

THE COMMON ELEMENTS OF AN EDUCATIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT MODEL
FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the supportive elements needed by nontraditional students in the community college setting as they relate to an Educational Case Management approach. Two “like” community colleges were selected as defined by the Michigan Community College Activities Classification Manual (MCCNET, 2003, p. 2). These activity measures consisted of general revenue source, first-year equivalent students (FYES), contact hour equivalent students (CHES), and unduplicated student head count.

Two community colleges that agreed to participate were Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College. Student surveys were distributed through an online survey to ascertain the common elements of Educational Case Management or its proxy. To triangulate, Delphi surveys were used to ascertain field-expert opinion regarding the common elements of Educational Case Management or its proxy.

The study is significant because identifying the important elements of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management can provide nontraditional community college students a non-academic support service that contributes to postsecondary academic success, retention, and completion.

The major findings in this study were that an Educational Case Management model utilizing common elements such as intrusive outreach, collaborative relationships with a caring institutional agent, career assessment, value clarification, short- and long-term goal development, and navigation of the postsecondary system are important for nontraditional

student feelings of mattering and belonging in the community college. Developing positive relationships that provide structure, engagement, feedback, and support is essential in giving nontraditional students a respectful place in the academy.

Recommendations for student-centered sustainable change in the community college should focus on a shift from policy and rule enforcement to student-centered interventions, establishing early and long-term relationships with students, use of technology to augment high touch outreach, and consistent assessment and evaluation of interventions and programs.

KEY WORDS: Educational Case Management, non-traditional students, advising

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to nontraditional students everywhere who attend community colleges and are driven to make a more quality life for themselves and their families. Balancing multiple life roles, they face their doubts and fears to pursue higher education. I am honored to be part of their journey in the transition from often just surviving to thriving in the economic vitality of their communities.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In his education agenda, President Barack Obama called upon the nation's community colleges to educate an additional 5 million students with degrees, certificates, or other credentials by the year 2020 (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012; Dewayne, 2013).

In this national agenda, higher education leaders are called upon to develop specific strategies boosting community college recruitment, enrollment, and retention for all students, including those referred to as nontraditional.

Historically, the established intent of community colleges focused on student access. However, much of today's agenda in the community college is now centered on retention and completion (Bailey, 2016; Handel, 2013; McPhail, 2011). According to Burns (2010), "Community college leaders and practitioners agree that open access institutions can improve supporting students on the road to degree attainment" (p. 33).

To meet these ambitious goals, community colleges have been challenged to develop innovative, sustainable student success strategies that not only focus on the open door but "shift their attention to the success of students once they enter community college" (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012, p. 1). This includes addressing the needs of nontraditional students who are prone to unsuccessful attempts at postsecondary education.

A concept of advising called Educational Case Management (ECM) could be a potential framework to assist nontraditional community college students in their quest to become part of this educational agenda. Defined as a “comprehensive model of delivering services to students, both inside and outside the classroom, that potentially impact the student’s ability to succeed” (Hamilton, 2008, p. 13), an Educational Case Management model could deliver a “structured support system” (p. 35) enabling nontraditional students to compete and succeed in the academy.

According to Adams, Hazelwood, and Hayden (2014), case management within the student affairs arena can address the “emotional, physical, academic, and personal needs” (p. 447) of students in higher education. Advocating and helping students to negotiate the college system, a case management model could provide the intervention needed for nontraditional students who face additional obstacles and challenges to postsecondary education.

Educational Case Management could be defined as a “collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation, and advocacy” (Case Management Society of America [CMSA], 2016). Within this model, an individualized plan of service is created to assist nontraditional students reach their full potential for academic success. Specific elements of this model could provide a successful framework with the ultimate goal of assisting nontraditional students in navigating the educational system, retaining these students, and helping them complete their educational goals (Adams et al., 2014; Karp, 2011; Rendón, 1994; Schlossberg, 1989; Tinto, 1993).

While much of the current research has shown that student supports that are most effective for nontraditional students involve a case management or intrusive advising model (Glasper & De Los Santos, 2013; Karp, 2011, 2013; Muraskin, 1998; Rendón, 1994), many community colleges have struggled with this approach, electing to limit case management to small “at-promise” (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995) populations.

The American Association of Community Colleges (2012), in their report from the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, stated, “90% of students wanted more academic advising” (n.p.). More specifically, interviewing minority and economically disadvantaged students in a rural community college, Karp, O’Gara, and Hughes (2008) found that “disadvantaged students could benefit from what Grubb (2006) and others term ‘intrusive advising’” (p. 23).

The 2012 Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) survey noted that 91% of community college student respondents reported academic advising and planning as important elements in their academic and career pathway: “While academic planning certainly includes course selection, community college students need advising that helps them set and maintain long-term goals and create a clear path” (CCCSE, 2012, p. 11).

If best practices reveal that an intrusive relational advising approach has proven to promote persistence and retention for nontraditional student populations, it stands to reason there is a need for better defined elements leading to a more sustainable model of what could be referred to as Educational Case Management (Karp, 2013; Museus & Ravello, 2010; Scott-Clayton, 2011).

As the gateway into education for many nontraditional students, community colleges are the ideal arena poised to offer initiatives like Educational Case Management that can assist in helping achieve academic success, program completion, and marketability for nontraditional students (Karp, 2013; Moore, Shulock, & Offenstein, 2009; Roberts & Povich, 2006). In the spotlight of postsecondary attainment,

Community colleges are more important today to the process of achieving social justice and economic equity in the United States than ever before. The community college has become the institution of choice for an increasingly diverse and traditionally underrepresented group of postsecondary students including students of various abilities, socioeconomic statuses, ages, race-ethnicities, and national origins. (Pusser & Levin, 2009, p. 50)

Enrolling over 6 million students in 2010 (Schneider & Yin, 2011), community colleges have historically provided open access to nontraditional student populations who might not otherwise have an opportunity to gain the education needed to compete in today's economic climate. According to *Pathways to Success* (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012), "Between 2009 and 2020, NCES projects there will be a 21% increase in students aged 25 to 34 and a 16% increase in students aged 35 and above" (Hussar & Bailey, 2011).

The Community College Research Center (CCRC, 2014) has cited that 44% of low-income students (those with family incomes of less than \$25,000 per year) attended community colleges as their first college after high school. Similarly, first generation or 38% of students whose parents did not graduate from college choose community colleges as their first educational institution.

However, the completion rate of those attending community college remains low. An American Institutions for Research study (Schneider & Yin, 2011) estimates “one fifth of community college students who began their studies at a community college dropped out after one year” (p. 4). Even accounting for transfer students, these authors found one fifth of full-time students “who began their studies at a community college did not return for a second year” (p. 5).

The statistics for community college completion are low when compared to traditional college or university-bound students who may be full-time and college-ready. According to Prosvasnik and Planty (2008), “Of 100 students entering community colleges for the first time, only 15% will complete a degree or certificate within three years, while 45% will leave school without completing any credential” (Table SA-25, p. 59).

According to Ross-Gordon (2011), “When the term nontraditional student is defined more broadly to include seven characteristics not typically associated with participation in college, a full 73% of students may be viewed as nontraditional” (p. 1). Students considered nontraditional typically possess the following characteristics:

- Entry to college delayed by at least one year following high school;
- Having dependents;
- Being a single parent;
- Being employed full time;
- Being financially independent;
- Attending part time.

Students who face additional challenges to completing postsecondary education are called "nontraditional" because they do not fit the traditional college model of being 18 to 22 years old, receiving financial assistance from their parents, and being enrolled full time. Nontraditional students may be older, parenting, or financially independent. Most are low income and live at or below the poverty line (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012; Burns, 2010).

According to the Working Poor Families Project (Helmcamp, 2015), in 2011 "there were more than 2.1 million student parents enrolled at public two-year institutions representing more than 44.5% of all student parents" (p. 8). Hussar and Bailey (2011) projected enrollments in the postsecondary sector are expected to increase 38% for students over 25 years of age.

Today's economic influences, including the constant change in technology, increased demands in the workplace, and global competition, are pressuring millions of nontraditional students to return to postsecondary education (Ross-Gordon, 2011). Beginning their academic journey or returning for retraining, many nontraditional community college students are more likely to require high-touch elements or interventions that can help them persist to degree attainment (Garing, 1993; Karp, 2011, 2013; McClenney, Marti, & Adkins, 2012; Purnell & Blank, 2004).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As noted earlier, an Educational Case Management model or its proxy has been cited as initially too expensive and labor-intensive for full implementation within the academy (Hamilton, 2008). Therefore, a question to ask is: What are those influential elements

associated with student engagement and retention that have shown to support nontraditional students? Additionally, can these elements be defined and supported in a more sustainable model?

To support nontraditional students in their quest for postsecondary success and completion, community colleges must be intentional in determining those crucial elements needed to create a more sustainable model of Educational Case Management or its proxy (Karp, 2011).

While initial enrollment in college may be a possibility, nontraditional students have a multitude of responsibilities taxing their time and financial resources while in school, lowering the likelihood that they will stay enrolled and graduate (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012). While 84% of community college students work while enrolled in college, 60% work more than 20 hours a week (Hussar & Bailey, 2011).

According to Ross-Gordon (2011), “Students who considered themselves employees first were also more likely to be married, leaving them with at least three life roles to manage while attending school: this group was also less likely to complete a degree in six years” (p. 2).

Terry O’Banion, reporting in his keynote address to community college presidents and trustees, stated, “14% of community college students do not complete a single credit in their first semester, 50% drop out after the first year and 60% need remediation upon entry into the academy” (O’Banion, 2013).

Schneider and Yin (2011) analyzed “five academic years from 2004/2005–2008/2009, finding that \$4 billion was spent on community college students who began as first-time, full-time degree seeking students but did not return for a second year of school.” This American

Institutes for Research study found that the dollars spent on first-time, full-time students who did not return for a second year included:

- Almost \$3 billion appropriated by state and local governments;
- More than \$240 million on state grants to students;
- About \$660 million in federal student grants;
- A total of \$3.85 billion in federal, state, and local appropriations and grants.

According to Rath, Rock, and Laferriere (2013) in their report *Pathways Through College: Strategies for Improving Community College Student Success*, a labor market study by Northeastern University states that obtaining an associate's degree extends beyond initial salary benefits:

The proportion of adults who pay all types of taxes increases relative to educational attainment. Individuals with more education also require less cash and in-kind government support benefits such as Medicare/Medicaid, food stamps, and rental subsidies. They are also institutionalized in jails, prisons, and mental health facilities, at far lower rates. These differences amount to huge cost savings. (p. 8)

Rath et al. (2013) believe developing nonacademic supports that include “encouraging social interactions, defining student goals, developing college knowledge and assisting with unanticipated challenges and conflicts” (p. 19) can help retain nontraditional students and are more cost-effective strategies leading to completion of their academic goals, including transfer or immediate employment.

According to Baum, Ma, and Payea (2013), “Federal, state, and local governments enjoy increased tax revenues from college graduates and spend less on income support programs for them, providing a direct financial return on investments in postsecondary education” (p. 5). More likely to receive pensions and health benefits and to participate as active citizens with

higher levels of voting, an educated populace earns more over their lifespan and has fewer social problems (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013).

The American Association of Community Colleges 2014 report *Where Value Meets Values: The Economic Impact of Community College* indicates the economic impact of the nation's community colleges on society and the individual cannot be overlooked. According to this 2014 study, students graduating from our nation's community colleges saw a net return of \$4.80 in additional benefits, society saw \$25.90 in added income and social savings, and taxpayers accumulated \$6.80 in added taxes and public sector savings over the students' working lives.

Nontraditional students need to be included in this postsecondary agenda if they are to play a civic and economic role in the mainstream. Often unprepared for the culture of higher education, nontraditional students do not speak the language of education, are often unable to navigate what some consider a middle-class system, and many face barriers to completing their education such as childcare services, transportation, and lack of life management skills (Melendez, Falcon, & Monrichard, 2004).

Nontraditional students have multiple external barriers that often interfere with their best intentions of completing a postsecondary certificate or degree. Nontraditional student populations need sustainable support programs that will respect their lived experiences, validate their strengths, and show they matter in the academy so that retention, completion, citizenship, marketability, and economic equity are realistic goals (Purneli, Blank, Scrivener, & Seupersad, 2004).

Nontraditional students arrive in the academy needing a sense of direction and guidance. They do not succeed well in an invalidating, sterile, fiercely competitive context for learning that is still present in many college classrooms today. For many low-income, first generation students, external validation is initially needed to move students toward acknowledgement of their own internal self-capableness and potentiality. (Rendón-Linares, 2011, pp. 16-17)

The challenges facing nontraditional students can be framed “not only in terms of economic and cultural capital but also in terms of social capital” (O’Keefe & Djeukeng, 2010, p. 1). Defined as “those features of social relationships which act as resources for individuals and facilitate collective action for mutual benefit” (Kawachi, as cited by O’Keefe & Djeukeng, 2010, p. 2), social capital theory encompasses a network of relationships derived from family and friendships that provide an individual with the resources necessary to get ahead in the world.

The accumulation of social capital often missing in the experiences of nontraditional students could help to explain “the discontinuities between the cultures (i.e., norms, values, expectations) of their families and communities, and the culture that exists on college campuses, which they often describe as ‘worlds apart’” (Engle, 2007, p. 11).

For these authors, social capital translates into a network of relationships that matter. This network of relationships could include the critical support that Educational Case Management can provide nontraditional students in their pursuit of postsecondary education.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to provide a forum for nontraditional community college students to report out their responses about the common elements of Educational Case Management or its proxy. In addition, the Delphi survey allowed field experts to offer insights about their responses to those same common elements of Educational Case Management.

Using an inductive approach to “allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data” (Thomas, 2006, p. 2), this study utilized two key components as the framework underlying an inductive qualitative approach:

- Condense the varied raw data into a summary format;
- Establish clear connections between the research questions and the summary findings “to ensure these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research)” (Thomas, 2006, p. 2).

The goals of this study were focused on the supportive elements needed by nontraditional students in the community college as they relate to an Educational Case Management approach. For the purpose of this dissertation, the goals to determine the sustainable elements of Educational Case Management are the following:

- Determine the common elements of Educational Case Management or its proxy for nontraditional students in the community college;
- Determine the importance of the common elements of Educational Case Management or its proxy for the retention of nontraditional students in the community college;
- Determine the value of the reported common elements of Educational Case Management or its proxy for nontraditional students in a community college that could be incorporated into a sustainable model;
- Add to the body of knowledge of effective student support services for nontraditional students in community college;
- Provide insight into further areas for research on Educational Case Management or its proxy as it relates to nontraditional student retention in community college.

OBJECTIVES

For the purpose of this study, the objectives to determine the sustainable elements of Educational Case Management for nontraditional community college students are the following:

- Identify the common elements of Educational Case Management, advising or its proxy;
- Identify the common elements in existing Educational Case Management programs that are reported to be important for retention of nontraditional community college students;
- Identify those elements in existing Educational Case Management programs that are reported not to be important for retention of nontraditional community college students;
- Determine the value of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management, advising or its proxy for retention of nontraditional community college students.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

For the retention and persistence of nontraditional community college students, an intentional case management or advising relationship can have a positive impact on the commitment and relationship to their education and the institution. More specifically, if research tells us students' relationships and experiences are key to their academic success (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Tinto, 1993; Wilcox, 2016), it stands to reason that an intervention like Educational Case Management or its proxy, academic advising, could be a way to "connect students to the campus and help them feel that someone is looking out for them" (Campbell & Nutt, 2008, p. 5).

Jobs requiring an associate's degree or higher are projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). By 2019, the percentage of

students over age 25 attending community colleges is expected to increase by more than 20%.

To further the need for an educated populace and skilled workforce, America's economic strength will depend on including nontraditional students in this postsecondary agenda: "The demand for assessment, measurement, data gathering and accountability has forced community colleges to create programs and strategies that define, profile, and construct models which call for systemic and comprehensive reform" (Chaney, Muraskin, Calahan, & Rak, 2012). Included in this national agenda is the need for interventions that assist nontraditional students in realizing full integration and participation in the 21st century economy.

If we more broadly define nontraditional community college students, this population is a significant segment in postsecondary education (Ross-Gordon, 2011), and a "precious commodity that institutions must now concern themselves with retaining so that, if nothing else, budgets can be preserved" (Cuseo, 1981, p. 79).

Equally important to fiscal solvency, targeting retention and completion of nontraditional students serves the greater good and supports "social mobility and economic stability" (Nguyen, Lundy-Wagner, Samayoa, & Gasman, 2015).

If nontraditional community college students are to experience full integration into the mainstream, the academy must be proactive and reach out to this population, providing an environment that is safe for students to express their worldview. This includes respecting cultural values, assisting them to internalize the knowledge and culture of the college setting, and equipping them with the necessary skills to adapt and live quality lives (Rendón, 1994, 2006).

Much of the current research shows the most effective student supports for nontraditional students involve a case management or intrusive advising approach (Brock et al., 2007; Karp, 2011; Karp et al., 2008; Muraskin, 1998; Muraskin & Lee, 2004; O'Banion, 1994; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Purnell & Blank, 2004; Tinto, 1993).

Promising initiatives similar to case management have incorporated a "personal touch" by validating academic agents, including such services as financial aid, career planning, academic advising, personal counseling and tutoring, thus helping nontraditional community college students navigate the academy (Bragg, Baker, & Puryear, 2010; Brock et al., 2007; Karp, 2011).

Educational institutions would do better to deliver intrusive academic support or outreach to nontraditional students, providing a connection with timely assistance for academic performance: "Students' instructors will vary from term to term" (Cuseo, 2003, p. 14), but an educational case manager who can provide "continuous contact and an ongoing relationship that may endure throughout the college experience" (p. 12) can provide a personal touch for those students who otherwise may feel marginalized in the academy.

Helping nontraditional students build social capital, "the features of social relationships which act as resources for individuals" (O'Keefe & Djeukeng, 2010, p. 2), can help them to have a "higher quality college education, translate into post-graduation, and rolled back into economic capital through the ability to find a good job and earn a good salary" (p. 2). Utilizing a sustainable model of Educational Case Management in the academy can be a support intervention contributing to nontraditional student retention and completion.

For community colleges serving commuter nontraditional students who most likely have experienced nonvalidation in their academic and interpersonal lives, the constructs of validation and mattering as a foundation in Educational Case Management could be an important intervention for integration and retention of this valuable and growing population (Rendón, 1994; Schlossberg, 1989).

To provide triangulation of data resources, the researcher proposed a research model that utilized the literature review, Phase 1 represented the Delphi field expert case management survey, and Phase 2 represented the case management student survey data. Triangulation is a way of assuring the validity of the research by using a variety of data collection methods on the same topic. Figure 1 outlines the research model that represents triangulation of the researcher's data sources.

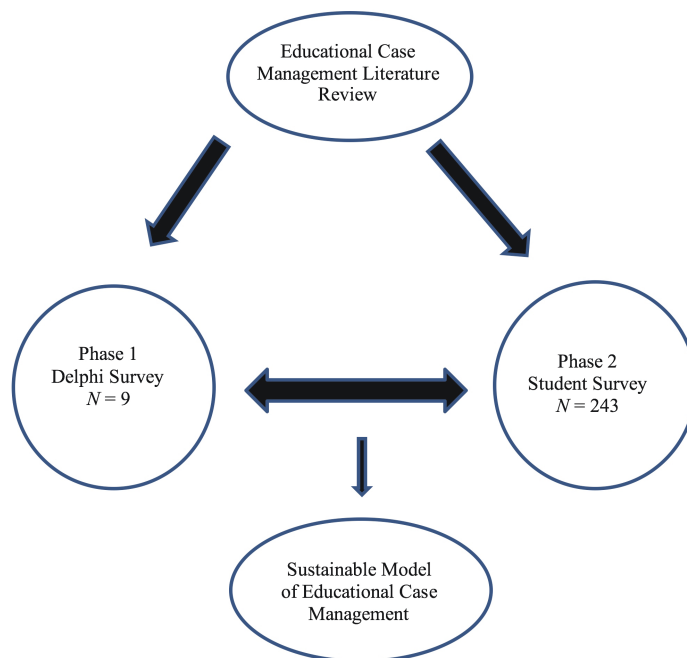


Figure 1. Triangulation model of the researcher's literature review with the Community College Field Expert Survey and the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey.

ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

Conducting a Delphi field expert and a nontraditional community college student study called for a number of assumptions that are important to note, as these may be out of the researcher's control and may impact the results of the study or the interpretation of the study.

- All data collected for both the student and Delphi survey study are current and accurate.
- Data are limited to the programs currently utilizing the Educational Case Management model, its elements, or proxy. Generalization or application of research might be limited to the study population and institution.
- Case managers, advisors, or their proxy would be considered experts in their field and would potentially lend insight, experience, and knowledge in the field of the common elements of Educational Case Management.
- All Delphi respondents have the experience and knowledge to answer truthfully and accurately; however, responses may be based on the bias of worldview and personal experience.
- Responses from both the Delphi and student survey may be based on the respondent's depth of understanding of the concepts and definitions.
- Delphi participants have the equivalent in knowledge and experience.
- Delphi participants would be motivated to respond to this study because of their passion and professional investment in adding knowledge to the field of innovative student success strategies for nontraditional community college students.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Delimitations or boundaries imposed by the researcher should be mentioned considering the use of both a student survey and the Delphi method in this study.
- The data collected in this study were based on the self-reported opinions of selected nontraditional students in two "like" Michigan community colleges, Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College. Selection of the student sample for this study was from a grouping of "like" community colleges as cited on the Michigan Community College Network (Michigan Workforce Development Agency, 2013).

- The Delphi survey of field experts from the same “like” Michigan community colleges, Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College, was limited to those nine of the survey respondents who replied to the Case Management Field Expert survey.
- Only case managers and advisors associated with Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy were surveyed in Phase 1 of the Delphi survey to secure the greatest number of responses from the first 13 participants.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is intended to present a possible student support intervention that could influence community college nontraditional student populations in their quest for postsecondary education. Educational Case Management or its supportive elements have been identified as a specific intervention based on a holistic, wrap-around service that could provide the necessary academic and community supports unique to the challenges that nontraditional student populations present in the academy.

Some conditions are beyond the control of the researcher and may affect this study. The following limitations to the study are noted:

- Only a purposive sample of community colleges that have attempted to utilize Educational Case Management or its proxy participated in this study.
- Only the questions previously cited have been included and measured using a survey instrument specifically designed for this study.
- Only those questions that are grounded in the literature and approved by an expert panel have been included in the survey instrument. Due to the nature of the interview process, extraneous information has been excluded from this study.
- Only the support intervention referred to as Educational Case Management or its proxy has been included in the study. Intrusive advising is a suggested proxy and part of the Educational Case Management intervention.
- This study was based on self-reported data, thus limited by participant understanding of the definitions, questions, and the honesty of their responses.

- This study was limited to the opinions of selected field experts in the area of case management, advising, or its proxy.
- The researcher collected data solely from electronic interactions; therefore, the study was limited to data entered and processed electronically.
- Due to the overlap of the researcher's educational trajectory and passion for the case management model in relation to nontraditional community college students, researcher bias may have influenced this study's data analysis and findings in some way.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Definitions of the following terms are useful, as some may not be widely understood.

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and may have special meaning in the context of this research. The researcher developed all definitions not accompanied by a citation.

Academy: A generic term sometimes used to refer to all of academia. In the Western world, the term *academia* has been commonly used for the collective institutions of higher learning.

At-Promise: Swadener and Lubeck coined this phrase in their 1995 text, *Children and Families "at Promise": Deconstructing the Discourse of Risk*, as a response to the state mandate for the development of programs to serve children with disabilities and those at-risk in public education. These authors believed the label "at-risk" perpetuates a belief in students as damaged and personally flawed, where "psychological character, physiological makeup, and cultural patterns of students are called into question and labeled deficient" (Franklin, 2000, p. 3).

