minimum number of enrollments are necessary to run the courses, the CSIU will pay LCCC $3,000 per course, for a total of $12,000 in the 2023-2024 academic year. To increase the earning potential for the college, it was agreed that non-Early College students may enroll at the current tuition rate as well.

On the other side of the partnership, the Chief Academic Officer of the CSIU met with local superintendents to get their thoughts on the potential for their students to participate in the program. Though they could not ensure enrollment, they did not share any concerns with the structure. Because many districts also partner with the local Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) Bloomsburg University, school leaders wanted a link between the LCCC classes and Bloomsburg University. In addition to the program-to-program alignment of the Early Childhood Education program, all courses selected for the cohort transfer directly as well. With the essential details of the program in agreement, the college moved forward with promotional materials to be shared with local school districts during the scheduling process, which runs from February until April.

Early College Teacher Academy Details

In March of 2023, Luzerne County Community College, in partnership with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU), formally announced the Teacher Academy at LCCC's Greater Susquehanna Center in Watsontown, Pennsylvania. LCCC's Teacher Academy is designed for students who are interested in working with children from birth to high school. The courses selected include general education courses as well as methods courses required for future preK-12 teachers. In addition to college classes, observation and fieldwork are required.

In order to enroll, high school students must be in their junior or senior year of high school and be in good academic standing. It is important to note that Early College is appropriate for more than just the highest-achieving high school students. The expansion of dual enrollment to those who are considered at-risk is based on the theory that the best way to prepare students to be college-ready is by actually providing them access to real college coursework (Struhl and Vargas, 2012). In cases where grades, attendance, and/or discipline are a concern, the school district and college advisor will work with the student and family to ensure that supports are in place to address these issues.

Participating students can earn up to six credits each semester that count toward an associate degree at LCCC and transfer directly to Bloomsburg University as well as many other colleges and universities. Specific transferability to Bloomsburg University, which is part of the newly established Commonwealth University, is included for those who are interested in the local Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) institution. In addition to the free college credits, students may have the opportunity to work in the CSIU's early childhood programs or their local school district classrooms while taking classes.

Fall 2023 Course Schedule:

- Monday/Wednesday: EDU-150 Introduction to Education online (transfers to Bloomsburg University as ELEMED 121)

- Tuesday/Thursday: PSY-103 General Psychology online (transfers to Bloomsburg University as PSYCH 101)

Enrollment Period

Promotional materials were shared with all school districts within the CSIU region in February and the GSC Director attended local career fairs to share the information with students. Within the first four months of enrollment for the fall, no high school students enrolled in the classes.

Case Study Outcome

The Teacher Academy is an example of a mutually beneficial partnership between two educational organizations that seeks to increase postsecondary opportunity and access for learners in rural Pennsylvania. Its good intentions and positive interactions are not enough to create a sustainable partnership, however. Many a good community partnership has ended, even after a strong start. In an effort to avoid this scenario, Baker et al. (forthcoming) identified four community partnership principles that are necessary to build capacity in such partnerships. They include: "(a) high-level liaisons and on-the-ground-coordinators, (b) guiding priorities grounded in robust needs assessments, (c) consistent opportunities to build relationships, and (d) ongoing education and development." In its inaugural year, the goal of the Teacher Academy is to enroll high school and adult students alike to strengthen the teacher pipeline. Throughout the pilot year, members of both the college and intermediate unit must review these community partnership principles to ensure that the foundation for a solid and sustainable program has been laid.

Recommendations

While sharing recommendations based on a program that has not reached the implementation stage may be premature, the slow rate of initial enrollment suggests that the current program, as designed, does not adequately address students' interests. Beyond the benefit of taking

transferable college courses while still in high school, students within the CSIU region will attend for free. In this way, the barriers of cost and accessibility were addressed. What was not considered was the lack of interest in the education profession that has led to the significant decline in teacher candidates within the last decade.

Though the leaders of the college, intermediate unit, and school districts were involved in developing the program, no school administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, or students were given the opportunity to participate. Using Baker et al.'s community partnership principles for reference, it appears that the high-level liaisons must gain some perspective from the on-the-ground coordinators in order to determine what revisions are necessary to increase student participation. Using the insight gained from these conversations may improve the viability of not only the pilot program but also the potential for continuing the program in years to come.

Conclusion

Though the eventual success of this pilot Teacher Academy is not yet known, its design and development are examples of the work that can be done when institutions create mutually beneficial partnerships that not only promote their institutions but also positively impact the shared students who are served by them. Beyond the partnership, the program's innovative financing model, which guarantees that the classes will run regardless of enrollment, has implications for future partnerships between the college and other organizations.

Declaration of Interest Statement: *The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.*

References

Baker, V. L., Apps, H., Terosky, A. L., & Parker, R. (*forthcoming*). "Setting an agenda: The role of community-engaged scholarship and practice in liberal arts colleges" *Collaborations: A Journal of Community-Based Research and Practice*.

Calcagno, J.C., Bailey, T., Jenkins, D., Kienzl, G., & Leinbach, T. (2008). Community college student success: What institutional characteristics make a difference?. *Economics of Education Review*, 27(6), 632-645.

Garcia, E., & Weiss, E. (2019). The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought. The first report in "The perfect storm in the teacher labor market" series. *Economic Policy Institute.*

Jacobs, J., & Worth, J. (2019). The evolving mission of workforce development in the community college. *TU O'Banion* (Ed.), 13, 167-190.

Karp, M.M., Hughes, K.L, & O'Gara, L. (2010). An exploration of Tinto's Integration Framework for community college students. Journal of College Student Retention: *Research, Theory & Practice*, 12(1), 69-86.

Struhl, B., & Vargas, J. (2012). Taking college courses in high school: A strategy guide for college readiness—The college outcomes of dual enrollment in Texas, *Jobs for the Future.*