Case Management: Defined by the Case Management Society of America (2016), the concept of case management is a "collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation,

care coordination, evaluation, and advocacy for options and services to meet an individual's needs through communication and available resources to promote quality, cost-effective outcomes."

Educational Case Management: Case management is an emerging practice within the student affairs area in higher education. According to Kingsley (1989), as cited by Adams, Hazelwood, and Hayden (2014), case management is a "client-centered, goal-oriented process for assessing the need of an individual for particular services and assisting him/her to obtain those services."

Educational Case Management provides structured support systems enhancing a student's educational experience from point of entry, career guidance, graduation, and job search. This framework includes an individualized plan of service with an assessment for academic success, structured strategies based on the student's needs, and a proactive approach for outreach by institutional agents.

Educational Case Manager: A professional who acts as an institutional agent in an educational setting providing support, intervention efforts, and outreach utilizing campus and community systems to assist students facing academic issues, life crises, and other barriers that could interfere with academic success.

Intrusive Advising: Also defined as proactive advising. This concept is predicated on outreach to students with the purposeful intention of connecting with them before a situation or academic crisis occurs. Further, the goal of this intentional contact would be to develop a caring and supportive relationship that leads to increased academic motivation, persistence, and completion (Garing, 1993; Karp, 2011; Purnell et al., 2004; Varney, 2012).

Marginality: Nancy Schlossberg (1989) uses this concept in her theory of Marginality and Mattering, believing every time an individual changes roles or experiences a transition, the potential for feeling marginal arises: “The larger the difference between the former role and the new role the more marginal the person may feel, especially if there are no norms for the new roles” (p. 2). Further, Schlossberg cites Robert E. Park, who talks about a marginal individual as

one who is living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples, never quite willing to break, even if permitted to do so, with past and traditions, and not quite accepted, because of prejudice, in the new society in which the individual seeks to find a place. (Park, 1928, p. 892)

Rendón-Linares and Muñoz (2011) believe the concept of marginality has implications in “hindering a student’s growth and development” (p. 23).

Mattering: Schlossberg (1989) cites Morris Rosenberg (1981), explaining that “mattering is the direct reciprocal of significance . . . mattering is a motive: the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate” (p. 165). Mattering means that we believe we are significant to others (Rendón-Linares & Muñoz, 2011).

Sustainability: Defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), sustainability is the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Elements included in this definition are concern for the future, community, collaboration, leave no footprint, assess for continuous improvement, and ethical purpose.

Relating these elements to a sustainable model of Educational Case Management, nonacademic interventions would help students to move forward, help them feel they are a

part of something, pool college resources for student success, utilize a developmental approach, and gather data to inform decisions and role model ethical values.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

CRITICALITY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The introduction of new models for postsecondary student retention and completion are on the agenda for stakeholders at every level. Local, state, federal, and private funders have aligned with one strategic goal, that of student completion. This is especially true for community colleges, the gateway into education for many nontraditional students.

According to Pusser and Levin (2009), “Community colleges are more important today to the process of achieving social justice and economic equity in the United States than ever before” (p. 7). This includes the growing number of nontraditional students who need the value and economic viability that comes with a community college education.

As historically open-access institutions, community colleges provide nontraditional students the opportunity to play a role in the economic equity of their communities. High impact interventions such as learning communities, first-year experience courses, contextualized learning, dual enrollment, early college alliances, and student success seminars can have a profound impact on nontraditional students who arrive in the academy unprepared to meet the rigors of college-level study (O’Banion, 2013).

Arriving in college to find institutional support can make all the difference in the academic success and retention for nontraditional students. Tierney (1997) called for a “cultural

model that emphasized all individuals have a contribution and hand in creating a fruitful role in society that enables voice and empowerment” (p. 6). Defined sustainable elements of Educational Case Management can be part of a student success intervention that gives nontraditional students the personal touch they need for academic persistence and completion.

There appears to be some general consensus in the literature of what constitutes common elements of Educational Case Management or its proxy. Barbara Oertel (2007) believes “a shared commitment of effort and resources to a common goal that generally requires a high level of interaction” might be the most important foundation element of an effective organizational advising structure (p. 211).

Adams et al. (2014) write that postsecondary student affairs case management consists of assessment, goal setting, knowledge of internal and external resources, advocacy, collaboration, and resolution. Table 1 presents a literature search list of defined common elements of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy contributing to nontraditional student retention and success.

This chapter presents a review of traditional student development theories. Two additional theories are presented that provide a theoretical foundation for a nontraditional student service delivery intervention referred to as Educational Case Management.

Table 1: *Literature Search Revealing Elements of Case Management or Advising Contributing to Nontraditional Student Retention and Success*

DEFINED ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT SUCCESS	AUTHORS
Assisting students in developing self-understanding and acceptance with value clarification; understanding abilities, interests and limitations; and decision making skills necessary for critical thinking	Heisserer & Parette (2002) Bailey & Alfonso (2005) Ross-Gordon (2011)
Assisting students in developing life goals by relating interests, skills, abilities, and values to careers, the world of work, and their higher education experience	Moore, Shulock, & Offenstien (2009) Burns, (2010) Karp (2011, 2013) Scott-Clayton (2011)
Assisting students in developing an educational plan consistent with their life goals	Purnell & Blank (2004) CCCSE (2012)
Providing accurate information about institutional policies, procedures, resources, and programs	Purnell & Blank (2004) Adams, Hazelwood, & Hayden (2014)
Providing students with external referrals to institutional or community services	Michael, Dickson, Ryan, & Koefer (2010) Adams, Hazelwood, & Hayden (2014)
Assisting students in evaluation of progress toward established goals and educational plans	Garing (1993) Jenkins & Cho (2012) Adams, Hazelwood, & Hayden (2014)

TRADITIONAL STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

Historically, student development theories originated from a psychosocial and identity development perspective. This framework, developed as a “response for professionals in the academy to examine the profession and align education with student development” (R. D. Brown, 1972; S. S. Brown, 1988), involved reorganizing student affairs offices and functions, conducting outcomes assessments, and developing new sets of competencies with regard to student identity.

The purpose of this research and central to the model of Educational Case Management in student affairs are the theories of Validation by Laura Rendón and Marginality & Mattering

by Nancy Schlossberg. Both constructs introduce a focus on the challenges that nontraditional students face in their quest for postsecondary education and ways the academy can help these students to accomplish their academic goals.

Psychosocial Theories

Psychosocial theories developed in response to the growth of an individual over their lifespan. These theories view individual development as a series of stages or developmental tasks. “Emphasizing the importance of separation and individuation in the development of identity” (Chickering & Reisner, 1993, p. 115), psychosocial theories can be divided into two categories of development and identity formation, including gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Prominent authors in the field include Erik Erikson and his Theory of Psychosocial Development (Sokol, 2009), Arthur Chickering and his Identity Development Model (Chickering, 1969) and James Marcia’s Model of Ego Identity Achievement (Marcia, 1966). Most significant to nontraditional student populations is the five-stage Model of Nigrescence developed by William Cross (Richey, 2014).

A researcher in the field of black psychology, William Cross looked at the identity development of African Americans reflected in three stages, that of a non-Afrocentric to an Afrocentric to a multicultural identity. The Nigrescence Model proposed that racial identity is a progression from naïveté to a more in-depth understanding, commitment, and acceptance of one’s race. Cross’s four developmental stages include pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, and internalization.

Relating to nontraditional student populations, Cross's Nigresence Model calls for higher education learning environments to respect and honor differences "inclusive of multicultural ways of doing, bases of knowledge, perspectives, and styles of educating, honoring, supporting and challenging each learner to be a uniquely contributing member" (Chavez & Guido-Dibrito, 1999, pp. 44-45).

Highlighting the importance of understanding the psychosocial development of nontraditional populations, the academy "can be more proactive in anticipating student issues and more responsive to, and understanding of, concerns that arise when working with students" (Evans, 2003, p. 185). However, the academy must become aware that often nontraditional students entering the college system can feel unprepared for their new roles and need help navigating the culture. According to Rendón (1994), "Success in college requires freedom from fear of not knowing what to do or where to go, of making a mistake, of being less than perfect" (p. 132).

Chickering and Reisner (1993) believe psychosocial theories of student development are historically based on identity development as discrete developmental tasks occurring in chronological order throughout the life span. In a systematic progression, these steps move closer to adulthood with the ultimate goal of intellectual and emotional integration.

Cross (Richey, 2014) has focused on the developmental trajectory of minorities, populations not addressed in the more traditional psychosocial theories, and has identified the unique characteristics similar to those shared by nontraditional students.

Cognitive-Structural Theories

Cognitive-structural theories attempt to explain changes in thinking and “increased ownership of well-thought-out opinions, beliefs, judgments and greater tolerance for others points of view” (Chickering & Reisner, 1993, p. 116). Presented as hierarchical and sequential in stages, prominent authors include William Perry and his Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development (Perry, 1970), and Lawrence Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development Development (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977).

Carol Gilligan’s (1982) research, outlined in her text, *In a Different Voice*, shifts the student development conversation to a focus on women’s core of caring. “Difference Feminism,” as it has come to be called, is predicated on the concept that women use “an ethic of caring” (Kuhse, Singer, & Rickard, 1998). The focus of Gilligan’s work is about relationships and the connection with others.

The relevance of Gilligan’s work with nontraditional students in postsecondary education has its basis in the concept that all perspectives and voices are important in the work of the academy. Individuals interpret, frame, and transform their learning through the lens of their life experiences, and thus construct new ways of meaning and learning. In developing her research on validation, Rendón was influenced by the way women learn and the transformation that occurs as their voices are validated, culminating in the belief they had value in their own truth.

As noted later by Rendón and Schlossberg, Gilligan promotes inclusiveness where all individual voices matter, are validated, and are celebrated. In this paradigm, the academy is

called upon to provide a safe collaborative environment where nontraditional students can use their moral compass to develop their own narrative, meaning, and knowledge.

Relevant to nontraditional students is Robert Kegan's Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). A progressive movement through five stages, "the process of growth involves an evolution of meaning that is marked by continual shifts from periods of stability to periods of instability, leading to ongoing reconstruction of the relationship of persons with their environments" (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010).

Kegan's theory has critical importance for nontraditional students and their beliefs about support by the academy. Believing that we construct and organize our own experience, Kegan first coined the term *meaning-making* (Evans et al., 2010, p. 5) as a developmental measure of how individuals construct their experience. Positive relationships and shared experiences encourage students to engage with the academy, thus promoting a feeling of validation and mattering.

Supporting someone's development first requires comprehending and valuing how the other person currently understands his or her experience. Kegan (1982) suggests that to be of effective help to another, we need to be able to communicate that we understand how it is for them. This act creates the interpersonal connection that is so important. (Evans et al., 2010, p. 13)

Cognitive-structural theories focus on the intellectual trajectory of how students think, reason, and make meaning in their lives. However much these theories have informed student development, the academy must be cognizant of the notion that culture, gender, employment, marital, and socioeconomic status may not have been fully considered for nontraditional student experiences.

Evans et al. (2010) believe, because of this limitation, educational professionals must be careful in generalizing these theories to nontraditional students and begin to develop more suitable academic experiences that reflect their lived experiences.

Typology Theories

Research indicates that typology theories are not developmental in nature but help us to examine individual differences in how students view and relate with the world. These theories can explain distinctive but stable learning, personality, and interpersonal styles in relation to academic majors and career interests (Evans et al., 2010).

Popular theories here include David Kolb's Learning Styles Model (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) used to develop his learning styles inventory. Katherine Briggs and Isabel Myers developed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk & Hammer, 1998), designed to assess personality types. John Holland developed the Holland Theory of Vocational Choice (Holland, 1968), which looks at one's occupational preferences. The Keirsey Temperament Sorts (James & Blank, 1993) developed by David Keirsey is a self-assessed personality survey designed to help individuals better understand themselves and others.

While these models have been widely used in the traditional career assessment arena, some experts believe the predictions are limited with respect to nontraditional student populations (Quimby & De Santis, 2006; Schooler, 2014).

Person-Environment Interaction Theories

Person-environment interaction theories attempt to explain how the environment influences behavior and identity formation. James Banning (1978) talks about the importance

of managing and assessing the ecological campus, and the impact the campus environment has on student outcomes and the role it plays in student experience. In his 1978 monograph, *A Perspective for Student Affairs*, Banning explains how campus ecology “influences the environment on students and students on the environment” (p. 5).

Assuming concern for individual students by the academy, the focus of campus ecology concentrates on the “transactional relationship between students and their environment in a more systematic manner” (p. 5) where the learner “experiences a degree of empathy, caring and honesty from other human beings in the learning environment. That is, the learner is touched by a network of positive human relationships” (p. 5).

In contrast, Wright and Lopez (2002) propose an environment where “practitioners must be committed to examining a person’s (a) strengths and (b) weaknesses, as well as the (c) resources and (d) stressors in his or her environment. Emphasizing these four domains counterbalances the tendency to focus on human pathology” (Neufeld et al., 2006, p. 4) or blaming the individual for poor fit.

Neufeld et al. (2006) proposed a person-environment interaction model incorporating the construct of engagement “that acts to maximize the potential outcome of a given person-environment relationship” (p. 2). These authors believe our environment has equal responsibility in validating the strengths of individuals, thus maximizing their potential. These researchers believe that person-environment theories address how students interact in relation to the educational environment. Often utilized in career planning, these theories can further help to explain behavior as a function of the interaction between these two elements.

Similar to elements in Rendón's Validation and Schlossberg's Mattering and Marginality models, a safe learning environment where developing positive relationships, structure, engagement, feedback, and support is essential gives nontraditional students a respectful place in the academy.

College Impact Theories

College impact models "concentrate not so much on any particular internal process or dimension of student change as on the processes and origins of change" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 50). Significant among these are Alexander Astin's Theory of Student Involvement, Ernest Pascarella's General Model for Assessing Change, and Vincent Tinto's Student Retention Theory.

A strong element of Astin's theory (Astin, 1999) is the concept of student engagement in on-campus student organizations, leadership positions, and activity in campus residence halls, thus leading to a positive correlation with retention and academics. However, most of this research was completed with four-year college students and not easily translated to the nontraditional community college population.

While Astin's theory attempts to connect on-campus engagement with student retention and academic success, nontraditional students have competing life interests, limiting their ability to participate and sustain traditional student engagement. Thus, this theory may not be relevant to the lived experiences of nontraditional community college students.

Ernest Pascarella's General Model for Assessing Change (Long, 2012) focused on the direct and indirect impact of institutional characteristics and environment on student change.

Pascarella suggested that student growth is a function of the direct and indirect effects of five major sets of variables, including the student's background, the college environment, student interactions with agents of socialization, and the quality of student effort.

Finally, Tinto developed his Student Retention Theory (Tinto, 1993) citing key factors contributing to why college students do not persist. These include feelings of isolation, difficulty with adjustment to a new environment, and an inability to integrate new knowledge and experiences with previous knowledge and experiences.

Both Astin and Tinto believe social and academic integration is critical to student retention. Being involved on campus does matter for student persistence, especially in the first year. However, Tinto's (2006) early work focused on traditional students in the four-year setting, concentrating on "studies of largely residential universities and students of majority backgrounds" (p. 3).

Not having considered the lived experiences of students in two-year institutions or those of a different gender, ethnicity, or income, Tinto has admitted college student retention has undergone a shift: "Where it was once argued that retention required students to break away from past communities, we now know that for some if not many students the ability to remain connected to their past communities, family, church, or tribe is essential to their persistence" (p. 4).

According to Tinto (2005), higher education student affairs professionals are now beginning to have a fuller understanding and appreciation for the broader array of cultural, economic, and social forces that many nontraditional students experience and bring into the academy. Respecting and validating differences in the knowledge developed through their lived

experiences is critical if we are to help nontraditional students succeed and participate in the 21st century.

College impact theories focus on the “process and origins of student development rather than on any particular internal process or dimensions of student change” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Institutional structures, policies, programs, attitudes, values, and behaviors of those individuals who dwell within institutional environments are potential sources of influence on students’ thinking and behaviors.

For nontraditional students who “exhibit varied learning styles and preferences influenced in part by their past encounters with higher education as well as by their social and cultural backgrounds” (Ross-Gordon, 2011), the academy must be thoughtful and consider the needs of nontraditional students when designing interventions for student retention and success.

A student success intervention model like Educational Case Management, or its proxy, could contribute to the validating experience nontraditional students need to be retained, successful, and complete in the academy.

Adult Learning Theories

While a thorough description of adult learning theories is outside the scope of this study, it is important to include principles highlighted in the literature relevant to nontraditional student success in postsecondary education. These include the Chain of Response (COR) model by Patricia Cross, the Andrological Model of Adult Learning by Malcolm Knowles, the

Transformative Learning Theory by Jack Mezirow, and the Theory of Margin by Howard McClusky.

Patricia Cross (1981) developed the Chain of Response (COR) model in relation to adult participation in learning. Stressing psychological elements of her COR model, Patricia Cross believed “if adult educators wish to understand why some adults fail to participate in learning opportunities, they need to begin at the beginning of the COR model—with an understanding of attitudes toward self and education” (p. 130).

Cross believed adults who experienced past negative learning environments were often less confident and developed a less positive attitude towards future learning opportunities. With three types of barriers—situational, institutional, and dispositional—adult learners face obstacles that can prevent them from realizing their full academic potential.

- Situational barriers can mean challenges with finances, time management, family responsibilities, and transportation.
- Institutional barriers can mean discouraging academic policies/rules, inconvenient class times, questionable admission requirements, and limited advice on the college culture.
- Dispositional barriers can mean lack of self-esteem and confidence.

Lack of this academic confidence can thwart the best of intentions for community college nontraditional students in their quest for postsecondary education. Successful completion for nontraditional community college students is more likely if life obstacles and challenges are addressed by better access to information and services offered in the academy (Boeren, 2009).

According to Malcolm Knowles, the Andrological Model of Adult Learning (Merriam, 2001) includes six characteristics of adult learners. Incorporating concepts developed by Cross,

Gagne, Houle, Rogers, and Tough, Knowles developed this model as it relates to the motivation of adult learning:

- The need to know – adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.
- The learner’s self-concept – adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives. Once they have arrived at that self-concept they develop a deep psychological need to be seen by others and treated by others as being capable of self-direction.
- The role of the learner’s experience – adults come into educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from youths.
- Readiness to learn – adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do so in order to cope effectively with their real-life situation.
- Orientation to learning – in contrast to children’s and youths’ subject-centered orientation to learning (at least in school), adults are life-centered (or task and problem-centered) in their orientation to learning.
- Motivation – while adults are responsive learners to some external motivators (better jobs, promotions, higher salaries, and the like), the most important motivators are internal pressures and the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life, and the like.

(Knowles, 1990, p. 44)

Considering adult learners comprise many nontraditional students we see on our campuses, the academy must begin to design thoughtful interventions that view adult learners as self-directed, understand they thrive on encouragement and nurturing, and learn from and share experiences.

Through interventions like Educational Case Management, caring institutional agents in the academy can encourage adult learners to advocate for themselves, empathize and

champion the need for institutional support, and create a safe place to share ideas where their voices are recognized and respected.

In Transformative Learning Theory (1997), Mezirow believes adults come to “form a frame of reference in how they relate with their world” (p. 74). Through dialogue, assessing evidence and analyzing alternative points of view, some adults begin to question their initial frame of reference, reflect on alternative views, and eventually construct more dependable, reliable, and meaningful ways of their world. However, if “old habits of the mind” are to be transformed, Mezirow believes adult learning theory “must recognize the crucial role of supportive relationships” (p. 25) that help to build self-efficacy.

Through relationships with caring institutional agents, nontraditional students can experience the transformational learning needed to navigate the educational landscape, address anxieties about taking on the new role of student, and serve as a resource for both internal and external challenges.

The adult learning theories provided here address the philosophy that even though many adult learners face a variety of life challenges, they strive to be independent learners motivated by ownership of their lived experience and require interventions that can assist them in achieving their academic and career goals.

Howard McClusky, an author in the educational psychology and adult learning field, developed his Theory of Margin (Munn & Rocco, 2008) as an explanation for ways to assist adults through retirement age. While the theory was formulated to explain and understand the physical and mental well-being of later adulthood, Theory of Margin could be relevant to the higher education challenges faced by many nontraditional students.

Conceived as a formula expressing a ratio or relationship between “load (of living) and power (to carry the load), McClusky defined load as the self and social demands required by a person to maintain a minimal level of autonomy” (Hiemstra, 1993, p. 4). Power is defined as the “resources (abilities, possessions, position, allies, etc.) which a person can command in coping with the load” (Hiemstra, 1993, p. 4).

McClusky believed that an individual’s performance would be the result of both the internal and external load dimensions (family support, resiliency, coping skills, etc.) and the capacity to carry the load. “Margin would be increased by either reducing the load or increasing the power while the critical element for meeting learning or other life demands is the ratio between load and power ($M = L/P$)” (Hiemstra, 1993, p. 5).

This has great relevance for nontraditional students as they continually struggle to find ways of balancing life demands combined with the challenge of learning the new role of student. The expectations of the academy can unknowingly generate excess load by expecting nontraditional students to navigate an unfamiliar culture.

Proactive interventions like Educational Case Management could help to widen the margin for nontraditional students such that “this margin that confers autonomy on the individual, gives him or her, the opportunity to examine a range of options, and enables them to reinvest their psychological capital in growth and development” (Hiemstra, 1993, p. 5).

As described here, much of the literature suggests that traditional models of student engagement have focused primarily on students in the four-year academy. If student service professionals and the institution are serious about having a true understanding of student developmental processes and leave taking, it is imperative the postsecondary academy be

aware of the gender, cultural, socioeconomic, and psychological biases presented by some of these theories.

Williams (2007), citing Rutter and Rutter, criticized traditional student development models because they concentrate “on the universals of development rather than individual differences” (p. 1). Not applicable to women, minorities, the GLBT population, or students of different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds, these theories fail to address the complex issues faced by many nontraditional community college students who, in addition, may be part-time, employed, caregivers, and balancing the multiple roles that can derail them from achieving educational success and completion.

Not everyone has equal knowledge of college rules. Some have “different amounts and quality of capital with which to play” (Gill, Reayb, Clayton, Colliander, & Grinstead, 2008, p. 168). Many nontraditional community college students have not had the benefit of role models to help them learn the language, navigate the landscape of higher education, or become adept at initiating involvement in the abundance of student activities.

Thomas (2002) believes “there is a temptation to blame students for being poorly prepared for higher education, and/or for lacking academic ability” (p. 424) rather than asking in what ways the academy can help to retain nontraditional students. Researching what influences nontraditional students to persist through academic rigor, Thomas employed the concept of “institutional habitus” used by Bourdieu to refer to the norms and practices of particular social classes or groups:

A person’s habitus is acquired, at least in a significant part, through the family, and this, for example, structures their educational experiences. These experiences in turn impact

and modify the habitus, which again goes on to structure further experiences (such as additional learning or employment). (Thomas, 2002, p. 430)

Thomas (2002) cites work by McDonough (1996), Reay (1998), and Reay et al. (2001) in believing nontraditional students are not inferior or less academically prepared but rather that educational institutions favor knowledge and experiences of dominant social groups (e.g., white, middleclass men) to the detriment of other groups. Hence, the education system is socially and culturally biased, and this is played out in the relations between staff and students, and amongst students. (p. 431)

For nontraditional community college students who may face additional challenges like the decision to attend college, are unfamiliar with the language of education, and “do not have role models that can help them negotiate the college system” (Rendón, 1994, p. 44), developing a new identity of college student can be overwhelming. Rendón believes these students “don’t know what questions to ask and do not know how to take full advantage of the system” (p. 45).

Table 2 provides a summary of the major student development theories and their authors.

Table 2: *Traditional Student Development Theories*

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THEORY	THEORY PHILOSOPHY	PRIMARY AUTHORS
Psychosocial	Student development as a series of tasks or stages	E. Erickson, A. Chickering W. Cross
Typology	Learning, personality types in the context of development	D. Kolb D. Kiersey
Person-Environment	Impact of environment on the behavior of the student	J. Banning B. Wright S. Lopez
College Impact	Student characteristics relative to the college environment	A. Astin E. Pascarella V. Tinto
Adult Learning	Andragogy: a set of assumptions about how adults learn	P. Cross M. Knowles J. Mezirow H. McClusky

ACADEMIC ADVISING MODELS

Research tells us that one of the most important factors for student retention and completion is that of academic advising (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; CCCSE 2012; Cuseo, 2003; Education Advisory Board, 2009; Karp, 2011, 2013; Museus & Revello, 2010; O'Banion, 1994; Oertel, 2007). Developing a relationship with a strong supportive institutional agent who can assist students to negotiate and integrate into the college culture is a priority for institutions that are serious about creating a culture of student success (Campbell & Nutt, 2008).

Habley (1994) believes quality advising provided by a caring, competent professional can often be “the only structured service on the campus in which all students have the opportunity for ongoing, one-to-one contact with a concerned representative of the institution” (p. 10). Nutt (2003) concurs that “academic advising is the very core of successful institutional efforts.”

Often the only source for academic and student support services, a solid academic advising structure can be crucial in delivering the needed support services for nontraditional community college students. Organizational models of academic advising include centralized, shared, and decentralized.

A centralized advising model is considered self-contained, where all academic advising, from entry to graduation, is handled in one location. Shared models are a split concept, where a central advising office advises specific groups of students (e.g., undecided, special populations) while all other students are assigned to a faculty member. A shared concept also includes a dual model, where each student is assigned to a faculty advisor for issues related to the major and an advising office that handles all general inquiries. Another shared concept includes a total

intake model, where advisors see students for a specific time, and once certain requirements are completed, students are referred to faculty for advising.

A decentralized or satellite model calls upon the institution to establish a faculty-only approach, where students are assigned to prospective faculty within the student's program of study.

Historically, academic advising was prescriptive in the sense that students asked questions and advisors provided the answers. This delivery system assumed an information dump holding the advisor responsible for student outcomes but had little thought for the developmental needs of the student.

In contrast, developmental advising, a more student-centered approach, shifted the responsibility from the advisor to the student with the goal of "preparing students to plan, set goals, and make decisions" (Appleby, 2001, as cited by Oertel, 2007). A "process-oriented relationship" (Vander Schee, as cited by Fowler & Boylan, 2010, p. 50) where the main focus is on student goals, academics, and personal concerns, developmental advising is about "developing or validating life purpose, all of which are associated with academic success (Ender & Wilkie, as cited by Fowler & Boylan, 2010, p. 10).

Intrusive advising, a more specific developmental approach, is at its core proactive and intentional, where the advisor is actively engaged in the affairs of the student. Intrusive advising calls upon structured interventions designed to motivate students to seek help at the first sign of academic difficulty. Characterized by "action-oriented responses to specific academic problems" (Fowler & Boylen, 2010), intrusive advising matches a student with a caring institutional agent and suggests interventions to ward off early academic, social, and

personal problems that have the potential to interfere in a student's path to college completion. Intrusive advising can help students develop "self-authorship" (Harding & Miller, 2013), resulting in a "balance between self-enhancement and accurate self-evaluation" (p. 9).

Appreciative and strength-based advising are complementary strategies in an overall intrusive model. Building on students' natural strengths, institutional agents can focus their efforts on helping students define these strengths and begin to develop goals for students' academic, career, and personal lives.

For nontraditional community college students, who face multiple challenges in completing their academic goals, a sustainable proactive advising model using an appreciation for their unique contributions can mean the difference between completing postsecondary education or eventual dropout. An Educational Case Management model incorporating specific elements like collaboration, assessment, facilitation, planning, and advocacy can be this intervention. However, the elements of such a model must promote student engagement in the college and create "equality of opportunity and integration" (Harding & Miller, 2013, p. 4) by encouraging nontraditional community college students to take responsibility for their interdependence and become fully involved in college activities and resources.

Suggested elements of developmental and intrusive advising models assume a holistic wraparound service that includes intentional academic interventions, regular appointments, early alerts, development of short- and long-term career goals, value clarification with development of self-acceptance and awareness, pro-active outreach, and continuous assessment of the service plan (Church, 2005; Karp, O'Gara & Hughes, 2008; Museus & Ravello, 2010).

Common elements of a validating institutional agent reflect a caring and nonjudgmental perspective with the intentional focus of relationship development, collaboration, facilitation, and engagement. This also includes guiding nontraditional students using a solution-focused and option-oriented direction. Collaborating with students to identify strengths that lead to self-awareness, institutional agents can help students overcome obstacles and build the self-efficacy needed to persist and complete their academic goals.

This research focuses on two models of student engagement that can frame the developmental trajectory of nontraditional community college students and render the academy responsible for outreach efforts necessary to include these student populations in our national community college completion agenda.

THEORIES OF VALIDATION, MARGINALITY AND MATTERING

The Theory of Marginality and Mattering by Nancy Schlossberg (1989) and the Theory of Validation by Laura Rendón (1994) provide a theoretical foundation necessary to understand how a sustainable model of Educational Case Management can influence a sense of integration with the goal of retention and completion for nontraditional community college students.

Nancy K. Schlossberg (1989), working extensively in the field of adult and minority students, believed an inability to transition and fit into the academy led to poor student outcomes. Developing her theory of Marginality and Mattering (based on Astin's Theory of Involvement), Schlossberg built a new construct on the belief that "involvement creates connections between students, faculty and staff that allow individuals to believe in their own personal worth" (p. 5). Marginality and Mattering has its foundation in the concept that if

students believe in their sense of self-worth and belonging, it is more likely that satisfaction and involvement in the academy will occur. This involvement will most likely lead to a greater connection with academic programs and activities, resulting in persistence, retention, and completion.

The central element of Schlossberg's (1989) theory is the notion that, regardless of ethnicity, income, social class, age, or gender, "as social beings we all need connection, a feeling of belonging and a sense of mattering. People in transition often feel marginal and that they don't matter" (p. 9). Schlossberg defines mattering as "our belief, whether right or wrong, that we matter to someone else" (p. 9). As we transition into new life roles, "the potential for feeling marginalized arises. The larger the difference between the former role and the new, the more marginal the person may feel, especially if there are no norms for the new role" (p. 6). Although the quality of community connection was the focus of Schlossberg's (1989) study, "the study of patterns of student involvement and what encourages or discourages that student involvement could result in more purposely designed programs and activities" (p. 6).

Nontraditional students who transition into the student role and have no norms or understanding of how to negotiate this new landscape often have a greater chance of feeling marginalized, disconnected, and unable to persist despite their best intentions. Asking nontraditional students to become unlike all the significant others in their lives, take on a new or mixed identity, and learn the habits and customs of a new culture (college) can be daunting.

Aligning with Schlossberg, Laura Rendón (1994) introduced the construct of Validation in response to emerging nontraditional student populations. Believing that nontraditional students are a "tapestry of differentiation in social background, race/ethnicity, gender, disability, lifestyle

and sexual orientation” (p. 33), Rendón challenged the status quo historically serving traditional students and called on the academy to review their approach to student development theories and support services.

Rendón believed the construct of Validation could be the key to success in college for nontraditional student populations (Rendón, 1994, 2006; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). In her article, “Validating Cultural Diverse Students: Toward a New Model of Learning and Student Development,” Rendón (1994) explained five common elements that emerged as nontraditional students attempted to conform to the traditional college culture:

- Students were initially doubtful about their ability to succeed in college.
- Students need outreach from the academy to negotiate the college culture.
- Students need academic and/or interpersonal validation by institutional agents during the first year of college.
- Marginalized nontraditional students are transformed into learners when validation is present.
- The Construct of Validation may be the key for nontraditional student success.

Developing Validation Theory was an attempt to explain how nontraditional students might find success in higher education, “especially those who found it difficult to get involved, had been invalidated in the past, or had doubts about their ability to succeed” (Rendón-Linares & Muñoz, 2011, p. 12).

Rendón-Linares and Muñoz (2011) defined validation as an “intentional, proactive affirmation of students by in- and out-of-class agents using characteristics like enabling, confirming and supportive processes” (p. 13). Offering a validating environment, Rendón

believed students could begin to internalize they are creators of their own knowledge and thus valuable members of the learning community.

Using validation as a “developmental process, students begin to affirm their identity as capable learners” (Rendón-Linares & Muñoz, 2011, p. 14). Any external agent like “classmates, spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, family members, friends and college staff including counselors/advisors, coaches, and tutors” (Rendón-Linares & Muñoz, 2011, p. 14) that validates a student can have a significant impact on his or her persistence and retention within the educational setting. More effective early on in the student’s college experience, a supportive validating individual can provide continuous feedback, helping nontraditional students internalize the confidence to learn and negotiate the college system.

Rendón-Linares and Muñoz (2011) believed these students were more likely to become engaged in the academy because the role of the institution was proactive. Faculty, case managers, advisors, counselors, and administrators can actively demonstrate “reaching out to students or designing activities that promoted active learning and interpersonal growth” (p. 14). Taking on new roles can leave an individual teetering on the margin when they do not know what that new role should look like. Nontraditional students need a promise of institutional outreach and a belief the academy will proactively create a culture of validation and mattering.

Rather than a model that assumes students conform to an alien invalidating culture and leave their own identity behind, the challenge for today’s postsecondary institution is to develop a new model where an individual’s identity is affirmed, honored, and welcomed into the academy. In revisiting the Theory of Validation, Rendón-Linares and Muñoz (2011) noted

this theoretical framework has guided research in the explanation of college experiences for nontraditional students, minority populations, immigrants, and international and developmental students.

Collectively, this research notes that validation can be offered from any source, including out-of-class agents like case managers and advisors. Rendón-Linares and Muñoz (2011) reinforced this when they stated, “A validating team of faculty and counselors can provide students with care, encouragement and support, as well as key information needed to transfer the academic skills needed to be successful in college” (p. 21).

Developing a first connection, a trusting relationship with a validating agent who believes nontraditional students matter to the academy, can make all the difference in retention for this population. Incorporating validation and mattering as a holistic, asset-based approach to student development can promote inclusiveness and self-efficacy, where all voices have value with the institution playing a proactive role in outreach to these “at-risk” (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995) populations.

Rendón identified students who most likely need validation and outreach, which included

racial and ethnic minorities, students who had been out of school for some time, full time mothers or single parents, immature students, those who did poorly in high school, those scared of a new culture, and those who felt incapable of learning. (Barnett, 2008, p. 198)

For community colleges serving commuter nontraditional students, who most likely have experienced nonvalidation in their academic and interpersonal lives, the constructs of

validation and mattering as a foundation in Educational Case Management can be an important intervention for integration and retention of these students.

In an attempt to explain the reasons for student dropout, many authors believe lack of student “integration or involvement” in college academics or extracurricular activities is the culprit (Astin, 1999; Bean & Metzner, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Terenzini et al., 1996; Tinto, 1993, 1998, 2004). Based solely on the majority, white, traditional college-age student, these traditional student models do not explain the life experiences, challenges, and barriers of nontraditional student populations and place student engagement as the responsibility of the student rather than the institution.

Melinda Karp (2011), in her working paper on the review of student persistence theories, believes “students should not have to choose between their home culture and the majority college culture” (p. 15). For nontraditional students, the challenge is arriving in the academy with a unique set of needs and identity issues that isolate them from the mainstream.

In her extensive review of the literature, Karp states,

Empirical tests of theories rooted in Tinto’s integration framework (Tinto, 1993; see also Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Braxton et al., 1997; Braxton et al., 2004) demonstrate that integration and commitment are related to student success, but they do not explain how students become integrated. For practitioners, the result has been challenging. (p. 3)

Because many traditional student development theories originated under the bias that students inherently know the rules necessary to independently negotiate the academic system, the academy did not feel the urgency for outreach. For nontraditional students, the academy must begin to validate their real-world experiences and help them shape an identity where academic and social integration will help them to persist and complete their educational goals.

While academic supports are a significant part of assisting nontraditional students to become college-ready, Helmcamp (2015) believes “non-academic supports address a distinct set of skills, knowledge, and resources that students need to be successful in college . . . addressing the financial, developmental and other social factors that are often associated with lower college completion” (p. 2).

Karp (2011) cited four possible nonacademic supports that could help nontraditional students in their transition to college, including relationship building, developing college know-how, clarifying academic and career direction, and making college palatable.

Rather than emphasizing specific programs, Melinda Karp (2011) analyzed the specific mechanisms, “the things that happen within programs or activities that support students and help them succeed in and graduate from postsecondary education” (p. 5). According to Karp, the four mechanisms that appear to encourage student engagement and success for nontraditional students are:

- *Creating social relationships*: These activities help students interact with professors and classmates in meaningful ways so that they develop strong relationships with each other. Such activities make students feel that they belong in higher education and provide students with access to information and resources that they can use to be successful in school and after graduation.
- *Clarifying aspirations and enhancing commitment*: These activities help students develop clear goals and become or remain committed to achieving those goals via higher education.
- *Developing college know-how*: These activities help students learn about the procedural and cultural demands of college. This includes basic information, such as how to navigate the physical space of college, as well as valuable cultural knowledge. This is also includes strategies for attaining success in postsecondary education, such as study skills, resume writing, and how to use student services.

- *Making college life feasible*: These activities meet students' needs as they arise. They are the little things that help students overcome the various challenges they face outside of the classroom. (p. 6)

On the importance of creating social relationships, Karp cites Rendón, stating that “nontraditional students commonly expect to fail in college but can overcome this expectation with the help of external agents who actively help them navigate college and validate that they belong in postsecondary education” (p. 7).

If the aforementioned statistic states 73% of students are considered nontraditional and begin their studies in community colleges, the use of nonacademic supports like Educational Case Management can assist these students in navigating an unfamiliar culture and help integrate them into postsecondary education, thus giving them the motivation to persist and complete.

EDUCATIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT

Wilson et al. (2013), in their article titled “The History of Case Management in Higher Education,” remind us that “case management as a broad-based service has been present in higher education since the 1860s” (p. 1). Historically, case management has been used in primarily community settings, which set the framework for use in higher education. Student affairs administrators have used forms of case management as an “embedded function of their role” (Wilson et al., 2013 p. 1) with common elements being “assessment, connection with resources, client interventions, monitoring and advocacy” (p. 2).

The use of case management in the postsecondary setting has steadily increased as more vulnerable student populations enroll in greater numbers (Wilson, 2014). Because of the

tragic circumstances surrounding the mass shootings in 2007 at Virginia Tech, a case management approach in higher education has emerged in response to students in crisis. Combining both a student affairs case management and social work framework, postsecondary education professionals are beginning to address students holistically.

Addressing “emotional, physical, academic and personal needs” (Adams et al., 2014, p. 447), case management is an attempt to assist students in negotiating the college system with the goal of academic success. Defined as a “client-centered, goal-oriented process for assessing the need of an individual for particular services and assisting him/her to obtain those services” (Adams et al., 2014, p. 448), the case manager and student partner to develop an action plan.

Working with individual students to “coordinate an action plan based on specific levels of need” (Adams et al., 2014, p. 448), the case manager “effects change through a series of functions including: assessment, planning, linkage, monitoring and advocacy” (p. 448) based on student need, environment and resources.

Using a case manager as a general “intermediary who assists in helping people with resources” (Adams et al., 2014, p. 449), students in higher education are advantaged in receiving help with personal, social, and academic needs. Applicable to student affairs, case management focuses on collaboration, assessment, goal setting, advocacy, empowerment, and resolution, enhancing a student’s academic success.

Students do not have to be in crisis to benefit from this model. Within the environment of student affairs, the student, rather than the crisis, is the primary focus. Operating as an

“information broker” (Gregory, 2002, p. 138), case managers are responsible to the student, acting as a link between the student and the system.

Translating case management into higher education student affairs, an Educational Case Management model for nontraditional students could offer a type of enhanced student retention program that supports identity and equips “at-risk” (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995) nontraditional students in their quest to degree completion.

In her 2008 dissertation, *A Study to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Case Management Approach of Academic Advising Utilized in a Community College in South Texas*, Hamilton examined a case management approach in a community college setting with nontraditional students. Hamilton defined Educational Case Management as “a comprehensive model of delivering services to students that provides assistance with all factors, both inside and outside the classroom, that potentially impact the student’s ability to succeed” (p. 13).

If approximately 73% of current community college students are considered nontraditional and student support best practices dictate an intrusive personal touch for academic success of nontraditional students, it stands to reason the need is greater than ever for a more sustainable model of Educational Case Management or its proxy. This study asked community college field experts and nontraditional community college students to define the common and sustainable elements of an Educational Case Management model.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The literature review led to the following questions in an effort to identify the common elements of a student success intervention referred to as Educational Case Management:

1. What are the common elements of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy?
2. What are the common elements in existing Educational Case Management programs that are reported to be important for retention of nontraditional community college students?
3. What are those elements in existing Educational Case Management programs that are reported not to be important for retention of nontraditional community college students?
4. What is the value of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy for retention of nontraditional community college students?

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of this study was selected to explore the elements of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management. A mixed methodology design was employed, incorporating the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. This included a student survey with the use of a Likert-type rating scale and incorporation of a Delphi process to gain expert consensus on the major research questions.

According to the *Best Practices for Mixed Methods Research in the Health Sciences* (Creswell, Klassen, Clark, & Smith, 2011), a mixed method study incorporates various forms of data collection, maximizing the strengths and minimizing the weaknesses of any particular methodology. Research questions most suitable for a mixed method are often those where

either approach, by itself, “is inadequate to develop a complete understanding” (p. 6) about the issue. This study used a student survey and Delphi methodology to provide a more holistic view of both student and field-expert perspectives.

According to Vogt (2007), there are four criteria needed to ascertain when survey methodology is best suited to answer program questions similar to those used in this study:

- The need to ask individuals about their programs;
- The expectation of a maximum response rate;
- The expectation that respondents will provide reliable information;
- The notion that surveys will generate useful information if analyzed effectively.

Check and Schutt (2012) reinforced Vogt’s belief that survey research is efficient and versatile and is an ideal method in probability sampling for “developing a representative picture of the attitudes and characteristics of a large population” (p. 160).

According to Yousuf (2007), use of a Delphi technique is valuable when expert opinions are required for consensus but “time, distance, and other factors make it unlikely or impossible for the panel to work together” (p. 1). Considering the online survey in this research does not lend itself to “precise analytical techniques” (p. 4), a major advantage in using the Delphi technique is that “consensus will emerge with one representative opinion from the experts” (p. 4). The combination of these research techniques provides a comprehensive insight into the research questions.

Phase 1 Student Survey

According to the Case Management Society of America (CMSA, 2010b), case management is defined as a “collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation and advocacy” (p. 1). Striving to address all points along the continuum, the goal of case management is to partner and engage with a specific population using targeted interventions that promote optimum functioning.

Historically associated with health care, the above-cited elements of case management can be used in many settings, including postsecondary education. Using this construct, a student survey element grouping was created followed by a student survey. The student survey asked students to rate the elements of Educational Case Management from 1 through 5, with 5 being *extremely important* and 1 being *unimportant*.

The purpose of using a student survey in this study was to obtain information from a purposive sample of nontraditional community college students regarding the importance and commonality of those elements associated with Educational Case Management, or its proxy. The student survey also included open-ended question response opportunities to capture student input that could not be anticipated in the main survey and gave the respondents further opportunity for elaboration.

The first phase of the instrumentation involved development of a student survey based on the defined elements of Educational Case Management: assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation, and advocacy. A definition for each of these elements was matched with the constructs, followed by development of statements.

Part I of the student survey consisted of a 15-item list asking students to define how important it is for their community college case manager or advisor to use the characteristics related to the defined elements of Educational Case Management.

Part II of the survey consisted of 21 questions that asked students to rate how important they believe certain factors are for the retention of nontraditional students in community college. The instrument used a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 5 being *extremely important* and 1 being *unimportant*.

Part III of the student survey consisted of six open-ended questions asking students to reflect on the original defined elements of Educational Case Management. Finally, the survey requested student demographic data from which a research review demonstrated strong prior relationships for nontraditional students. The researcher constructed questions for the student survey based on the five constructs of assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation, and advocacy. In addition, the literature review in Chapter II offered relevant themes based on Rendón's Theory of Validation and Schlossberg's Theory of Marginality and Mattering.

The Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) project provided themes of mattering and validation for nontraditional students in the postsecondary setting. The DLE survey was designed to "assist educators in addressing the needs and advancing the success of a diverse student population in order to implement practices that will increase degree attainments as well as achievement and retention" (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013, p. iv).

Table 3 represents the Case Management Element Grouping Grid, which was developed to connect the elements of Educational Case Management, the definitions of these elements, and the resulting survey choices captured in the final student survey.

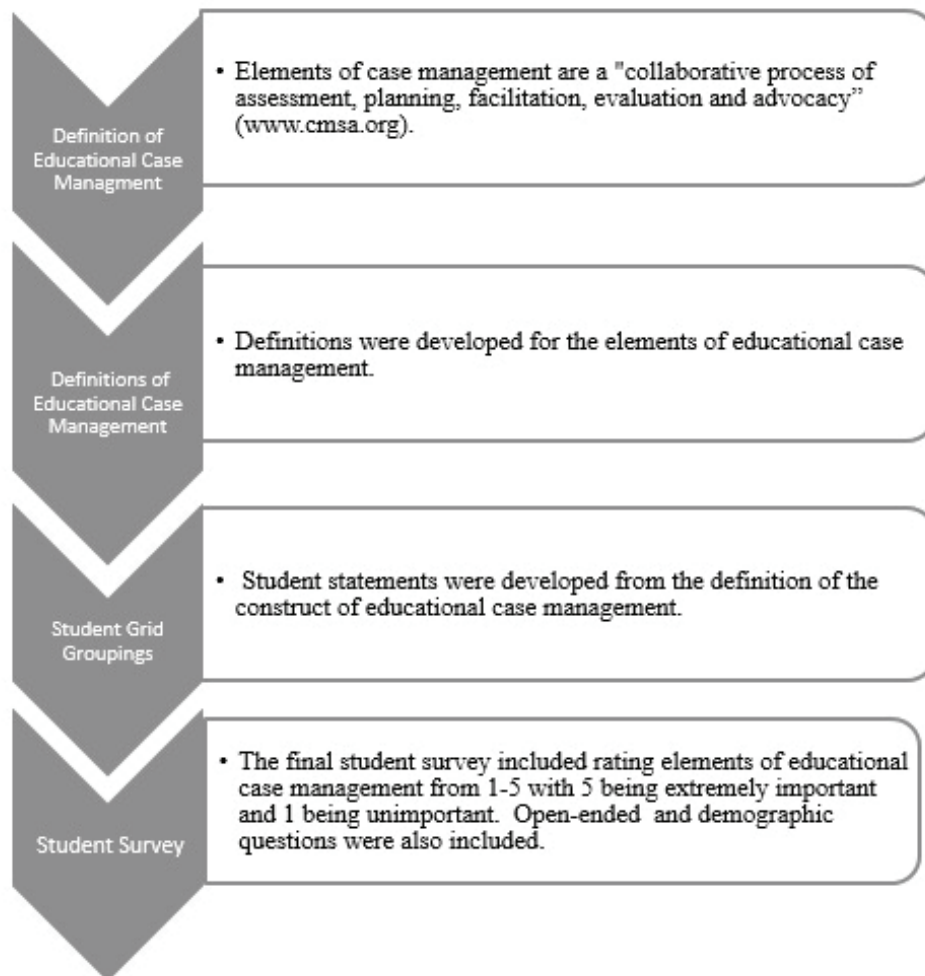
Table 3: *Student Survey Educational Case Management (ECM) Element Grouping Grid*

ELEMENT OF ECM	DEFINITIONS	SAMPLE SURVEY CHOICES
Collaboration	Working together to produce or create an active partnership between student, advisor, and/or case manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes me feel welcome • Shows concern for me as an individual • Helps me feel I am a member of the college community • Shows me I matter to the institution • Provides the support I need to thrive in this college • Provides encouragement • Builds strong collaborative partnerships • Shows advisor or case manager empathy • Promotes student interdependence • Helps me to build self-efficacy and self-esteem • Listens to my concerns • Builds relationships with students • Understands student values and beliefs • Shows an understanding of student feelings
Assessment	Gathering information from diverse/multiple sources to develop full understanding of student experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is knowledgeable about my program requirements • Understands my values and beliefs • Concentrates on strengths of students, not weaknesses • Helps me become aware of college programs and services

ELEMENT OF ECM	DEFINITIONS	SAMPLE SURVEY CHOICES
Planning	Making/carrying out plans, establish goals, procedures, and action steps to achieve an objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps students choose classes • Helps me adjust to college life • Helps me cope with non-academic responsibilities like family, work, etc. • Helps me learn to problem solve • Helps me take achievable steps to “feel successful” • Helps me gain knowledge of the college system
Facilitation	Helping to bring about an outcome using indirect assistance/guidance to meet the goals of a student/group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps me to reach my academic goals • Helps me navigate the college system • Helps me coordinate college services • Helps make college user friendly
Evaluation	Analysis of ongoing or completed activities that have determined to be effective. Uses criteria governed by accepted standards with the purpose of identifying future change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifies career and academic direction • Provides timely reminders like early notifications and college information • Uses technology for follow-up (Twitter, Facebook, social media, etc.) • Helps coordinate college services
Advocacy	Supports a cause and speaks on behalf of student concerns so their voices/rights/views can be heard. Helps access information/services, explores choices/options to educate and give knowledge. Participates in professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages students to openly share their ideas • Respects the values of different student groups • Participates in professional training for advisors/case managers • Has knowledge of nontraditional student needs and challenges • Has knowledge of key community resources • Looks out for the best interest of students

Figure 2 describes the steps followed in the development of the student survey.

Definitions were developed based on the meaning of each element followed by development of student survey questions. Survey questions were rated from 1 through 5, with 5 being *most important* and 1 being *least important*.



Source: CMSA, 2014, p. 1

Figure 2. Schematic of the student survey process using the elements of case management.

The student survey cover letter emailed to all nontraditional students selected for this research is found in Appendix A.

Appendix B presents questions 1 through 26 of the student survey sent to selected nontraditional community college students at Washtenaw and Grand Rapids Community Colleges.

Phase 2 Delphi Survey

Phase 2 of this investigation employed a Delphi study. According to Skulmoski, Hartman, and Krahn (2007), the Delphi method is a flexible research technique that can be employed to “collect and distill the anonymous judgments of experts using a series of data collection and analysis techniques interspersed with feedback” (p. 1). This flexibility lends itself to answering many research questions within a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodology study.

Considering the Delphi technique has proven to be the most useful method in gathering field expert data, it is important to understand the logic in utilizing the Delphi method in this study. Developed by Norman Dalkey of the RAND Corporation, the history of the Delphi method has its origins “in the 1950’s for a U.S. sponsored military project” (Skulmoski et al., 2007, p. 2).

Used primarily as a forecasting tool for the military, the Delphi method was designed to “solicit reliable responses from a panel of experts regarding a particular problem or dilemma” (Stitt-Gohdes & Crews, 2004, p. 2). Rowe and Wright (1999), as cited by Skulmoski et al. (2007), explained the importance of the Delphi method using four key elements:

- Participants are anonymous, allowing the ability to freely express their opinions without pressure or conformity to others in the group.
- Rounds allow participants to re-evaluate their opinions with reference to the progress of the group.
- Controlled feedback using multiple rounds informs all participants of each other’s perspectives allowing each participant to clarify their opinion.

- Quantitative analysis and data interpretation can be included using group aggregation.

According to Hsu and Sanford (2007), the Delphi technique is a "widely used and accepted method for gathering data from respondents within their domain of expertise" (p. 1). Utilizing a series of questionnaires for consensus-building, major characteristics of the Delphi process include modifications of previous field-expert opinions, subject anonymity, controlled feedback, and the use of statistical analysis techniques that "allow for an objective and impartial analysis and summarization of the collected data" (p. 2).

According to Ziglio (1996), the Delphi method may be an appropriate research method as it is a more systematic approach and important for future researchers to discern patterns and trends regarding the common elements of Educational Case Management via field-expert feedback. Table 4 presents some advantages and disadvantages of using the Delphi method.

Table 4: *Advantages and Disadvantages of a Delphi Study*

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Process allows for consensus and minimizes group dynamics allowing freedom to provide opinions Reduces the "noise effect" (Hsu & Sandford, 2007)	Labor and time intensive for retention of participants and data gathering
Economical in cost	Some critics believe the process is inadequate due to central tendency, bias, possible communication issues, and ethical standards
Anonymity is protected	Uncertain results
Efficient data collection	The combination of qualitative and quantitative measures makes it difficult to normalize procedures

This Delphi study used what is referred to as a purposive sampling. As described by Hasson, Keeney, and McKenna (2000), the researcher can elect to choose field experts based on

their knowledge and understanding of the research population. An important step in the design of a Delphi study is the selection of the participants.

Stitt-Gohdes and Crews (2004) stated, "Careful selection of the panel of experts is the keystone to a successful Delphi study" (p. 60). These authors believe Delphi participants need to be in employment settings relevant to their field of expertise. Ziglio (1996) wrote that participants should be familiar with their area of expertise, be willing to participate, and have the knowledge base and written skill set to prioritize in subsequent rounds.

Stitts-Gohdes and Crews (2004), citing Powell (2003), stated, "There is very little actual empirical evidence on the effect of the number of participants on the reliability or validity of consensus processes." Ten to 15 participants may be an adequate number for a Delphi study that is "focused and where the participants do not vary a great deal" (p. 62).

The purpose of using a Delphi survey in this study was to obtain the response of experts in the field and strive for consensus regarding the common elements of Educational Case Management, the sustainability of such elements, and how these elements relate to the retention of nontraditional students in a community college. Table 5 presents the researcher's intent in demonstrating the Delphi method steps used in this study.

Table 5: *Delphi Field Expert Method Steps*

PURPOSE OF STUDY	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
<p>The purpose of this study was to provide a forum for nontraditional community college students and Delphi field experts to report their responses about the common elements of Educational Case Management or its proxy.</p>	<p>Nancy Schlossberg – Theory of Marginality & Mattering Laura Rendón – Theory of Validation</p>
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the common elements of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy? 2. What are the common elements in existing Educational Case Management programs that are reported to be important for retention of nontraditional community college students? 3. What are those elements in existing Educational Case Management programs that are reported not to be important for retention of nontraditional community college students? 4. What is the value of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy for retention of nontraditional community college students? 	

Informal data collection was obtained from various experts in the field revealing common characteristics of Educational Case Management. These elements included assessment, advocacy, college knowledge and community resources, facilitation, and interpersonal skills.

Using the same definition of Educational Case Management as introduced in the student survey, the researcher utilized a Delphi process for the purpose of surveying experts in the field of Educational Case Management. A Delphi survey element grouping was created followed by development of a Delphi survey asking field experts to anonymously rate the elements of Educational Case Management from 1 through 5, with 5 being *extremely important* and 1 being *unimportant*.

The Delphi survey also included open-ended question response opportunities to capture field-expert input that could not be anticipated in the main survey and gave the respondents

further opportunity for elaboration. The focus of this Delphi process involved anonymous “interaction between the researcher and a group of identified experts on a specified topic utilizing a series of questionnaires with the goal of consensus within that topic” (Yusef, 2007, p. 1).

As indicated previously, the purpose in using a Delphi survey in this study was to obtain the responses of experts in the field and arrive at a consensus regarding the common elements of Educational Case Management.

Delphi Population and Sample

The researcher administered the Delphi survey to field experts at both Washtenaw Community College and Grand Rapids Community College. Washtenaw Community College, located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, serves approximately 20,000 credit and 8,000 non-credit students. Offering over 100 credit programs with four extension sites, Washtenaw Community College grants certificates and degrees to 1,400 students annually (Washtenaw Community College, 2015).

Permission to survey Washtenaw Community College field experts in their respective advising and case management areas was approved by the Vice President for Student Services. Eight Washtenaw Community College field experts represented the areas of Career Counseling & Planning, the Student Resource Center, and the Learning Support Services area.

Grand Rapids Community College, located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, served approximately 33,105 credit students in 2012-13. Offering approximately 150 career, transfer, and certificate programs at the Holland campus and four regional sites, Grand Rapids

Community College awarded 1,894 degrees and certificates in 2012-13 (Grand Rapids Community College, 2015).

Permission to survey Grand Rapids Community College field experts in their respective advising and student support service areas was approved by the Director of Academic Advising. Nine Grand Rapids Community College field experts represented the Academic Advising department.

According to Hsu and Sandford (2007), field experts considered eligible to participate should be individuals that have “somewhat related backgrounds and experiences concerning the target issue, and who are primary stakeholders to the target issue or research” (p. 3). Further, these authors suggest 10 to 15 survey participants if their backgrounds are “homogeneous” (p. 3).

A list of 18 seasoned professionals at both Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College were then identified as experts in the field of Educational Case Management by virtue of their reputations with the case management model and longstanding academic relationships with nontraditional students. A phone call was placed soliciting their assistance in completion of the Delphi survey, followed by an email invitation, consent letter, and the Delphi survey instrument.

Delphi Field Expert Survey Data Collection and Analysis

Round 1 of the Delphi survey consisted of 15 questions asking field experts to rate how important it is for community colleges to demonstrate elements of Educational Case Management and 21 items on how important they believe certain factors are for the retention

of nontraditional students in community college. The instrument used a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 5 is *extremely important* and 1 is *unimportant*.

The Delphi survey consisted of six open-ended questions that asked experts to reflect on the original defined elements of Education Case Management, including institutional support and sustainability. The Delphi survey included demographics collected to give the research meaningful groups of respondents.

Round 2 of the Delphi survey included instructions to participants asking them to rate each of the responses where there was a wide range of agreement from round 1. Specifically, the participants we asked to rate using a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 5 is *extremely important* and 1 is *unimportant*.

To assess the validity of the questions selected for round 1 of the Delphi prior to implementation, a Delphi pilot was conducted. The field experts who participated in the Delphi pilot were professionals in the Learning Support Services center and the Student Resource Center at Washtenaw Community College. Participants in the pilot study represented learning specialists and case managers knowledgeable about nontraditional student populations and contributed valuable feedback for this study.

Figure 3 presents the common characteristics of Educational Case Management as cited by field experts in a preliminary informal questionnaire. These characteristics were assessment, advocacy, college knowledge and community resources, facilitation, and interpersonal skills. The definitions of these constructs were developed based on input from the field-expert statements resulting in the Delphi survey questions. Delphi survey questions were rated from 1 through 5, with 5 being *most important* and 1 being *least important*.

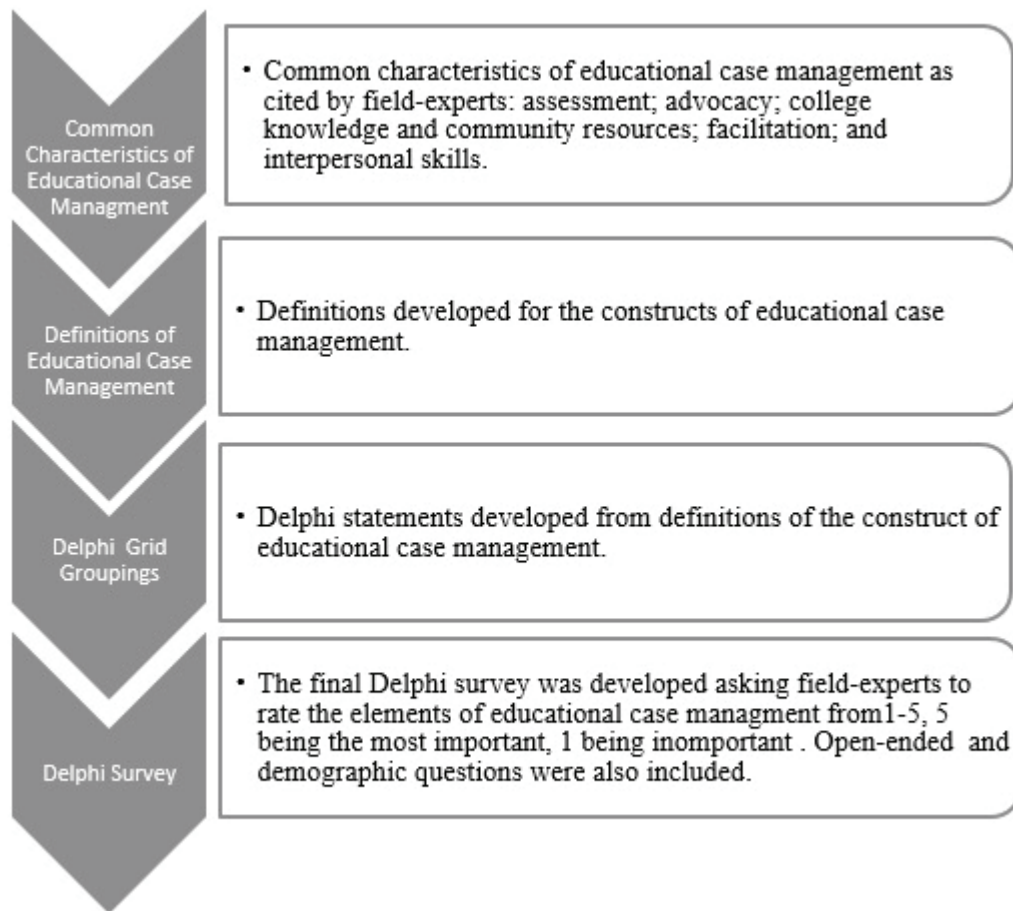


Figure 3. Schematic of the Delphi survey process utilizing informal data collection obtained from various experts in the field revealing the reported common characteristics of Educational Case Management.

The Delphi survey consent letter accompanying the Delphi survey sent to Washtenaw and Grand Rapids Community College field experts is found in Appendix C.

Appendix D contains the Delphi Field Expert Survey with open-ended and demographic questions delivered to field experts at Washtenaw and Grand Rapids Community Colleges.

STUDENT SURVEY POPULATION, SELECTION AND SAMPLE

According to the Demographic and Enrollment Characteristics of Nontraditional Undergraduates (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), researchers agree some of the following are common characteristics of nontraditional postsecondary students:

- Attends part-time for at least part of the academic year;
- Works full time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled;
- Is considered financially independent for purposes of determining eligibility for financial aid;
- Has dependents other than a spouse (usually children);
- Is a single parent (either not married or married, but separated).

According to the Michigan Community College Association Fast Facts (MCCA, 2015), Michigan community colleges served 411,764 students, with 35.5% over age 24, 36% first generation, 27.9% minority status, and 17% single parents.

A wide variety of academic advising models are employed as part of a general student support service model in Michigan's 28 community colleges. An informal and anecdotal survey of advising and case management professionals preceding this study (Appendix E) suggests that some of these community colleges utilize a case management approach for their nontraditional student populations (Michigan Community College Special Population Coordinators, personal communication, September 30, 2013).

If nontraditional students are shown to have similar characteristics (Ross-Gordon, 2011), it stands to reason that selecting students to survey from Michigan community colleges with similar population types would yield the data necessary to determine the elements of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management. Selection of the student sample for this

study was taken from a grouping of “like” community colleges as cited in the *Michigan Workforce Development Agency Activities Classification Structure (ACS) 2011-12 Data Book and Companion* (Michigan Workforce Development Agency, 2013).

The Michigan Community College Network (www.michigancc.net) provides a range of data for, and about, Michigan community colleges sponsored by the Michigan Work Force Development Agency. Using a set of “categories and definitions” (MCCNET, 2003, p. 2), the Michigan Community College Network (2012-13) developed a classification structure grouping “like” community colleges by activity measures such as general revenue source, first-year equivalent students (FYES), contact hour equivalent students (CHES), and unduplicated student head count.

There are four groupings of “like” community colleges with “the fundamental purpose of the Activities Classification Structure providing data that can be used to make sound fiscal decisions based on meaningful, uniform information from all 28 community colleges” (MCCNET, 2003, p. 30). The Michigan Community College Activities Classification Manual (MCCNET, 2003) uses data comparisons relating Michigan community colleges “on a number of significant issues that relate to institutional policies” (p. 4).

The focus of this study was to collect data from what has been determined to be “like” community colleges from the *Michigan Workforce Development Agency Activities Classification Structure (ACS) 2011-12 Data Book and Companion* (Michigan Workforce Development Agency, 2013). It stands to reason that if these colleges are classified as “like” community colleges and are similar in general revenue fund, first-year student equivalent status, credit-hour equivalent status, and unduplicated headcount, then these colleges will offer similar resources to support

nontraditional students. Two Michigan community colleges were selected from group three of this classification data book: Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College (Michigan Workforce Development Agency, 2013).

Table 6 reflects the data from the two selected Michigan community colleges, Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College, which are similar when comparing their general revenue fund, first-year student equivalent status, student credit-hour equivalent status, and unduplicated student headcount.

Table 6: *Community College Selection from the Grouping of “Like” Community Colleges*

COMMUNITY COLLEGE	GENERAL REVENUE FUND (\$)	FYES (FIRST YEAR EQUIV.)	CHES (CREDIT HOUR EQUIV.)	UNDUPLICATED STUDENT HEADCOUNT
Grand Rapids	\$114,080,869	10,684	12,172	24,654
Washtenaw	\$96,665,918	8151	10,222	21,712

Selected from the Grouping of “Like” Community Colleges (Michigan Workforce Development Agency, 2013, p. 20)

GENERAL “LIKE” COLLEGE DESCRIPTIONS

Grand Rapids Community College, established in 1914, is a public-supported community college located in the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan. With a faculty and staff of 660, Grand Rapids Community College provides classes at their downtown main campus, the DeVos Campus on Heritage Hill, the Lakeshore Campus in Ottawa County with five facilities, the Leslie E. Tassell M-TEC in SE Grand Rapids, the Learning Corner on Fuller Ave SE in Grand Rapids, and six regional centers across Kent County. Grand Rapids Community College is governed by an elected Board of Trustees.

Grand Rapids Community College counselors provide a variety of services including academic orientations, academic advising, personal counseling, transfer planning, occupational exploration/career development, crisis management and goal setting (GRCC, 2015). Students who have declared a major use an advisor for educational support in conjunction with faculty members who are specialists in that field of study. Pre-admission academic counseling is also available.

Additional student support programs at Grand Rapids Community College include the Disability Support Program (DSP), Academic Foundations Program (AFP), Occupational Support Program (OSP), and the TRIO/Student Supports Program (SSS). The federally funded TRIO Program is designed to assist first-generation students who meet federal income guidelines. Grand Rapids Community College's Occupational Support Program provides a variety of support services to eligible students who are enrolled in an occupational program. These services include academic advising, priority registration, career exploration, grant funding, and community referrals.

Washtenaw Community College, established in 1965, is a publicly supported community college located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, with a total of 561 employees and governed by an elected Board of Trustees. Washtenaw serves off-site extensions in Brighton, Dexter, and Ypsilanti.

According to the Washtenaw Community College advising website (www4.wccnet.edu/student-services), Washtenaw Community College advisors and counselors are available for appointment, walk-in academic advising, and transfer options. In addition, personal counseling is available by appointment and faculty are available for advising in their

field of study. Additional student support programs at Washtenaw Community College include Learning Support Services (LSS), the International Student Center (ISC), the Veterans Center, and the Student Resource Center (SRC). The Student Resource Center (SRC) provides Educational Case Management services specializing in nontraditional students.

Utilizing a holistic approach to service (www.wccnet.edu/src), the Student Resource Center at Washtenaw Community College serves all students but is sensitive to single parents, nontraditional, and economically disadvantaged students. Their services include individual case management by appointment, education planning, grant funding, and connections to community resources.

INSTRUMENTATION

The researcher used an online survey software program disseminated through SurveyMonkey® (1999-2015) for both the student and Delphi phase. Following the guidelines approved by the Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), this researcher developed an introduction to each survey including information regarding the study purpose, description, procedures, and confidentiality. This description also included subject's rights as well as time required to complete the survey, risks associated with participation, and contact information for the researcher.

The researcher followed the Ferris State University institutional protocol by completing the required 15 modules associated with social and behavioral research as cited in the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (2014). Following the Ferris State University human

subject policy, all research involving human subjects was reviewed and approved by the Ferris Institutional Research Board (Appendix F).

Piloting a survey can offer the researcher a way to try out a test instrument and address issues prior to application (Simon, 2011; Van Teijlingen, Rennie, Hundley, & Graham, 2001). The following factors can be addressed as a result of pilot testing: checking instructions for understandability, wording of the survey, and reliability and validity of results.

The researcher constructed the student survey using the defined elements of Educational Case Management as a “collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation and advocacy” (CMSA, 2010a). Definitions of these elements were developed followed by grid groupings, resulting in the final student survey. A pilot of the student survey was conducted using selected nontraditional students who provided minor feedback.

The researcher constructed the Delphi survey based on the common characteristics of Educational Case Management as cited by field experts in an informal pilot survey. Characteristics included assessment, advocacy, college knowledge and community resources, facilitation, and interpersonal skills. Definitions of these elements were developed followed by grid grouping, resulting in the final Delphi survey.

The researcher contacted Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College to assess the primary research protocol for each college.

PRIMARY SURVEY RESEARCH PROTOCOL AT GRAND RAPIDS AND WASHTENAW COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Survey research at Grand Rapids Community College is approved by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. The research request application asked for the title of the

research, protocol, purpose of the study, target population, recruitment of students, retention and destruction of student data, and, finally, how the researcher would ensure human subject confidentiality.

A first draft of the research request application was submitted on October 5, 2015. A request for further management of student email addresses was returned to the researcher. Specifically, the researcher was asked to further clarify storage, retention, and destruction of student email addresses during and upon completion of the study. These requests were addressed by the researcher and the research request was approved on November 20, 2015, with the stipulation that Grand Rapids Community College would maintain control of student emails.

Survey research at Washtenaw Community College must be approved by the Director of Institutional Research and the Vice President for Instructional Administration. The research request application asked for title, purpose of the study, benefits to the college and community, data collection methods, recruitment of students, and human subject approval requirements.

A first draft of the research request application was submitted to the Director of Institutional Research on February 2, 2015. A subsequent revised request was submitted on February 11, 2015 and approved.

DATA COLLECTION, PROCESS, AND ANALYSIS

In Chapter I, the research established that approximately 73% of the current community college student population are considered nontraditional, with 1 in 4 students fitting the

traditional student model (Juszkeiwicz, 2014; Ross-Gordon, 2011). The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2002) defines a nontraditional student as having the following characteristics:

- Delays college enrollment;
- Attends part-time for at least part of the academic year;
- Works full- time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled;
- Is considered financially independent for purposes of determining eligibility for financial aid;
- Has dependents other than a spouse (usually children);
- Is a single parent (either not married or married but separated).

However, students do not have to share all factors to be considered nontraditional.

According to Choy (2002) in the NCES study on the Condition of Education for NonTraditional Students, “Students are considered to be ‘minimally nontraditional’ if they have only one nontraditional characteristic, ‘moderately nontraditional’ if they have two or three, and ‘highly nontraditional’ if they have four or more” (p. 3).

Much of the current research has shown that student supports that are most effective for nontraditional students involve a case management or intrusive advising approach (Brock et al., 2007; Karp, 2011, 2013; Muraskin, 1998, Muraskin & Lee, 2004; O’Banion, 1994; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Purnell & Blank, 2004; Tinto, 1993, 2004). Thus, it stands to reason that surveying community college students who are tracked for and are eligible to receive federal financial aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) would most likely fit those nontraditional student characteristics, giving this study the survey data needed

to determine the elements of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management or its proxy.

Survey Instrument

The study utilized SurveyMonkey® (1999-2015) for the online survey instrument. SurveyMonkey® ensures secure transmission by using a Secure Socket Layer protocol for transmitting private documents or information via the Internet. Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) and Transport Layer Security (TLS) technology (the successor technology to SSL) protect communications by using both server authentication and data encryption. This ensures that user data in transit is safe, secure, and available only to intended recipients. The privacy policy for SurveyMonkey® states they are only custodians of the data, will not share or sell email addresses, and will use these addresses only in accordance with this policy. All collectors allow the survey creator to collect responses anonymously. The privacy policy can be viewed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>. Additional security factors are listed below:

- Owned and managed by SurveyMonkey®, the data centers are surveilled 24/7 with restricted access, security guards, and entry requirements such as passcards and biometric recognition. Network and storage security can be viewed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/security/>
- Uptime: Continuous uptime monitoring, with immediate escalation to SurveyMonkey® staff for any downtime.
- Third Party Scans: Weekly security scans are performed by Qualys.
- Testing: System functionality and design changes are verified in an isolated test “sandbox” environment and subject to functional and security testing prior to deployment to active production systems.
- Firewall: Firewall restricts access to all ports except 80 (http) and 443 (https).

- Patching: Latest security patches are applied to all operating system and application files to mitigate newly discovered vulnerabilities.
- Access Control: Secure Virtual Private Networks multifactor authentication, and role-based access is enforced for systems management by authorized engineering staff.
- Logging and Auditing: Central logging systems capture and archive all internal systems access including any failed authentication attempts.
- Backup Frequency: Backups occur hourly internally, and daily to a centralized backup system for storage in multiple geographically disparate sites.
- Production Redundancy: Data stored on a Redundant Array of Independent Disks. Operating system is stored on a RAID 1 array.

Data Analysis

To address the research question, a student survey was distributed to nontraditional students at Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College, two “like” community colleges, to ascertain student responses regarding the important elements of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy.

A Delphi survey was distributed to advising and case management field experts at Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College to gather case management field-expert responses regarding the elements of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy.

The researcher selected nontraditional community college students who attended for the fall 2013 and winter 2014 academic years. Based on the following criteria, Figure 4 represents the dataset received from Grand Rapids Community College:

- Over age 24;
- Attended part time for some of the year;

- Registered for less than 12 credits;
- Unemployed or employed part time or full time with wages cited for the student and spouse (if any);
- Single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed;
- Answering “yes” to the FAFSA question “Do you have a child where you provide more than half of support?”

High School Graduates ≥ 24 (over age 24)	
Enrolled F13 or W14 (< 12 credit hour)	
Mid-Year Enrolled $>$ Grad Year +1 (delays college enrollment by one year post HS grad)	
2011 $>$ (2007 grad +1= 2008)	Yes
2011 $>$ (2010 grad +1= 2011)	No
2011 $>$ (2011 grad +1= 2012)	No
2011 $>$ (2009 grad +1= 2010)	Yes
Submitted FAFSA	394

Figure 4. Grand Rapids Community College nontraditional student characteristics.

The researcher selected nontraditional community college students who attended for the fall 2013 and winter 2014 academic years. Based on the following criteria, Figure 5 represents the data set received from Washtenaw Community College:

- Over age 24;
- Attended part time for some of the year;
- Registered for less than 12 credits;
- Unemployed or employed part time or full time with wages cited for the student and spouse (if any);
- Single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed;
- Answering “YES” to the FAFSA question “Do you have a child where you provide more than half of support?”

High School Graduates (>=24)	
Enrolled F13 or W14 (<12 credit hour)	
Mid-Year Enrolled > Grad Year +1	
2011 > (2007 grad +1= 2008)	Yes
2011 > (2010 grad +1= 2011)	No
2011 > (2011 grad +1= 2012)	No
2011 > (2009 grad +1= 2010)	Yes
Submitted FAFSA	394
Have Children to Support	199

Figure 5. Washtenaw Community College nontraditional student characteristics.

Pilot Study

According to Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001), a pilot study can give the researcher the ability to test his or her instrument: a “mini version of a full-scale study as well as the specific pre-testing of a particular research instrument” (p. 1). These authors believe conducting a pilot study gives “advance warning whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated” (p. 1).

Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) provided possible reasons pilot studies can improve the validity of a questionnaire or survey:

- administer the questionnaire to pilot subjects in exactly the same way as it will be administered in the main study;
- ask the subjects for feedback to identify ambiguities and difficult questions;
- record the time taken to complete the questionnaire and decide whether it is reasonable;
- discard all unnecessary, difficult, or ambiguous questions;
- assess whether each question gives an adequate range of responses;
- establish that replies can be interpreted in terms of the information that is required;

- check that all questions are answered;
- re-word or re-scale any questions that are not answered as expected
- shorten, revise, and, if possible, pilot again.

Although not a guarantee of success, Simon (2011) believes a pilot study can “give advance warning regarding weaknesses in the proposed study” (p. 2) and an opportunity to resolve issues such as instruction clarity, survey wording, and reliability and validity.

In addition to a student survey pilot, a Delphi survey pilot to solicit field-expert opinion regarding the elements of case management was employed. “A Delphi pilot is sometimes conducted with the goals of testing and adjusting the Delphi questionnaire to improve comprehension and to work out any procedural problems” (Skulmoski et al., 2007, p. 4).

An email was sent soliciting feedback from a small subset of Washtenaw Community College nontraditional students and field experts. Minor changes were suggested, which were incorporated in both the student and field-expert surveys. In addition, both the student and Delphi surveys were emailed as practice surveys, allowing the researcher to test for any user difficulty.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Steps were taken to protect the identity of the sample population and to collect responses anonymously. The Delphi and student survey do not ask for names and there is no discreet identification associated with the survey. SurveyMonkey® has the ability to make surveys anonymous and to change the settings so that email and IP addresses are not accessible, saved, or retrieved.

Each community college in this study has its own institutional research protocol. Grand Rapids Community College institutional research application requested the title of the research, protocol, purpose of the study, target population, recruitment of students, retention and destruction of student data, and assurance of human subject confidentiality. Applications are reviewed and subsequently approved by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. Nontraditional student criteria were submitted and a Grand Rapids Community College institutional research analyst was assigned to the researcher for data collection and distribution of student surveys.

The Washtenaw Community College institutional research application requested the research title, purpose of the study, benefits to the college and community, data collection methods, recruitment of students, and human subject approval requirements. Applications are reviewed and subsequently approved by The Director of Institutional Research and the Vice President for Instructional Administration. Nontraditional student criteria were submitted and Washtenaw Community College student emails were provided to the researcher.

Secure Sockets Layer encryption is automatically turned on for surveys including those supported by SurveyMonkey®. The survey assigns a unique response ID number to each survey response. The privacy policy for SurveyMonkey® can be accessed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>. The security statement for SurveyMonkey® can be accessed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/security/>.

LIMITATIONS

The following limitations to the investigation are noted:

- Only those respondents that return the surveys participated in the study. This might have adversely affected the composition of the population and the sample size. Non-respondents were not investigated. Only those that responded were calculated in the results.
- Generalizations to other colleges and populations, even considering similar conditions, are limited due to the different characteristic of the colleges and the student populations, including limited views, agendas, and geographic locations. Research using human subjects increases the chance of ethical dilemmas that undermine the overall validity of the study.
- There was an inability to investigate causality between different research phenomena.
- Each institution and individual has its own definition of case management specific to the populations that attend that institution.
- Only students captured in the data for fall of 2013 and winter of 2014 were included in this study.
- Due to the multiple feedback steps integral to the Delphi survey process, there was a greater possibility of a low response rate over the sequence of rounds.
- Pressure to conform to group ratings in the Delphi feedback was a potential risk.
- There was the possibility of left side bias (Friedman, Herskovitch, & Pollack, 1999) in construction of the student survey with 5 being most important located on the left side of the survey.
- The Delphi and student survey pilot studies may include inaccurate predictions or assumptions including contamination. Contamination may result if pilot participants are included in the main study but new data are discovered from these participants.

SUMMARY

This chapter detailed the methodology used to develop and administer Delphi and student survey instruments based on the six elements of Educational Case Management: collaboration, assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation, and advocacy. A mixed methodology design was employed incorporating the use of both qualitative and quantitative

techniques. This included a Delphi process to gain expert consensus on the major research questions and a student survey with the use of a Likert-type rating scale.

The Delphi survey was designed using a series of questionnaires from field experts with the goal of consensus-building regarding the common elements of Educational case Management. The student survey was designed to obtain information from a purposive sample of nontraditional community college students regarding the importance and commonality of those elements associated with Educational Case Management or its proxy.

This chapter detailed the population description and sample selection from two “like” Michigan community colleges, survey protocol for each, the survey instrument used, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

As stated in Chapter I, the purpose of this study was to identify the common elements of an Educational Case Management approach to support nontraditional students in the community college and to address the following objectives:

1. Identify the common elements of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy.
2. Identify the common elements in existing Educational Case Management or advising programs that are reported to be important for retention of nontraditional community college students.
3. Identify those elements in existing Educational Case Management or advising programs that are reported not to be important for retention of nontraditional community college students.
4. Determine the value of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy for retention of nontraditional community college students.

This chapter reports on the findings that provide answers to the research questions. The information has been arranged and is presented using the results of an anonymous Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey and a Community College Nontraditional Student Survey. The research design of this study was developed to discover the elements of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management that could be used as an intervention tool for the academic success and retention of nontraditional students in a community college setting.

To address the research objectives, a mixed methodology design was employed incorporating the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Using the definition of

Educational Case Management as a “collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation and advocacy” (CMSA, 2016), a Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey and a Community College Nontraditional Student Survey were created to solicit feedback from student service field experts and nontraditional community college students regarding the importance and commonality of those elements associated with Educational Case Management or its proxy.

RESULTS OF PHASE 1 — COMMUNITY COLLEGE DELPHI FIELD EXPERT SURVEY

Phase 1 of this investigation employed a Delphi study consisting of data collection from field experts in case management and academic advising. These elements included assessment, advocacy, college knowledge and community resources, facilitation, and interpersonal skills.

The Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey asked field experts to anonymously rate the elements of Educational Case Management from 1 through 5, with 5 representing *extremely important* and 1 representing *unimportant*. Open-ended question response opportunities captured field-expert input that could not be anticipated in the main survey and gave the respondents further opportunity for elaboration. The Delphi survey asked for the panel’s demographic information to provide insight into the panel’s personal and academic background that may have an influence or provide insight into their responses.

The Delphi technique was chosen because it has been proven to be the most useful method in gathering field-expert data (Skulmoski et al., 2007). The Delphi investigation in this study was conducted in two rounds with the analysis of respondent feedback at the end of each round to assess for consensus and emergent themes that originated from field-expert opinions.

Case managers and academic advisors at Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College were considered experts in their field of case management and advising. Considering that nontraditional students from these community colleges were surveyed for this study, it stands to reason the case managers and advisors that serve these nontraditional students were likely to have field expertise regarding nontraditional community college students.

The researcher developed the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey using an online software program called Survey Monkey®. Participants were invited to respond to the questions in multiple rounds to achieve consensus on the research questions. The researcher received Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission and worked with a Ferris State University faculty as principal investigator. In addition, the researcher also received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from both Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College.

In round 1, the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey offered participants a set of four questions asking respondents to rate 34 advisor and case-manager behaviors from *extremely important to unimportant*, respond to 4 open-ended questions, and answer 12 selected demographic questions to better understand factors influencing the nontraditional student experience.

Results of Round 1

In round 1, the 34 advisor and case-manager behavior questions, 4 open-ended questions, and 12 selected demographic questions were sent out to 16 case-management and

advisor field experts at Grand Rapids and Washtenaw Community Colleges. Nine complete responses were received by the researcher for round 1.

Upon completion of round 1, a second survey was developed based on the round 1 responses. Round 1 participants were selected from the grouping of similar community colleges, as cited in the *Michigan Community College Activities Classification Structure (ACS) 2012-12 Data Book & Companion* (Michigan Workforce Development Agency, 2013, p. 20). The field-expert participants were academic advisors and counselors at Grand Rapids Community College, and case managers and academic advisors at Washtenaw Community College.

According to the ACS Data Book (Michigan Workforce Development Agency, 2013), Washtenaw Community College grants certificates and degrees to 1,400 students annually and serves approximately 21,712 students (2014-15), along with offering over 100 credit programs with four extension sites. Grand Rapids Community College awarded 1,894 degrees and certificates in 2012-13 and serves approximately 26,654 students (2014-15), along with offering 150 career, transfer, and certificate programs at the Holland campus and four regional sites.

Table 7 represents the number of Delphi field-expert surveys sent out in round 1 and 2.

Table 7: *Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey Participants*

COMMUNITY COLLEGE	ROUND 1 SURVEYS DISTRIBUTED	ROUND 1 SURVEYS RETURNED	ROUND 2 SURVEYS DISTRIBUTED	ROUND 2 SURVEYS RETURNED
GRCC	9	2	2	2
WCC	7	7	7	5

Using the Delphi method, data were collected from field experts at Grand Rapids and Washtenaw Community Colleges regarding their opinions on the common elements of Educational Case Management. Round 1 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey used questions that were constructed and based on the review of the literature and an informal pilot study of case-management field experts.

Figure 6, as presented in Chapter III, describes the development of the common characteristics of Educational Case Management in the initial field-expert pilot.

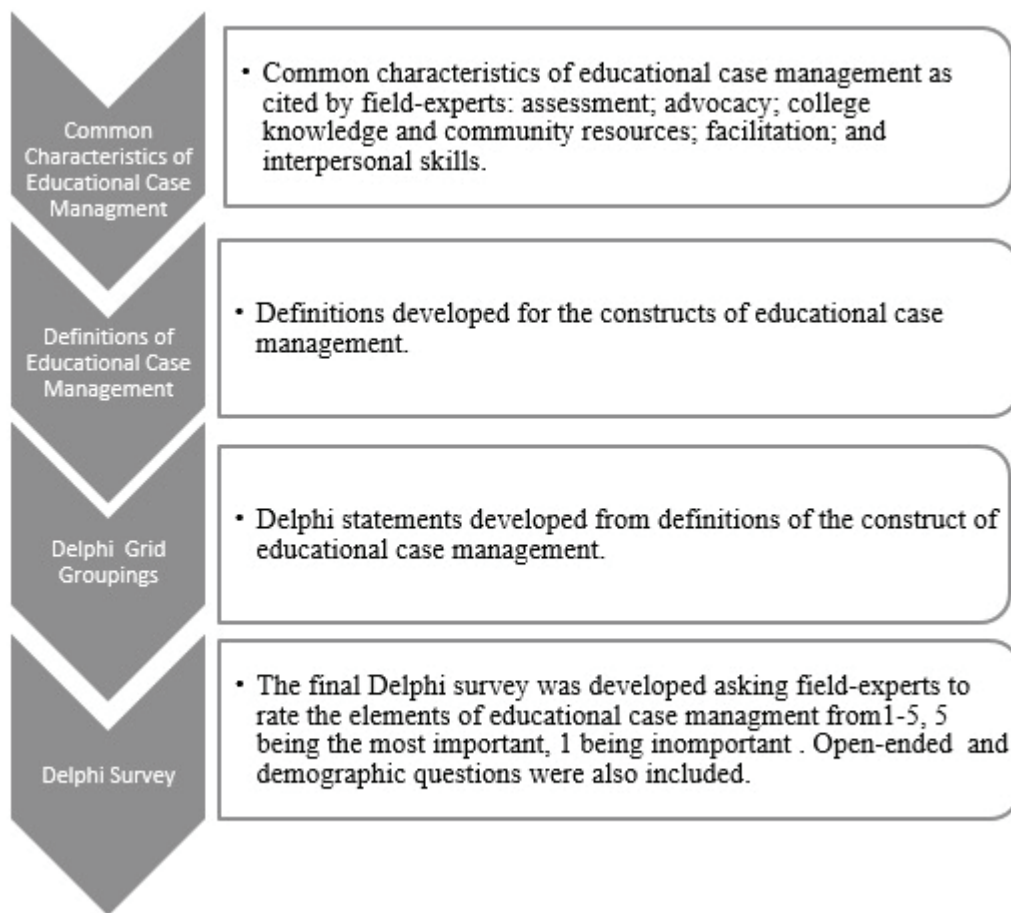


Figure 6. Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey process utilizing informal data collection from the initial pilot.

The Delphi method generally utilizes rounds with field-expert participants chosen based on their expertise, knowledge, and experience. Utilizing multiple rounds as part of the Delphi process allows participants to re-evaluate their initial responses (Vazquez-Ramos, Leahy, & Estrada Hernández, 2007). Table 8 represents the data collection procedures in round 1 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey.

Table 8: Round 1 Data Collection Procedures for the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey

COMMUNITY COLLEGE	PROCEDURE
Grand Rapids Community College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacted the Director of Counseling and Advising soliciting permission to survey field experts in the Counseling Center. • Permission was granted and an email invitation with an embedded survey link was emailed to nine counselors/ advisors. • A soft nudge via telephone was made to counselors/ advisors as a reminder to complete the survey. • Two completed surveys were received.
Washtenaw Community College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacted the Vice President for the Student Services Division requesting permission to survey field experts in the Counseling, the Student Resource and the Learning Support Service Centers. • Permission was granted and an email Invitation with an embedded survey link was sent to nine advisors and case managers in the above centers. • Seven completed surveys were received.

A collection of demographic data in the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey gave the research insight into the characteristics of the respondents. Results of the round 1 Delphi field-expert personal demographics showed, of the eight total responses, 100% were married, 87% were female, 63% were Caucasian, and 25% were African American. The mean age was calculated at 49 years with the range of birth years reported between 1955-1985.

Table 9 represents the round 1 Delphi personal demographic data provided by the participants of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey from Grand Rapids and Washtenaw Community Colleges.

Table 9: Round 1 Delphi Personal Demographic Data

DELPHI PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS	N	PERCENTAGE RESPONSES
Gender		
Female	7	87.5
Male	1	12.5
Year of Birth		
1955	1	12.5
1956	1	12.5
1960	2	25.0
1965	1	12.5
1967	1	12.5
1985	2	25.0
Relationship		
Married	8	100.0
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	2	25.0
White	5	62.5
Hispanic	2	12.5

The employment demographics in round 1 revealed the respondents were employed in their current position an average of 7 years with 88% having a master’s degree or higher. Respondents reported having a variety of position titles including counselor, advisor, case manager, and director of an advising center. Of the respondents, 75% reported total enrollment by headcount between 12,000 and 17,999, with 88% reporting that advising and/or case-management services were not mandatory at their institution.

Table 10 represents the round 1 Delphi employment demographic data provided by the participants of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey from Grand Rapids and Washtenaw Community Colleges.

Table 10: Round 1 Delphi Employment and Institutional Head Count Data

DELPHI PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS	N	PERCENTAGE RESPONSES
Highest Ed.		
Master's	7	87.5
PhD/EdD	1	12.5
Years in Current Position		
14	2	25.0
9	1	12.5
8	1	12.5
7.5	1	12.5
5	1	12.5
2	2	25.0
Current Position		
Advising Director	1	12.5
Counselor	1	12.5
Case Manager	2	25.0
C M/Adv.	3	37.5
C M/LPC	2	25.0
Institutional Head Count		
9,000–11,900	1	25.0
12,000–17,999	7	75.0

Of the eight total respondents, 88% reported advising or case management was not required at their community college, 63% used their survey of student satisfaction as the current assessment effort in their college, and 75% used this same student satisfaction survey to assess the effectiveness of their advising and/or case management services.

Analysis of Community College Delphi Field Expert Round 1 Survey Responses

Consensus was determined for the purpose of this research and was achieved when respondents reported a rating of 4, representing *important*, and 5, representing *very important*. An analysis of round 1 respondents was conducted and yielded a range of responses that

indicated consensus of the percentage of topics. A total of 44 topics were included in questions 1, 2, and 3, with 100% consensus reached on 26 topics.

Sixteen surveys were sent out to field experts at Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College. Nine surveys were sent to the Director of Counseling and Advising at Grand Rapids Community College, who dispersed the Delphi field-expert surveys to GRCC counselors and advisors. Seven surveys were sent directly to field experts in counseling and advising at Washtenaw Community College. Seven surveys were returned from Washtenaw Community College. A reminder email was sent to the Director of Counseling at Grand Rapids Community College, resulting in two returned surveys. A total of nine surveys were returned, with responses ranging among *extremely important*, *important*, and *moderately important* in questions 1 and 2.

The range of opinions focused on the importance of the case-management element of *assessment* in question 3; however, only eight field experts responded to this question. The goal of round 1 was to collect field-expert opinion and determine consensus on the responses before proceeding to round 2.

When asked question 1, *How important is it for educational case managers or advisors in the community college to show the listed case manager behaviors?* round 1 Delphi participants supplied a range of opinions from *extremely important* to *important* to *moderately important* for helping students feel they are members of the college community, helping students reach their academic goals, helping students adjust to college life, helping students cope with nonacademic responsibilities, providing supports to help students thrive in college, and showing students they matter to the institution. Table 11 represents a summary of the

field-expert responses for round 1 question 1 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey.

Table 11: Round 1 Community College Delphi Field Expert Responses for Question 1: How Important Is It for the College Case Managers or Advisors to Show the Following Behaviors?

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	MODERATELY IMPORTANT 3	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE 2	UNIMPORTANT 1	N	SD
Makes students feel welcome	6 66.67%	3 33.33%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.47
Shows concern for students as individuals	7 77.78%	2 22.22%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.42
Helps students feel they are members of the college community	7 77.78%	1 11.11%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.67
Is knowledgeable about students' program requirements	5 55.56%	4 44.44%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.50
Helps students reach their academic goals	6 66.67%	2 22.22%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.68
Encourages students to share their ideas openly	6 66.67%	3 33.33%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.47
Respects the values of different student groups	8 88.89%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.31
Shows students they matter to the institution	6 66.67%	2 22.22%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.68
Helps students adjust to college life	5 55.55%	4 44.44%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.50

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY		MODERATELY	OF LITTLE		N	SD
	IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	IMPORTANCE	UNIMPORTANT		
	5	4	3	2	1		
Helps students cope with responsibilities like family, work, etc.	3 33.33%	5 55.56%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.63
Provides supports students need to thrive in college	7 77.78%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.67
Listens to student concerns	7 77.78%	2 22.22%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.42
Provides encouragement for students	6 66.67%	3 33.33%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.47
Helps students navigate the college system	7 87.50%	1 12.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.33
Helps students learn to problem solve	7 77.78%	2 22.22%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.42

When asked question 2, *How important do the Delphi respondents believe specific case manager behaviors are for retention of nontraditional community college students*, round 1 respondents supplied a range of opinions, ranging from *extremely important* to *important* to *moderately important* on case-manager behaviors such as timely reminders, use of technology, helping students choose classes, and understanding student values.

Additional important case-manager behaviors include building strong partnerships, having knowledge of community resources, promoting student interdependence, helping build student self-esteem, helping students connect to the college, clarifying career and academic

direction, and helping make college user friendly. Table 12 represents a summary of the field-expert responses for round 1 question 2 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey.

Table 12: Round 1 Community College Delphi Field Expert Responses for Question 2: How Important Do You Believe the Following Factors Are for the Retention of Nontraditional Community College Students?

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	MODERATELY IMPORTANT 3	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE 2	UNIMPORTANT 1	N	SD
Provides timely reminders like early notification	2 22.22%	5 55.56%	2 22.22%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.67
Helps coordinate college services	3 33.33%	6 66.67%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.47
Builds relationships with students	1 11.11%	3 33.33%	4 44.44%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.42
Uses technology for follow-up (social media)	1 11.11%	3 33.33%	4 44.44%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.83
Helps students choose classes	3 33.33%	5 55.56%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.63
Understands student values and beliefs	2 22.22%	6 66.67%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.57
Builds strong partnerships	4 44.44%	4 44.44%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.67
Helps students in taking achievable steps to "feel successful"	6 66.67%	3 33.33%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.47
Helps students gain knowledge of the college system	5 55.56%	4 44.44%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.50
Participates in professional trainings for advisors or case managers	4 44.44%	5 55.56%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.50

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY	MODERATELY	OF LITTLE	UNIMPORTANT	N	SD
	IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	IMPORTANT 3			
Provides empathy toward student concerns	6 66.67%	3 33.33%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.47
Has knowledge of nontraditional student needs/ challenges	8 88.89%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.31
Has knowledge of key community resources	6 66.67%	1 11.11%	2 22.22%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.83
Helps to promote student interdependence	4 44.44%	4 44.44%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.67
Helps students to build self-efficacy	6 66.67%	3 33.33%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.47
Helps students to build self-esteem	5 55.56%	3 33.33%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.68
Helps student to connect to the college	5 55.56%	3 33.33%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.68
Concentrates on strengths of students, not weaknesses	3 33.33%	6 66.67%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.47
Clarifies career and academic direction	4 44.44%	4 44.44%	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.47
Makes college user friendly	2 22.22%	4 44.44%	3 33.33%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.74
Looks out for the best interest of students	4 44.44%	5 55.56%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.50
Helps student become aware of college programs and services	4 44.44%	5 55.56%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	9 100%	0.50

When asked in question 3 to rate the most critical elements for the academic success of nontraditional students in the community college, round 1 respondents supplied a range of opinions with regard to the element of “Assessment.” Table 13 represents a summary of the field-expert responses for round 1 question 3 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey.

Table 13: Round 1 Community College Delphi Field Expert Responses for Question 3: Of the Elements Listed Below, Please Rank the Most Critical for the Academic Success of Nontraditional Students in the Community College

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	MODERATELY IMPORTANT 3	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE 2	UNIMPORTANT 1	N	SD
Collaboration	6 75.00%	2 25.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.43
Assessment	6 75.00%	1 12.50%	1 12.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.70
Planning	8 100%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.00
Facilitation	5 62.50%	3 37.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.48
Evaluation	3 37.50%	5 67.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.48
Advocacy	2 25.00%	6 75.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.43

Although consensus was reached in question 4, it is provided here for continuity. When asked in question 4 to rate how valuable the elements of case management would be in a sustainable model of Educational Case Management for nontraditional community college students, respondents provided consensus for all elements including collaboration, assessment,

planning, facilitation, evaluation, and advocacy. Table 14 presents a summary of the field-expert responses for round 1 question 4 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey.

Table 14: Round 1 Community College Delphi Field Expert Responses for Question 4: Of the Elements Listed and Defined Below, Please Rate/Evaluate How Valuable These Elements Would Be in a Sustainable Model of Educational Case Management for Nontraditional Community College Students

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	MODERATELY IMPORTANT 3	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE 2	UNIMPORTANT 1	N	SD
Collaboration	6 75.00%	2 25.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.43
Assessment	6 75.00%	2 25.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.43
Planning	7 87.50%	1 12.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.33
Facilitation	5 62.50%	3 37.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.48
Evaluation	5 62.50%	3 37.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.48
Advocacy	3 37.50%	5 62.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 100%	0.48

The elements that Delphi field-expert participants rated *extremely important* or *important* for the success and retention of nontraditional community college students were having knowledge of nontraditional student needs and challenges (88%), respecting the values of different student groups (88%), and helping students navigate the college system (87%). Four additional elements included showing concerns for students as individuals, listening to students' concerns, helping students learn to problem solve, and building relationships with students (77%).

Table 15 presents a summary of round 1 case-management elements that participants indicated were *extremely important* or *important* for the success and retention of nontraditional community college students.

Table 15: Round 1 Community College Delphi Field Expert Responses Considered Extremely Important or Important for the Success and Retention of Nontraditional Community College Students

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	N	SD
Has knowledge of nontraditional student needs/challenges	8 88.89%	1 11.11%	9 100%	.31
Respects the values of different student groups	8 88.89%	1 11.11%	9 100%	.31
Helps students navigate the college system	7 87.50%	2 12.50%	9 100%	.42
Shows concern for students as individuals	7 77.78%	2 22.22%	9 100%	.42
Listens to student concerns	7 77.78%	2 22.22%	9 100%	.42
Helps students learn to problem solve	7 77.78%	2 22.22%	9 100%	.42
Builds relationships with students	7 77.76%	2 22.22%	9 100%	.42

Participating in professional trainings, looking out for the best interest of the student, and helping students become aware of college programs and services (44%) rated *less important* or *unimportant*. Finally, helping coordinate college services and concentrating on student strengths, not weaknesses, (33%) rated *less important*.

Table 16 represents round 1 of the case-management elements respondents indicated were *moderately important* or *of little importance* for the success and retention of nontraditional community college students.

Table 16: Round 1 Community College Delphi Field Expert Responses Considered Moderately Important or of Little Importance for the Success and Retention of Nontraditional Community College Students

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	MODERATELY IMPORTANT 2	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE 1	N	SD
Builds relationships with students	4 44.44%	1 33.33%	4 100%	.42
Uses technology for follow-up (social media)	4 44.44%	1 33.33%	4 100%	.42

Of the case-management elements rated as the most critical for the academic success of nontraditional students in the community college, participants determined planning (100%) followed by collaboration (75%), and facilitation (63%) were *extremely important*. When asked to rate how valuable these elements would be in a sustainable model of Educational Case Management, the following elements were rated as *extremely important* or *important*: collaboration, assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation, and advocacy (100%).

ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE DELPHI FIELD EXPERT ROUND 2 SURVEY RESPONSES

After round 1 results were compiled, field experts were invited to participate in round 2 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey, which focused only on items in which consensus was not reached. Round 2 questions were categorized based on the range of disagreement from the questions in round 1. A panel of 18 experts was initially established for

round 1 with a response rate of 50%. An email notifying the nine respondents of round 2 with an accompanying survey was sent out. A second reminder was generated, resulting in seven participants, a 77% response rate for round 2.

Educational Case Management continued to be defined as a “collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation and advocacy” (CMSA, 2016). A second survey was developed in Survey Monkey® with an invitation to nine respondents from round 1 at Grand Rapids and Washtenaw Community Colleges.

When asked in question 1 about how important it is for educational case managers or advisors in the community college to show the following behaviors, the field experts expanded consensus to include helping students feel they are a members of the college community, helping students reach their academic goals, and helping students cope with nonacademic responsibilities. A range of opinions continued to be evident for behaviors showing students they matter and providing supports that allow students to thrive in the academic setting.

Table 17 presents a summary of the field-expert responses for round 2 question 1 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey.

Table 17: Round 2 Community College Delphi Field Expert Responses for Question 1: How Important Is It for the College Case Managers or Advisers to Show the Following Behaviors?

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	MODERATELY IMPORTANT 3	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE 2	UNIMPORTANT 1	N	SD
Helps students feel they are a member of the college community	2 28.57%	5 71.43%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.45
Helps student reach their academic goals	4 57.14%	3 42.86%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.49
Shows students they matter to the institution	2 28.57%	4 57.14%	1 14.29%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.64
Helps students cope with nonacademic responsibilities like family, work, etc.	1 14.29%	6 85.71%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.35
Provides the supports students need to thrive in college	1 14.29%	5 71.43%	1 14.29%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	.53

When asked question 2, *How important is it for educational case managers or advisors in the community college to show the following behaviors*, field-expert participants in round 2 expanded consensus to include helping students choose classes, building strong collaborative relationships, having knowledge of key community resources, promoting student interdependence, helping students build self-esteem, clarifying career and academic direction, and making college user-friendly. Table 18 presents a summary of the field-expert responses for round 2 question 2 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey.

Table 18: Round 2 Community College Delphi Field Expert Responses for Question 2: How Important Do You Believe the Following Factors Are for Retention of Nontraditional Community College Students?

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	MODERATELY IMPORTANT 3	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE 2	UNIMPORTANT 1	N	SD
Provides timely reminders like early notifications	2 28.57%	4 57.14%	1 14.29%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.64
Uses technology for follow-up (Twitter, Facebook, social media)	0 0.00%	3 42.86%	1 14.29%	3 42.86%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.93
Understands student values and beliefs	3 50.00%	2 33.33%	1 16.67%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.75
Builds strong collaborative partnerships	3 50.00%	2 33.32%	1 16.67%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.75
Has knowledge of key community resources	3 42.86%	4 57.14%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.49
Helps to promote student interdependence	2 28.57%	5 71.43%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.45
Helps students to build self-esteem	2 28.57%	5 71.43%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.45
Helps students connect to the college	1 14.29%	5 71.43%	1 14.29%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.53
Clarifies career and academic direction	4 57.14%	3 42.86%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.49
Makes college user-friendly	4 57.14%	3 42.86%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	.49

When asked question 3, *How important are the following factors for the retention of nontraditional community college students*, participants in round 2 continued to have a wide range of agreement with regard to the element of *assessment*. Open-ended questions were not asked in round 2 as there appeared to be consensus in emergent themes. Table 19 presents a summary of the field-expert responses for round 2 question 3 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey.

Table 19: *Round 2 Community College Delphi Field Expert Responses for Question 3: Of the Elements Listed and Defined Below, Please Rank the Most Critical for the Academic Success of Nontraditional Students in the Community College*

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	MODERATELY IMPORTANT 3	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE 2	UNIMPORTANT 1	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Assessment	4 57.14%	2 28.57%	1 14.29%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	7 100%	0.73

At the conclusion of the survey, field-expert participants were asked four open-ended questions. The emerging themes offered insight from field experts into the important elements necessary for the academic success of nontraditional students in the community college. An initial review of the raw narrative participant comments was conducted by a case management field expert and organized according to each of the four open-ended questions included in round 1.

The researcher then summarized the themes from each of the four open-ended questions in round 1 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey. Participant responses are significant considering the purpose of the study is to rate those elements that are important and not important for the retention of nontraditional community college students.

Emergent themes were initially evaluated using Survey Monkey® text analysis of the most common words and phrases identified by the Delphi field-expert respondents. Detailed responses were then downloaded from Survey Monkey® into an Excel spreadsheet and further explored for a more detailed analysis. Table 20 presents the emergent themes from each of the four open-ended questions in round 1 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey.

Table 20: *Round 1 Community College Delphi Field Expert Open-Ended Questions and Emergent Themes*

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION	EMERGENT THEMES
<p>Q1. Considering the 6 elements of case management and advising listed below, what kind of institutional support would you need to make Educational Case Management more sustainable for nontraditional students?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Staffing b. Assigning students c. Face-2-Face time with students d. Professional development e. Build early relationships with students f. First Year Experience customized to nontraditional experience g. Assessment of student needs and goals h. Track student progress i. Having knowledge of community resources j. Set student milestones and track these k. Address technical skills, access, and remediate l. Use intrusive advising
<p>Q2. What knowledge or information about college and community resources do you feel is important for nontraditional community college students to be academically successful?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establishing a career path, knowing technology and navigating the college system b. Establishing a work/school/life balance c. Acknowledging students’ responsibilities for providing basic needs and how they fit with college d. Helping students feel they belong and matter to the institution e. Knowledge of academic supports, success strategies, and tutoring f. Knowledge of career services g. Knowledge of college programs h. Knowledge of financial aid

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION	EMERGENT THEMES
<p>Q3. What do you think advisors or case managers can do to make the advising or case management experience better for nontraditional community college students?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Be available and have accessible points of information as needed b. Provide information about college and community resources c. Be knowledgeable about college requirements d. Customized outreach to students based on information gathered at intake e. Make faculty and staff aware of resources f. Emphasize the importance of navigating college systems g. Require scheduled appointments h. Require an intake process and follow-up i. Market advising and student services
<p>Q4. How do you think your college could make nontraditional community college students feel more welcome and connected?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Offer nontraditional student services for their needs and at convenient times b. Connect to services appropriate to this population c. Offer a First Year Experience d. Provide outreach and an early connection to a case manager e. Offer ongoing support groups, activities, and programs focused on the nontraditional student experience

Results of Phase 2 – Community College Nontraditional Student Survey

Phase 2 of this study employed a student survey that was developed asking nontraditional community college students to rate the elements of Educational Case Management from 1 through 5, with 5 representing *extremely important* and 1 representing *unimportant*. The Community College Nontraditional Student Survey included open-ended question response opportunities to capture student input that could not be anticipated in the main survey and gave the respondents further opportunity for elaboration.

The Community College Nontraditional Student Survey also requested student demographic data from which a research review demonstrated strong prior relationships for

nontraditional students. As cited in Chapter I, one or more factors are associated with the definition of a nontraditional students (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012; Burns, 2010; Ross-Gordon, 2011):

- Delays college enrollment;
- Attends part-time for at least part of the academic year;
- Works full-time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled;
- Is considered financially independent for purposes of determining financial aid eligibility;
- Has dependents other than spouse (usually children);
- Is a single parent (either married or married but separated).

Table 21 presents the number of nontraditional community college student surveys emailed to participants at Grand Rapids and Washtenaw Community Colleges. A total of 243 responses were returned between February 15, 2016 and April 4, 2016. The response rate for the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey was 6%.

Table 21: *Nontraditional Community College Student Survey Participants*

COMMUNITY COLLEGE	ROUND 1 SURVEYS DISTRIBUTED	ROUND 1 SURVEYS RETURNED	ROUND 2 SURVEYS DISTRIBUTED	ROUND 2 RETURNED SURVEYS	TOTAL % RESPONSE RATE
Grand Rapids	4000	239	N/A	N/A	.05
Washtenaw	118	5	118	2	.05
Total	4118	244	118	246	.06

Data were collected from nontraditional students at Grand Rapids and Washtenaw Community Colleges regarding their opinions on the common elements of Educational Case Management. The low survey response rate could be attributed to factors such as timing when

the survey was received by the respondents, refusal to participate by the respondents, or inability to make contact with respondents. Figure 7, as presented in Chapter III, describes the steps followed in the development of the student survey. The researcher constructed the student survey using the defined elements of case management and developed grid groupings resulting in the final student survey. As a reminder, a pilot of the student survey was conducted using selected nontraditional students who provided minor feedback.

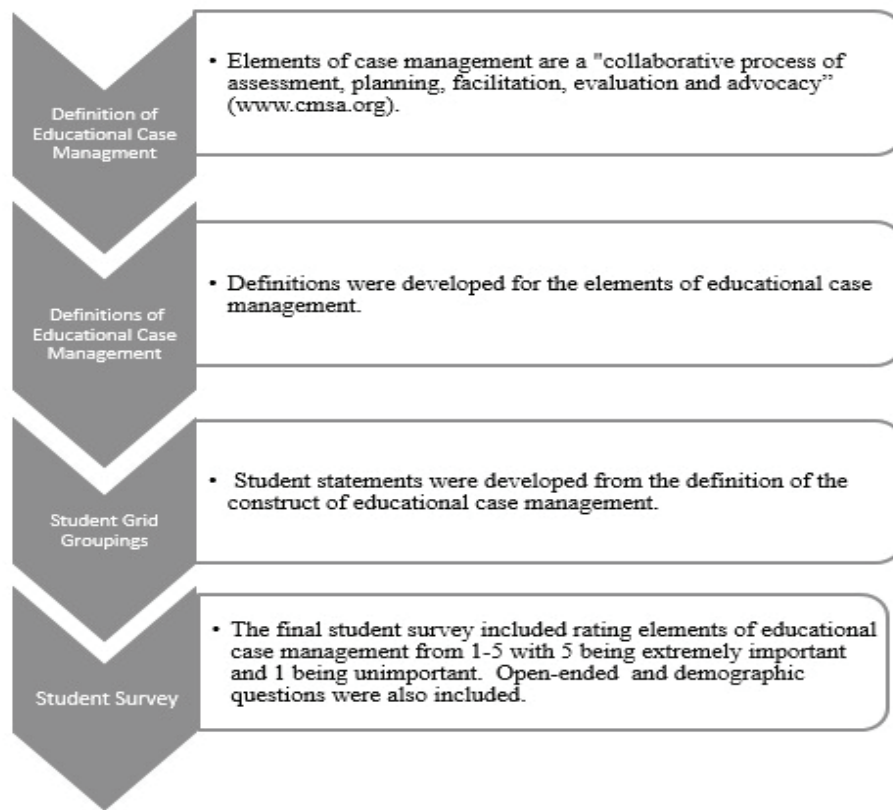


Figure 7. Schematic of the nontraditional student survey process utilizing informal data collection.

Table 22 illustrates steps taken by the researcher to select the nontraditional community college student population for survey at Grand Rapids and Washtenaw Community Colleges.

Table 22: *Student Selection Procedures for the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey*

COMMUNITY COLLEGE	PROCEDURE
Grand Rapids Community College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. First draft of research request sent to the Grand Rapids Community College IRB. b. IRB requested further clarification of student email storage and protection. c. IRB request approved November 20, 2015. d. The Community College Nontraditional Student Survey was forwarded to the IRB liaison for dissemination to selected nontraditional community college students who attended in fall 2014 and winter 2015 and who met the above criteria.
Washtenaw Community College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. First draft of research request sent to the Washtenaw Community College IRB. b. IRB requested further clarification of student population to be selected. c. IRB request approved on February 11, 2015. d. The researcher was provided a data set containing names and emails for 118 nontraditional students who fit the above criteria. e. The researcher emailed the selected students a survey invitation with an embedded link.

RESULTS OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

Results of the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey demographics showed that, of the 246 respondents, 90% attended Grand Rapids Community College and 4% attended Washtenaw Community College; 43% were married; 69% were female; and 78% were Caucasian, 9% Hispanic, and 6% African American. The mean age was calculated at 35 with year of birth range reported between 1965-1991. Table 23 presents the self-reported personal characteristics from the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey.

Table 23: *Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Personal Characteristics*

STUDENT PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS	N	PERCENTAGE RESPONSES
Gender		
Female	134	69.07
Male	60	30.93
Year of Birth		
1965-1969	16	8.64
1970-1979	49	26.00
1980-1989	107	58.00
1990-1991	13	7.00
Relationship		
Single	63	33.00
Married	84	42.90
Partner	8	4.20
Co-Habiting	17	8.90
Separated	3	1.60
Divorced	16	8.40
Race/Ethnicity		
American	2	1.04
Indian Alaskan	11	5.73
African American	150	78.13
White	17	8.85
Hispanic	2	1.04
Asian/Pacific	10	5.21

According to respondents' self-report, 38% had earned a high school diploma; 17% had earned an associate's degree; 11%, a bachelor's degree; and 3%, a graduate-level degree. For parents' highest level of education, 15% had earned an associate's degree, and 28% had earned a bachelor's or graduate-level degree.

Respondents reported their mean GPA, on a 4.0 scale, as 3.5, and they were enrolled for an average of 6.9 college credits for the current semester. In addition, respondents had, on average, 59.9 accumulated credits to date from all institutions; this includes 27 participants reporting over 100 accumulated credits. Respondents reported being enrolled in the following

programs of study: 22% in occupational, 18% in business, 14% in nursing and 13% in a liberal arts field.

Table 24 presents the self-reported academic characteristics from the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey.

Table 24: *Community College Nontraditional Student Academic Characteristics*

STUDENT ACADEMIC CHARACTERISTICS	N	PERCENTAGE RESPONSES
Highest Education		
GED	20	10.31
Home Schooled	3	1.55
Some High School	0	0.00
High School Diploma	74	38.14
Certificate	22	11.34
Associate's	33	17.01
Bachelor's	21	10.82
Graduate	5	2.58
College Attended		
GRCC	239	69.3
WCC	7	30.7
Program		
Occupational	40	22.0
Business	32	18.0
Nursing	25	14.0
Liberal Arts	23	13.0
Engineering	10	5.0
Accounting	9	5.0
Enrolled Credits	1227	100
Credits from all Institutions	10,315	100

For the 2014-15 academic year, 60% of respondents reported receiving financial aid that did not need to be repaid, 43% reported receiving financial aid that must be repaid, and 31% of respondents reported not having applied or received financial aid for this academic year. Table 25 presents the self-reported financial aid characteristics from the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey.

Table 25: *Community College Nontraditional Student Financial Aid Characteristics*

STUDENT FINANCIAL AID CHARACTERISTICS	N	PERCENTAGE RESPONSES
Type of Financial Aid		
Non – Did Not Apply	58	30.69
Non – Applied & Denied	6	3.17
Aid Not Repaid	100	59.91
Aid Repaid	82	43.39
Other	12	6.35

Of the 192 respondents who responded to this question, 81% reported being employed, 7% reported they were unemployed, and 13% reported being a homemaker. Of the 167 respondents who responded to this question, 48% had at least one dependent. Of the 185 respondents who responded to this question, 28% reported a household income over \$55,000, while 35% reported having household incomes between \$25,000 and \$45,000.

Of the 193 respondents who responded to this question, 87% reported they did not reside with a parent or guardian; 4% reported having veteran status. Table 26 presents the employment data provided by the participants of the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey from Grand Rapids and Washtenaw Community Colleges.

Table 26: *Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Employment Characteristics*

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS	N	PERCENTAGE RESPONSES
Veterans Status		
Yes	8	4.3
No	178	95.7
Employment		
Employed for wages	156	81.1
Out of work and looking	9	4.7
Out of work but not looking	8	4.2
Homemaker	6	3.2
Working for pay on campus	25	13.2
Working for pay off campus	6	3.2

When asked during the last semester how many hours per week were spent in specific activities, 90% of the respondents indicated they spent an average of 37.5 hours per week caring for family, 90% spent an average of 32 hours per week in their employment setting, and 98% of the respondents spent an average of 10 hours per week studying for class.

In contrast, 85% of respondents reported spending an average of only 6 hours per week in leisure time activity and less than 1 hour per week involved in on-campus clubs or activities.

Table 27 presents the activities and time spent in these activities reported by the participants of the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey.

Table 27: Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Activity Responses

STUDENT ACTIVITIES	N	PERCENTAGE RESPONSES
Average hours per day		
Attending class	180	98.36
Working	176	96.17
Commuting	178	97.27
Studying	180	98.36
On-campus activities	155	84.70
Volunteering	155	84.70
Caring for family	165	90.16
Leisure activities	166	90.17

Tables 28-30 present the nontraditional student responses rating the elements of Educational Case Management from 1 through 5, with 5 representing *extremely important* and 1 representing *unimportant*.

Table 28: Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses for Question 1: How Important Is It for the College Case Managers or Advisors to Show the Following Behaviors?

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT		MODERATELY IMPORTANT	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE	UNIMPORTANT	N	SD
	5	4	3	2	1		
Makes me feel welcome	105 43.21%	80 32.92%	36 14.81%	10 4.12%	12 14.94%	243	1.09
Shows concern for me as an individual	109 45.42%	85 35.42%	27 11.25%	11 4.58%	8 3.33%	240	1.01
Helps me feel I am a member of the college community	75 31.25%	70 29.17%	49 20.42%	28 11.67%	18 7.50%	240	1.24
Is knowledgeable about my program requirements	189 78.42%	42 17.43%	6 2.49%	3 1.24%	1 0.41%	241	0.61
Helps me to reach my academic goals	144 59.02%	68 27.87%	29 7.79%	8 3.28%	5 2.05%	244	0.91

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY	MODERATELY	OF LITTLE			<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
	IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	IMPORTANT 3	IMPORTANCE 2	UNIMPORTANT 1		
Encourages me to openly share their ideas	74 30.45%	95 39.09%	40 16.46%	22 9.05%	12 4.94%	243	1.11
Respects my values and beliefs	116 47.54%	78 31.97%	28 11.48%	14 5.74%	8 3.28%	244	1.05
Shows me I matter to the institution	87 35.80%	74 30.45%	44 18.11%	23 9.47%	15 6.17%	243	1.20
Helps me adjust to college life	62 25.41%	61 25.00%	57 23.36%	41 16.80%	23 9.43%	244	1.28
Helps me cope with nonacademic responsibilities like family, work, etc.	39 16.12%	50 20.66%	56 23.14%	59 24.38%	38 15.70%	242	1.31
Provides the support I need to thrive in this college	86 35.25%	77 31.56%	44 18.03%	22 9.02%	15 6.15%	244	1.19
Listens to my concerns	115 47.93%	76 31.40%	32 13.22%	12 4.96%	6 2.48%	242	1.00
Provides encouragement	83 34.16%	82 33.74%	143 7.70%	19 7.82%	16 6.58%	243	1.18
Helps me navigate the college system	129 53.09%	61 25.10%	33 13.58%	11 4.53%	9 3.70%	243	1.07
Helps me learn to problem solve	61 25.21%	72 29.75%	50 20.66%	30 12.40%	29 11.98%	242	1.31

Table 29: Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses for Question 2: How Important Are the Following Qualities for a Community College Case Manager or Advisor?

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	MODERATELY IMPORTANT 3	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE 2	UNIMPORTANT 1	N	SD
Provides timely reminders like early notifications and college information	87 38.67%	93 41.33%	33 14.67%	10 4.44%	2 0.89%	225 100%	0.88
Helps coordinate college services	74 32.60%	88 38.77%	45 19.82%	15 6.61%	5 2.20%	227 100%	0.99
Builds relationships with students	57 25.11%	70 30.84%	57 25.11%	30 13.22%	13 5.73%	227 100%	1.16
Uses technology for follow-up (twitter, face book, social media, etc.)	31 12.66%	55 24.23%	67 29.52%	46 20.26%	28 12.33%	227 100%	1.22
Helps students choose classes	107 47.14%	69 24.23%	38 16.74%	8 3.52%	5 2.20%	227 100%	0.97
Understand students values and beliefs	69 30.40%	79 34.80%	53 23.35%	16 7.05%	10 4.41%	227 100%	1.08
Builds strong collaborative partnerships	61 26.87%	94 41.41%	47 20.70%	16 7.05%	9 3.96%	227 100%	1.04
Helps students in taking achievable steps to "feel successful"	83 36.73%	84 37.17%	32 14.16%	16 7.05%	11 4.87%	226 100%	1.11
Helps students gain knowledge of the college system	106 46.90%	69 30.53%	35 15.49%	9 3.98%	7 3.10%	226 100%	1.02
Participates in professional trainings for advisors or case managers	75 33.19%	75 33.19%	47 20.80%	21 9.29%	8 3.54%	226 100%	1.10

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY	MODERATELY	OF LITTLE	UNIMPORTANT	N	SD	
	IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	IMPORTANT 3				IMPORTANCE 2
Shows an understanding of student feelings (empathy)	72 31.86%	82 36.2%	44 19.47%	16 7.08%	12 5.31%	226 100%	1.11
Has knowledge of nontraditional student needs/ challenges	124 54.87%	75 33.19%	20 8.85%	5 2.21%	2 0.88%	226 100%	0.81
Has knowledge of key community resources	96 42.48%	77 34.07%	40 17.70%	7 3.10%	6 2.65%	226 100%	0.98
Helps students advocate for themselves	86 38.60	85 37.95%	36 16.07%	10 4.46%	7 3.13%	224 100%	1.00
Helps students to build self-efficacy/self-esteem	60 26.67%	71 31.56%	56 24.89%	19 8.44%	19 8.44%	225 100%	1.20
Concentrates on strengths of students, not weaknesses	76 33.78%	74 32.89%	47 20.89%	15 6.67%	13 5.78%	225 100%	1.14
Clarifies career and academic direction	123 54.76%	76 33.78%	20 8.89%	2 0.89%	4 1.78%	225 100%	0.83
Makes college user friendly	95 42.44%	80 35.56%	37 16.44%	5 2.22%	8 3.56%	225 100%	.99
Looks out for the best interest of students	124 54.87%	78 34.51%	18 7.96%	3 1.33%	3 1.33%	226 100%	0.80
Helps students become aware of college programs and services	115 51.11%	84 37.33%	19 8.44%	3 1.33%	4 1.78%	225 100%	0.83

Table 30: *Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses for Question 3: How Important Is It for Your College Case Manager or Advisor to Perform the Following in Your Educational Experience?*

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT 5	IMPORTANT 4	MODERATELY IMPORTANT 3	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE 2	UNIMPORTANT 1	N	SD
Collaboration	88 44.44%	74 37.37%	28 14.14%	5 2.53%	3 1.52%	198 100%	0.88
Assessment	71 36.04%	87 41.16%	32 16.24%	6 3.05%	1 0.51%	197 100%	0.82
Planning	119 60.71%	62 31.63%	10 5.10%	3 1.53%	2 1.02%	196 100%	0.75
Facilitation	94 47.96%	73 36.24%	20 10.20%	6 3.06%	3 1.53%	196 100%	0.88
Evaluation	69 35.20%	80 40.82%	35 17.86%	8 4.08%	4 2.04%	196 100%	0.94
Advocacy	91 46.43%	69 35.20%	23 11.73%	9 4.59%	4 2.04%	196 100%	0.95

When asked question 1, *How important is it for your community college advisor or case manager to do the following*, participants supplied a range of opinions from *extremely important* to *unimportant*.

Respondents rated case manager or advisor behaviors as *extremely important* or *important* in regard to having knowledge of program requirements, helping students reach their goals, helping students navigate the college system, listening to student concerns, showing concern for students, and respecting student values and beliefs.

Table 31 presents elements of case manager/advisor behaviors that student participants ranked as *extremely important* or *important* when working with nontraditional community college students.

Table 31: *Nontraditional Community College Student Survey Responses of Extremely Important or Important for Question 1, Regarding the Behavior of Case Managers and Advisors When Working with Nontraditional Students*

ELEMENTS	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT	N	SD
Is knowledgeable about my program requirements	95.85%	234	0.61
Helps me reach my academic goals	86.86%	212	0.91
Helps me navigate the college system	78.19%	190	1.07
Listens to my concerns	79.33%	192	1.00
Shows concern for me as an individual	80.84%	197	1.01
Respects my values and beliefs	79.51%	198	1.05

Respondents rated case manager or advisor behaviors *of little importance or unimportant* in regard to showing students they matter to the institution, helping students to problem solve, helping students to adjust to college life, and helping students cope with nonacademic responsibilities. Table 32 presents the case manager/advisor behaviors that student participants rated *of little importance or unimportant* when working with nontraditional community college students.

Table 32: *Nontraditional Community College Student Survey Responses Of Little Importance or Unimportant for Question 1, Regarding the Behavior of Case Managers and Advisors When Working With Nontraditional Students*

ELEMENTS	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE/ UNIMPORTANT	N	SD
Shows me I matter to the institution	15.64%	38	1.20
Helps me learn to problem-solve	24.38%	59	1.31
Helps me adjust to college life	26.23%	64	1.28

When asked question 2, *How important are the following qualities for a community college case manager or advisor*, participants supplied a range of opinions from *extremely important to unimportant*.

Respondents rated the qualities of a community college case manager or advisor as *extremely important* or *important* in regard to looking out for the best interest of students, clarifying career/academic goals, having knowledge of nontraditional students' needs, helping students become aware of college programs/services, helping students choose classes, helping students gain knowledge of the college system, providing timely reminders such as early notifications, and having knowledge of key community resources.

Table 33 presents the student participant responses of *extremely important* or *important* for case manager or advisor qualities when working with nontraditional community college students.

Table 33: *Nontraditional Community College Student Survey Responses of Extremely Important or Important for Question 2, Regarding the Qualities of Case Managers and Advisors When Working with Nontraditional Students*

CASE MANAGER/ADVISOR QUALITIES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT	N	SD
Looks out for the best interest of students	89.38%	202	.80
Clarifies career and academic direction	88.54%	199	.83
Has knowledge of nontraditional student needs/challenges	88.06%	199	.81
Helps students become aware of college programs and services	88.44%	199	.83
Helps students choose classes	71.37%	176	.97

CASE MANAGER/ADVISOR QUALITIES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT	N	SD
Helps students gain knowledge of the college system	77.43%	175	1.02
Provides timely reminders like early notifications and college information	80.00%	180	.88
Has knowledge of key community resources	76.55%	173	.98

Seven additional qualities reported by participants included helping students in taking achievable steps to “feel successful,” helping coordinate college services, participating in professional development, showing an understanding of students’ feelings, concentrating on student strengths, understanding student values/beliefs, and building strong collaborative relationships.

Table 34 presents those seven additional qualities rated by student participants as *extremely important* or *important* for case managers or advisors when working with nontraditional community college students.

Table 34: *Nontraditional Community College Student Survey Responses of Extremely Important or Important for Question 2, Regarding Seven Additional Qualities of Case Managers and Advisors When Working with Nontraditional Students*

CASE MANAGER/ADVISOR QUALITIES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT	N	SD
Helps students in taking achievable steps to feel successful	73.90%	167	1.11
Helps coordinate college services	71.37%	162	0.99
Participates in professional trainings for advisors or case managers	66.38%	150	1.10
Shows an understanding of student feelings (empathy)	68.14%	154	1.11

CASE MANAGER/ADVISOR QUALITIES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT/IMPORTANT	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Concentrates on strengths of students, not weaknesses	66.67%	150	1.14
Understand student values and beliefs	65.20%	145	1.08
Builds strong collaborative partnerships	68.28%	155	1.04

Question 2 respondents rated qualities of college case managers or advisors as *of little importance* or *unimportant* in regard to helping students to build self-efficacy/self-esteem, building relationships with students, and using technology for follow-up.

Table 35 presents student participant responses indicating *of little importance* or *unimportant* for case manager or advisor qualities when working with nontraditional community college students.

Table 35: *Nontraditional Community College Student Survey Responses of Of Little Importance or Unimportant for the Qualities of Case Managers and Advisors When Working with Nontraditional Students*

CASE MANAGER/ADVISOR QUALITIES	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE/ UNIMPORTANT	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Helps students to build self-efficacy/self-esteem	16.88%	38	1.20
Builds relationships with students	18.95%	43	1.16
Uses technology for follow-up (Twitter, Facebook, social media, etc.)	32.59%	74	1.22

When asked question 3, *How important is it for case managers or advisors to perform the following elements of collaboration, assessment, planning, evaluation, and advocacy,*

nontraditional student participants supplied a range of opinions from *extremely important* to *unimportant*. Respondents rated planning as the most important element that case managers or advisors can perform as part of the student’s education process. Planning is defined as establishing goals with specific action steps to achieve each student’s objectives. Table 36 presents student participant responses of *extremely important* or *important* for the case manager or advisor behavior of the element called *planning*.

Table 36: *Nontraditional Community College Student Survey Response of Extremely Important or Important for Question 3, Regarding Case Managers or Advisors in Performing the Element of Planning*

CASE MANAGER/ADVISOR ELEMENT PERFORMANCE	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT/ IMPORTANT	N	SD
Planning	2.04%	181	0.75

Respondents rated the element of *advocacy of little importance* or *unimportant* for case managers or advisors to use in the student’s education process. Table 37 presents the student participant responses of *little importance* or *unimportant* for the element of *advocacy*.

Table 37: *Nontraditional Community College Student Survey Responses of Of Little Importance or Unimportant for Question 3, Regarding Case Managers or Advisors in Performing the Element of Advocacy*

CASE MANAGER/ADVISOR ELEMENT PERFORMANCE	OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE/UNIMPORTANT	N	SD
Advocacy	6.63%	13	0.95

At the conclusion of the survey, nontraditional community college participants were asked five open-ended questions. The emerging themes offered insight into the important

elements necessary for the academic success of nontraditional students in the community college. Table 38 presents the researcher’s summary of the emergent themes explored in the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey.

Participant responses are significant considering the purpose of this study is to rate those elements that are important and not important for the retention of nontraditional community college students. Emergent themes were analyzed using a text analysis of the most common words and phrases used by student respondents. Table 38 presents the emergent themes from each of the five open-ended questions.

Table 38: *Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Emergent Themes*

QUESTION	EMERGENT THEMES
Q4. What are the top 3 characteristics you are looking for in a case manager or academic advisor?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Knowledgeable about the college system, programs of study, courses, guide to completion, resources, and funds to pay b. Understanding feelings about where I am in life, my career direction, my plan, order of my courses, school-life balance, adult students as adults not HS students c. Advocacy for understanding my needs and guiding students towards their goals d. Facilitating career goals e. Help students become aware of their potential

QUESTION	EMERGENT THEMES
<p>Q5. What knowledge or information about college and community resources do you feel is important for nontraditional community college students to be successful?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Knowledgeable about college and community resources b. Knowledgeable of funding and grants c. Offering flexible advisor appointments d. Knowledgeable about adult needs and the work-school-life balance e. Knowledgeable about study tips, tutoring, time mgt., study groups f. Knowledgeable about college programs of study, courses, transfer options g. Offering development of academic plans, employment options, the time required for each program h. Offering early alerts, reminders, navigation of the college system for first generation i. Helping to set achievable goals j. Evaluation of current skills and life experience
<p>Q6. What do you think case managers or advisors can do to make the advising experience better for nontraditional community college students?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assign advisors to students b. Do not stereotype nontraditional students c. Offer flexible times to meet with students d. Offer outreach via email/text e. Encourage students to come in and talk to advisors f. Cut down on the jargon g. Offer information about different career paths or refer h. Have a working knowledge about nontraditional student issues i. Stop calling us nontraditional students j. Respect our views and beliefs k. Provide an education plan l. Provide consistent and accurate information from each advisor m. Listen, assess our needs, and answer our questions
<p>Q7. How do you think your college could make nontraditional community college students feel more welcome and connected?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Offer services tailored to nontraditional students like single parents b. Offer academic plans or “road maps” c. Assign advisors d. Market services better e. Offer online services like online orientations, nontraditional student Facebook f. Offer technology refresher g. Offer a FYE for nontraditional students or a “Re-entry” class h. Provide outreach via email, phone, and text i. Have facilities open after 5 pm and on weekends

QUESTION	EMERGENT THEMES
Q8. In your experience, what has been the biggest challenge for you as a nontraditional student in getting your education at the community college?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Balancing work/school/family/childcare b. Unclear about career direction, fear about returning to school c. Scheduling classes around work/family d. Advisor's lack of knowledge e. Funding, transportation f. Finding help for nontraditional students returning to school g. Being a nontraditional student and learning to navigate the system and language h. Understanding the curriculum set for the whole year i. Understanding the college resources j. Being bounced around from person to person k. Work/life/family balance l. Availability of classes, study time m. Seeing an advisor n. Technology, time management

When asked question 4, *What are the top 3 characteristics you are looking for in a case manager or academic advisor?* respondents reported the top three characteristics were being knowledgeable (50%), being understanding (23%), and advocacy (11%). Table 39 presents the top four characteristics valued in an advisor or case manager as reported by participants in the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey. The researcher included a fourth characteristic, facilitation (10%), as the reported rating was significant.

Table 39: *Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses for the Top Three Characteristics of Case Managers or Advisors*

CHARACTERISTICS (N = 146)	N	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Knowledgeable	73	50.00
Understanding	34	23.29
Advocacy	16	10.96
Facilitation	15	10.27

Table 40 presents, in order of importance, the remaining nine characteristics of case managers or advisors as reported by respondents in the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey.

Table 40: *Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses for the Remaining Nine Characteristics of Case Managers or Advisors*

CHARACTERISTICS (N = 146)	N	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Caring	8	5.48
Friendly	8	5.48
Encouraging	5	3.42
Respectful	5	3.42
Honest	4	2.74
Flexible	2	1.37
Approachable	2	1.37
Nice	2	1.37
Welcoming	2	1.37

When asked question 5, *What knowledge or information about college and community resources do you feel is important for nontraditional community college students to be academically successful*, 13% of respondents reported tutoring, not only for academic content but for technology, study strategies, the library, accommodations, and finances.

An additional 12% of respondents rated community resources, including where and how to utilize them, as important for the academic success of nontraditional community college students. Respondents rated financial assistance and financial aid (3% and 2%, respectively),

and the cost of education and homework (1.5%) lowest in importance for the academic success of nontraditional community college students.

Table 41 presents those items that participants ranked highest in regard to the knowledge or information that is important for nontraditional community college students to be academically successful.

Table 41: Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses Indicating the Knowledge or Information Most Important for Nontraditional Community College Student Academic Success

MOST IMPORTANT KNOWLEDGE/INFORMATION (N = 133)	N	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Tutoring	17	12.78
Resources	17	12.76
Programs	16	12.03

Table 42 presents those items that participants rated lowest in regard to the knowledge or information that is important for nontraditional community college students to be academically successful.

Table 42: Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses Indicating the Knowledge or Information Least Important for Nontraditional Community College Student Academic Success

RATED LEAST IMPORTANT KNOWLEDGE/INFORMATION (N = 133)	N	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Financial Aid	4	3.01
Financial Assistance	3	2.26
Cost of Education	2	1.50
Homework	2	1.50

When asked question 6, *What do you think case managers or advisors can do to make the advising experience better for nontraditional community college students?* 11% of respondents reported contacting advisors is important, yet difficult.

An additional 9% of respondents reported a better experience if advisors have knowledge about college courses, programs of study, transfer options, college policies, graduation requirements, technology, the general college system, and those issues and challenges impacting nontraditional students.

Approximately 6% of respondents reported a better experience if case managers or advisors have knowledge about programs of study, are more willing to find answers, and are flexible about meeting times. Responses indicated the following were less important in making the advising experience better for nontraditional students: navigating online tools, providing opportunities within majors, and responding to emails and phone calls.

Table 43 presents items that participants rated highest in regard to what case managers or advisors can do to make the advising experience better for nontraditional community college students. Table 44 presents those items that participants rated less important with regard to what case managers or advisors can do to make the advising experience better for nontraditional community college students.

Table 43: *Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses Indicating the Items Ranked Highest for What Case Managers or Advisors Can Do to Make the Advising Experience Better for Nontraditional Community College Students*

RATED HIGHEST IN MAKING THE ADVISING EXPERIENCE BETTER (N = 129)	N	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Advisor Contact	14	10.85
Knowledge	11	8.53
Programs	8	6.20
Flexible	8	6.20
Answer Questions	8	6.20

Table 44: *Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses Indicating the Items Ranked Lowest for What Case Managers or Advisors Can Do to Make the Advising Experience Better for Nontraditional Community College Students*

RATED LOWEST IN MAKING THE ADVISING EXPERIENCE BETTER (N = 6)	N	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Navigating Online Tools	2	1.55
Opportunities within Majors	2	1.55
Emails & Phone Calls	2	1.55

When asked question 7, *How do you think your college could make nontraditional community college students feel more welcome and connected*, 11% of respondents reported that offering services that are tailored to the lives of nontraditional students—like on-site childcare, evening events for students and their families, and regular check-ins—would help ensure academic success.

Another 7% of respondents reported the importance of having a better understanding of time constraints, personal issues, and the many different needs and challenges specific to

nontraditional students. Of the participants, 2% gave the lowest ratings in the areas of having a plan for their degree, having counseling and scholarships more available, and being better informed about school clubs.

Table 45 presents the items that participants rated highest in regard to how their community college could make nontraditional community college students feel more welcomed and connected. Table 46 presents the items that participants rated lowest in regard to how their community college could make nontraditional community college students feel more welcomed and connected.

Table 45: Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses Indicating the Items Ranked Highest for How Community Colleges Can Make Nontraditional Community College Students Feel More Welcomed and Connected

WHAT MAKES NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS FEEL WELCOMED/CONNECTED (N = 22)	N	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Offering Services for Nontraditional Students	14	11.48
Understanding	8	6.56

Table 46: *Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses Indicating the Items Ranked Lowest for How Community Colleges Can Make Nontraditional Community College Students Feel More Welcomed and Connected*

WHAT MAKES NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS FEEL WELCOMED/CONNECTED	N	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Academic Degree Plan	2	1.64
Availability of Counseling/Scholarships	2	1.64
Involvement/Information about Clubs/Social Events	2	1.64

When asked question 8, *What has been the biggest challenge for you as a nontraditional student in getting your education in the community college*, 50% of respondents reported a work/life/school balance as the most significant challenge. For 7% of respondents, frustration with meeting an advisor, receiving incorrect information from an advisor, and not having been assigned a specific advisor were the challenges.

For 2% of respondents, commuting and financial aid were less of a challenge as a nontraditional student. Table 47 presents those items participants rated as the most significant challenges as a nontraditional student in getting an education at the community college. Table 48 presents items participants rated as less of a challenge as a nontraditional student in getting an education at the community college.

Table 47: *Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses Indicating the Items Ranked as the Biggest Challenges for a Nontraditional Student in Getting an Education at the Community College*

BIGGEST CHALLENGES AS A NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT	N	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Work/Life/School	73	50.34
Advisors	10	6.90

Table 48: *Community College Nontraditional Student Survey Responses Indicating the Items Ranked the Least Challenging for Nontraditional Students in Getting an Education at the Community College*

LEAST CHALLENGING FOR A NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT	N	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Commuting/Transportation	2	2.07
Financial Aid	2	2.07

This chapter detailed field expert and student survey responses with the goal of identifying the important elements of Educational Case Management as a student support intervention for nontraditional community college students. The data were presented using the results of an anonymous Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey and a Community College Nontraditional Survey.

Phase 1 of this investigation employed a Delphi study consisting of two rounds with 16 surveys emailed to case-manager and advisor participants at Grand Rapids and Washtenaw Community Colleges. In round 1, the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey offered participants a set of four questions asking them to rate 34 advisor and case-manager behaviors, from *extremely important* to *unimportant*; respond to 4 open-ended questions; and answer 12 selected demographic questions.

Consensus was determined for the purpose of this research and was achieved when respondents reported a rating of 4, representing *important*, and 5, representing *very important*. The goal of round 1 was to collect field-expert opinion and determine consensus on the responses before proceeding to round 2. In round 2, field experts were invited to participate and focus only on items on which consensus was not reached in round 1.

Phase 2 of this study employed a student survey that was developed asking nontraditional community college students to rate the elements of Educational Case Management. The Community College Nontraditional Student Survey offered participants a set of four questions asking participants to rate 41 case-manager and advisor behaviors from 1 through 5, with 5 representing *extremely important* and 1 representing *unimportant*; respond to 4 open-ended questions; and answer 17 selected demographic questions.

In Chapter V, the results of this study in reference to the research questions, the relationship of emerging themes from the Delphi and student surveys, study limitations, and suggestions for future research are explored.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the supportive elements needed by nontraditional students in the community college setting as they relate to an Educational Case Management approach. Two “like” community colleges were selected as defined by the Michigan Community College Activities Classification Manual (2003, p. 2). These activity measures consisted of general revenue source, first-year equivalent students (FYES), contact hour equivalent students (CHES), and unduplicated student head count.

Two community colleges that agreed to participate were Grand Rapids Community College and Washtenaw Community College. Student surveys were distributed through an online survey to ascertain the common elements of Educational Case Management or its proxy. To triangulate, Delphi surveys were utilized to ascertain field-expert opinion regarding the common elements of Educational Case Management or its proxy.

The student survey provided a forum for nontraditional community college students to provide their opinions about the common elements of Educational Case Management, whereas the Delphi survey provided an additional forum to elicit field-expert opinion on those same common elements of Educational Case Management.

As discussed in Chapter II, much of the current student development research suggests that traditional models of student engagement have focused primarily on students in the four-year academy (Rendón, 1994, 2006; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Tinto, 2006; Williams, 2007).

Not applicable to women, minorities, the GLBT population, or students of different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds, these theories fall short in addressing the complex issues faced by many nontraditional community college students (K. P. Cross, 1981; Gilligan, 1982; Rendón, 1994; Ross-Gordon, 2011; Schlossberg, 1989; Thomas, 2002; Williams, 2007).

Table 49 is included as a reminder of the traditional student development theories explored in Chapter II.

Table 49: *Traditional Student Development Theories*

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THEORY	THEORY PHILOSOPHY	PRIMARY AUTHORS
Psychosocial	Student development as a series of tasks or stages	E. Erickson, A. Chickering W. Cross
Typology	Learning, personality types in the context of development	D. Kolb D. Kiersey
Person-Environment	Impact of environment on the behavior of the student	J. Banning B. Wright S. Lopez
College Impact	Student characteristics relative to the college environment	A. Astin E. Pascarella V. Tinto
Adult Learning	Andragogy: a set of assumptions about how adults learn	P. Cross M. Knowles J. Mezirow H. McClusky

For nontraditional community college students, who face multiple barriers in completing their academic goals, a sustainable proactive advising model using an appreciation

for their unique contributions can mean the difference between completing postsecondary education or eventual dropout.

This study offered a forum for both nontraditional community college students and community college field experts to share their opinions and expertise on the common elements of Educational Case Management for nontraditional students, common elements of Educational Case Management that are reported to be important, those elements reported not to be important, and determining the value of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy for retention of nontraditional students in the community college.

Using the research questions, the remaining portion of this chapter will summarize the conclusions of the study. The first section of this chapter discusses the case management elements rated *extremely important* or *important* as reported by the participants of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey and the Community College Nontraditional Student Survey in light of the scholarly literature. The second section discusses the elements rated *unimportant* in the same areas. The final section contains a student-focused model of Educational Case Management in relation to emergent trends, conclusions, and recommendations for further study and research.

CASE MANAGER OR ADVISOR ELEMENTS REPORTED IMPORTANT

Research question 1 in this study asked, *What are the common elements of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy?* Many researchers have agreed a high-touch approach using common case management or advising elements can contribute to the academic success and retention of nontraditional students in the postsecondary setting.

Building relationships with positive institutional agents, assisting students in developing clear academic and life goals, continuously assessing these goals, assisting students to engage with the institution while staying connected with their native habitus, and validating the strengths of individual differences are some of the common elements that can maximize the full academic potential of nontraditional students.

Table 50 presents a listing of researchers cited in Chapter II and the suggested common case management or advising behaviors and elements contributing to postsecondary retention and completion for nontraditional community college students.

Table 50: Elements of Case Management or Advising Contributing to Nontraditional Student Retention and Success from the Literature Search

ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT SUCCESS	AUTHORS
Assisting students in developing self-understanding and acceptance with value clarification	Heisserer & Parette, 2002 Bailey & Alfonso, 2005 Roberts & Povich, 2006 Ross-Gordon, 2011
Assisting students in developing life goals by relating interests, skills, and abilities	Moore, Shulock, & Offenstein, 2009 Burns, 2010 Karp, 2011, 2013 Scott-Clayton, 2011
Assisting students in developing an educational plan consistent with their life goals	Adams, Hazelwood, & Hayden, 2014 Moore, Shulock, & Offenstein, 2009
Providing accurate information about institutional policies, procedures, resources, and programs	Purnell & Blank, 2004 CCCSE, 2012 Adams, Hazelwood, & Hayden, 2014
Understanding abilities, interests, limitations, and decision-making skills necessary for critical thinking	Heisserer & Parette, 2002 Bailey & Alfonso, 2005 Roberts & Povich, 2006 Ross-Gordon, 2011

ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT SUCCESS	AUTHORS
Relating goals and values to careers, the world of work, and their higher education experience	Moore, Shulock, & Offenstein, 2009 Burns, 2010 Karp, 2011, 2013 Scott-Clayton, 2011
Assisting students in evaluation of progress toward established goals and educational plans	Adams, Hazelwood, & Hayden, 2014 Moore, Shulock, & Offenstein, 2009 Karp, 2011
Providing students with external referrals to institutional or community services	Purnell & Blank, 2004 CCCSE, 2012 Adams, Hazelwood, & Hayden, 2014

Research question 2 asked anonymous community college field experts to identify the common elements in existing Educational Case Management programs that are reported to be important for the retention of nontraditional community college students. The results of round 2 of the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey yielded consensus for the case-manager or advisor elements rated important for the success and retention of nontraditional community college students.

The data results of the Delphi field-expert survey are congruent with the scholarly literature discussed in Chapter II. Gill, Reayb, Clayton, Colliander, and Grinstead (2008) talked about cultural capital and the notion that nontraditional students often arrive in the academy having limited knowledge and understanding of how to navigate the postsecondary system.

Student affairs professionals are gaining more insight and understanding regarding the significance of cultural, economic, and social forces that accompany nontraditional students as they begin postsecondary education. As Gill et al. (2008) explain, not everyone has equal knowledge or understanding of college rules; thus, a temptation on the part of the academy to

blame the student for being ill-prepared for the rigors of college life exists. Nontraditional students can be advantaged by the academy that gains better insight into the challenges these students face.

While the nontraditional student is attempting to balance life challenges with developing a new identity, assisting nontraditional students with navigating the college culture is an important element in their postsecondary completion.

Thomas' (2006) work is particularly cogent here, as the cultural norms of postsecondary education have historically favored the dominant social group. A nontraditional student survey participant noted, "I need someone to help me navigate the college, someone who knows the resources, someone who knows about students like me."

In this study, Delphi field experts and student participants agreed that assisting nontraditional students in learning the landscape of postsecondary education is a key element for retention and completion. A Delphi field expert explained,

They have often been out of school for some time. We need to confirm their academic path, help them be made aware of resources, help them learn the need for technology, and help them navigate the college. They need to feel like they belong. Often they are juggling many roles and need help to sort these out and make life work.

Although Astin's College Impact Theory (Astin, 1999) and Tinto's Student Retention model (Tinto, 1993) have yielded positive correlations between student engagement and retention, the academic environment must offer a sense of psychological safety if nontraditional students are to thrive. Feelings of isolation along with difficulties in adjustment and integration to a new environment can have a negative impact on their ability to succeed.

Nonacademic support services have been reported in the literature to have a significant impact on assisting nontraditional students adjust to the postsecondary setting (Helmcamp, 2015; Karp, 2011). Situational barriers like housing, food, transportation, medical needs, budgeting, and childcare are but a few of the basic needs that, when jeopardized, can challenge even the best intent at college persistence.

Along with attempting to take on the new role of student, in an unfamiliar milieu, nontraditional students can face unforeseen life obstacles that challenge their ability to cope (K. P. Cross, 1981). A Delphi field-expert survey participant noted, “Students would feel more connected if we provided assistance with those outside barriers and be able to connect them to a network of systems that allow them to be more successful.” Developing positive relationships that provide structure, engagement, feedback, and support is essential in giving nontraditional students a respectful place in the academy.

William Cross (1971), Carol Gilligan (1993), and Wright and Lopez (2002) advocated for an inclusive and safe learning environment where all voices are important in the work of the academy. Constructing new ways of meaning and learning, the voices of nontraditional students are validated and contribute to the rich diversity of the learning environment.

Current research indicates that an intrusive case management or advising model incorporates elements such as development of short- and long-term goals, career assessment, value clarification, and building and sustaining commitment to the worth of postsecondary education (Karp, 2011).

Of the field experts that responded in the Delphi survey, 71% reported providing students with these kinds of planning supports was important in helping nontraditional students thrive in the academy.

Laura Rendón's Theory of Validation underscores the need for proactive outreach and validation by caring institutional agents if nontraditional students are to play an active role and engage with the academy. Outreach and interpersonal validation are key elements for nontraditional students who have found difficulty in engaging with the institution, have had past negative postsecondary experiences, and have doubts about their self-efficacy or ability to succeed.

According to Appleby (2008), developmental advising involves institutional agents who assist students in preparing to plan, set goals, and make decisions about careers, value clarification, and life activities. The foundation of academic training for many educational case managers or advisors has its basis in a student-centered approach where the main focus is a collaborative process between institutional agent and student for the purpose of planning academic and life goals.

Harding and Miller (2013) believe an essential element of successful retention for student engagement must include helping students gain a sense of interdependence, that is, the ability to take responsibility in becoming a full participant in college activities and resources.

Researchers believe postsecondary education reflects the dominant culture constructed in the language of the middle class (Gill et al., 2008; Karp, 2011; Thomas, 2002). Nontraditional students arrive in the academy unfamiliar with the rules and language of the college culture, a

glaring disadvantage that contributes to feelings of isolation and low self-esteem (K. P. Cross, 1981; Tinto, 2004, 2005, 2006).

Of the community college Delphi field experts, 71% reported the importance of assisting nontraditional students in connecting with the college community. Having a concerned institutional agent, a case manager or advisor, who can be responsible for acting as the “information broker” (Gregory, 2002) can provide an initial connection in helping nontraditional students steer a course for academic success.

Community college student participants agreed, as 77% reported the importance of helping students gain knowledge of the college system. A nontraditional student survey participant noted, “Help me navigate the college. I need help learning how things work. Help guide me through the process. Some people don’t know what questions they should be asking.”

Of the Delphi field-expert participants in this study, 57% reported it is important to show students they matter to the institution. Relevant to the Theory of Marginality & Mattering, Nancy Schlossberg believes role norms are lacking for nontraditional students, increasing the likelihood of feeling isolated and marginalized. Having a case manager or advisor as a validating agent instructing students about the norms of postsecondary education can increase feelings of self-worth, thus increasing the chance for persistence and completion.

In comparing responses from the Delphi field expert and student survey responses, participants are almost identical in reported key elements considered important for the academic success of nontraditional community college students. In addition, when nontraditional student participants were asked the top three important characteristics of case

managers or advisors, being knowledgeable, understanding, and an advocate were reported as *most important*.

Table 51 presents case-manager or advisor behaviors the community college Delphi field experts and nontraditional student participants in this study reported as important for the retention and success of nontraditional students.

Table 51: Community College Delphi Field Expert and Student Survey Responses That Identify Items Considered Important for the Success and Retention of Nontraditional Community College Students

DELPHI PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT OR IMPORTANT	STUDENT PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT OR IMPORTANT
Looks out for the best interest of students	8 100.00%	Looks out for the best interest of students	220 89.38%
Has knowledge of nontraditional student needs/ challenges	8 88.89%	Has knowledge of non-traditional student needs/ challenges	199 88.06%
Respects the values of different student groups	8 88.89%	Respects my values and beliefs	197 79.51%
Helps students navigate the college system	7 87.50%	Helps me navigate the college system	190 78.19%
Helps students cope with non-academic responsibilities like family	7 85.71%	Helps me cope with nonacademic responsibilities	97 40.08%
Listens to student concerns	7 77.78%	Listens to my concerns	192 79.33%
Shows concern for students as individuals	7 77.78%	Shows concern for me as an individual	198 80.84%
Helps students learn to problem solve	7 77.78%	Helps me learn to problem solve	59 24.38%
Builds relationships with students	7 77.76%	Builds strong collaborative relationships	155 68.28%

DELPHI PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT OR IMPORTANT	STUDENT PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT OR IMPORTANT
Helps to promote student interdependence	15 71.43%	Helps students in taking achievable steps to feel successful	167 73.90%
Provides the supports students need to thrive in college	5 71.43%	Helps students become aware of college programs and services	199 88.44%
Helps students connect to the college and feel they are members of the college community	5 71.43%	Helps students gain knowledge of the college system	175 77.43%

Case-manager or advisor behaviors reported important for nontraditional community college student success by Delphi field experts and nontraditional student participants align with the current literature. This alignment can be interpreted in the light of Rendón’s Theory of Validation and Schlossberg’s Construct of Marginality & Mattering. That is, individuals need to internalize feelings of self-worth and belonging if they are to thrive in a new environment.

While 93% of students surveyed by the National Survey of Student Engagement felt comfortable and valued being themselves at their institution, students with gender identity, students with gender identity Black or African American students were least likely to feel safe. Multiracial students and Black or African American students were least likely to feel valued (about one in four disagreed), and American Indian or Alaska Native and multiracial students were least likely to feel like part of the campus community. (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2016, p. 7)

“Mattering” to others and the larger collective is essential to our psychological survival.

As the nontraditional student attempts to take on the new role of student, feelings of marginalization increase, thus psychological safety and connection to the collective is threatened. The chance of succeeding in such a non-validating environment is at risk.

Educational Case Management utilizing validating institutional agents that ease the transition of nontraditional students and improve the likelihood of their academic success is a model that could advantage nontraditional students in their quest for postsecondary attainment.

Table 52 presents a comparison of the important case-manager or advisor behaviors as stated in the literature review, alongside the important behaviors reported by Delphi field experts and nontraditional community college student participants at Grand Rapids and Washtenaw Community Colleges.

Table 52: Comparison of Research-Suggested Institutional Agent Behaviors with Community College Delphi Field Expert and Community College Nontraditional Participant Responses

RESEARCH SUGGESTS INSTITUTIONAL AGENT IMPORTANT BEHAVIORS	DELPHI FIELD-EXPERT RESPONSES FOR INSTITUTIONAL AGENT IMPORTANT BEHAVIORS	NONTRADITIONAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT RESPONSES FOR INSTITUTIONAL AGENT IMPORTANT BEHAVIORS
Assisting students in developing short- and long-term life goals by relating interests, skills, abilities, and values to careers, the world of work, and their higher education experience	Having knowledge of nontraditional student needs/challenges Listening to student concerns Collaboration	Listening to student concerns Clarifying career and academic goals Looking out for the best interest of students
Assisting students in developing an educational plan consistent with their life goals	Clarifying career and academic direction Planning	Helping students reach their goals Helping students choose classes
Providing accurate information about institutional policies, procedures, resources, and programs	Having knowledge of key college and community resources Facilitating institutional information	Having knowledge of program requirements Helping students become aware of college programs/services
Providing students with external referrals to institutional or community services	Having knowledge of key college and community resources	Having knowledge of key community resources
Assisting students in continuous assessment and evaluation of progress toward established goals and educational plans	Helping students reach their academic goals	Helping students in taking achievable steps to “feel successful”

RESEARCH SUGGESTS INSTITUTIONAL AGENT IMPORTANT BEHAVIORS	DELPHI FIELD-EXPERT RESPONSES FOR INSTITUTIONAL AGENT IMPORTANT BEHAVIORS	NONTRADITIONAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT RESPONSES FOR INSTITUTIONAL AGENT IMPORTANT BEHAVIORS
Help students to develop supportive relationships with caring, competent institutional agents	Building relationships with students Helping students feel they are members of the college community	Building strong collaborative relationships
Structured service with regular appointments and early alerts	Providing the supports students need to thrive in college	Providing timely reminders such as early notifications
Helping students develop college know how, navigate the education system, develop cultural knowledge, and use student services	Helping students navigate the college system Helping students learn to problem solve	Helping students navigate the educational system Helping students gain knowledge of the college system
Making college palatable (user-friendly)	Making college user-friendly Showing students that they matter to the institution	Making college user-friendly
Helping students meet challenges and overcome them	Helps students cope with non-academic responsibilities like family, work, etc.	Concentrating on student strengths
Providing intentional proactive academic interventions	Having knowledge of key community resources	Helping coordinate college services
Helping students clarify values with development of self-acceptance and awareness	Helping students to build self-esteem Showing concern for students as individuals	Respecting students' values/ beliefs Showing concern for students Showing an understanding of students' feelings
Helping students engage with the institution and creating a culture of success	Helping to promote student interdependence Helping students connect to the college Respecting the values of different student groups	Having the knowledge of nontraditional student needs Understanding student values/ beliefs

Considering the elements of assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation, and advocacy, 100% of the Delphi field experts and nontraditional student survey participants

determined *planning* to be the most important element for the success of nontraditional community college students.

According to the literature, we know that planning has been an integral part of postsecondary student affairs career work and, more specifically, the case management model (Wilson et al., 2013). Collaborating with nontraditional students to create an academic, career, and life plan based on individual need is integral to the intrusive model.

Case Manager or Advisor Elements Reported Unimportant

Research question 3 in this study asked Delphi field experts and nontraditional student participants to identify those case-manager or advisor behaviors in existing Educational Case Management programs that are reported not to be important for retention of nontraditional community college students.

Compared to 56% of Delphi participants, 17% of nontraditional student participants reported helping students build self-esteem and self-efficacy as unimportant. Researchers believe dispositional barriers such as lack of self-worth can have a significant impact on the developmental trajectory of students in postsecondary education (K. P. Cross, 1981; Knowles, 1990; Mezirow, 1997; Rendón, 1994; Schlossberg, 1989). Reporting self-esteem and self-efficacy as *unimportant*, nontraditional student survey participants may have had difficulty in determining the definition of these constructs or how they impact their academic success.

Building relationships with students was reported by 19% of nontraditional student participants as *unimportant* compared to 16% of Delphi field-expert participants. This finding contrasts with the 83% of Delphi field experts and 89% of nontraditional student participants

who reported the importance of building strong collaborative partnerships and looking out for the best interest of students.

Table 53 presents case-manager or advisor behaviors that community college Delphi field experts and nontraditional community college students reported as *unimportant* for the retention and success of nontraditional students.

Table 53: *Community College Delphi Field Expert and Student Survey Responses for Items Ranked as Unimportant for the Success of Nontraditional Community College Students*

DELPHI PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	UNIMPORTANT	NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT PARTICIPANT RESPONSES	UNIMPORTANT
Building relationships with students	16%	Building relationships	19%
Showing students they matter	14%	Helping students build self-esteem/self-efficacy	17%
Using technology for follow-up	43%	Showing students they matter	16%

A STUDENT-FOCUSED SUSTAINABLE MODEL OF EDUCATIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT

Research question 4 in this study asked Delphi field experts and nontraditional student participants to determine the value of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy for retention of nontraditional community college students.

Congruent with the research, scholars have consistently emphasized an intrusive advising model that calls for proactive outreach to nontraditional student populations who enter the academy with unique needs (Church, 2005; Fowler & Boylen, 2010; Harding & Miller, 2013; Karp, O’Gara, & Hughes, 2008; Museus & Ravello, 2010).

As a reminder, Table 54 presents the original elements of Educational Case Management as defined in the Community College Delphi Field Expert and Nontraditional Student Surveys. The researcher has developed a letter assignment to show how the Educational Case Management elements correspond to the survey responses.

Table 54: *Educational Case Management Elements as Defined in the Community College Delphi Field Expert and Nontraditional Student Surveys*

EDUCATIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT ELEMENTS	DEFINITION	LETTER ASSIGNMENT
Collaboration	Case managers/advisors and students are working in active partnership	C
Assessment	Collecting information from multiple sources to develop a full understanding of each student's experience	A
Planning	Establishing goals with specific action steps to achieve each student's objective	P
Facilitation	Guiding each student to reach his or her full academic potential	F
Evaluation	Using established standards and criteria to measure the outcomes for each student	E
Advocacy	Helping each student develop choices, options and provide a voice for student concerns	Ad

The resulting wealth of open-ended responses offered by Delphi field experts and nontraditional student participants was collected from the Community College Delphi Field Expert Survey and the Nontraditional Student Survey, exported to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and grouped by response content. The open-ended responses were coded by themes, grouped by code similarities, and exported to Excel spreadsheets in order to maintain specific statements by participants as they shared their closing thoughts.

What follows is the researcher’s summary of the emergent themes provided by community college Delphi field experts and nontraditional student participants. This is important because the responses speak to answers that could not otherwise be explored in the main body of the survey, give the participants an opportunity to offer their insights, and are used in the analysis that led to a sustainable model of Educational Case Management.

Table 55 presents the survey questions and the emergent themes of community college Delphi field experts and nontraditional student participants along with the case management letter assignment. As is shown, many of the Delphi field expert and nontraditional student responses align with the original Educational Case Management terms defined in Chapter III.

Table 55: *Comparison of Emergent Themes from the Community College Delphi Field Expert and Community College Nontraditional Student Surveys*

SURVEY QUESTIONS	DELPHI FIELD-EXPERT EMERGENT THEMES	NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT EMERGENT THEMES
What knowledge or information about college/community resources do you feel is important for nontraditional community college students to be academically successful?	C = Show students they matter and belong P = Establish school/life balance P = Establish a career path Ad = Navigate the college system A = Knowledge of college/community resources	A = Knowledge of school/work/life balance A = Assessment/Knowledge of study tips/tutoring/time management A = Knowledge of college programs/transfer/employment A = Assessment of skills/life experience P = Offer academic plans/early alerts/goals F = Help in navigating college system

SURVEY QUESTIONS	DELPHI FIELD-EXPERT EMERGENT THEMES	NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT EMERGENT THEMES
What do you think case managers or advisors can do to make the advising or case management experience better for nontraditional community college students?	A = Provide intake/customize outreach F = Help navigate the college system A = Knowledgeable about college/community resources C = Be available/accessible P = Market services to students and staff	C = Respect adult world view/reduce jargon C = Listen to our needs and answer questions A = Have a working knowledge of adult issues/programs C = Advisor assignment for one point of contact P = Provide outreach/education plan
How do you think your college could make nontraditional community college students feel more welcomed and connected?	A = Offer tailored services for adult needs Ad = Offer a First Year Experience E = Provide outreach and early connections E = Provide ongoing services/activities/programs	C = Assign advisors as a point person/outreach P = Market services better A = Tailor services to nontraditional Ad = Offer a First Year Experience
What kinds of institutional support would you need to make Educational Case Management more sustainable for nontraditional students?	C = Intrusive advising/one point of contact C = Build early relationships E = Assessment and ongoing tracking of student needs Ad = Knowledge of community resources P = Establish student milestones Ad = Offer First Year Experience Ad = Ongoing professional development/staffing	C = Help students become aware of their potential Ad = Better understanding of career/life direction Ad = Advocacy and guidance P = Goal setting Ad = Knowledge of the college system/programs/community resources

The research and emergent themes from this study were used to develop and support the efficacy of a student-focused Sustainable Model of Educational Case Management. Providing a brokered or expanded Educational Case Management model that includes elements like “assessment, planning, linking to service, monitoring and advocacy” (Intagliata, 1982, p. 655) can advantage nontraditional community college students in reducing the system barriers that challenge their ability to succeed.

The student-focused Sustainable Model of Educational Case Management is a visual presentation with nontraditional students positioned to begin their postsecondary experience. The student academic life cycle, utilizing the onboarding and recruitment process, enrollment, registration, first semester, and first year to graduation, is the structured horizontal framework within which nontraditional students encounter Educational Case Management while supported by the elements of continuous collaboration, assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation, and advocacy.

EDUCATIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT MODEL STUDENT LIFE-CYCLE: ONBOARDING TO GRADUATION

Most notable in the literature and responses from the Delphi field expert and nontraditional community college student surveys is the collaborative relationship between case manager/advisor and student. Beginning early in the recruitment process, the academy would do well to use the onboarding process as the first outreach to nontraditional students. This means marketing services to all stakeholders using multiple methods to get the word out that the institution is serious about nontraditional student success, retention, and completion.

Capturing those life challenges in the recruitment process and initiating student relationship building can be the first step in an ongoing collaborative partnership between an institutional agent and nontraditional community college students. Early outreach and high-touch interventions begin to engage students and show they matter and belong.

Recognizing the nontraditional student experience is the first step toward that leap of faith that nontraditional students need to persist in college. "Building relationships early with prospective students improves the institution's chances of admitting, registering and retaining

them... the earlier the relationship is established, the greater the odds of admitting and retaining” (Burnett, 2002, p. 4).

In the onboarding process, marketing and tailoring services to nontraditional students send a welcoming message they belong and matter to the institution. Emergent themes in the Delphi field expert and nontraditional student survey emphasize that creating a welcoming environment and developing early relationships are significant for nontraditional student success.

A nontraditional student participant noted, “A welcome open house for nontraditional students to drop in and get information relative to their situation and have an advisor to answer questions would make nontraditional students feel more welcome and connected.”

Experts have been critical about the use of educational jargon when introducing students to postsecondary education (Gill et al., 2008; Rendón, 1994). Using educational terms and language that are unfamiliar further marginalizes nontraditional students, creating an unwelcoming environment. Early introduction to the terms students are likely to encounter reduces the fear of not belonging and increases the ability of nontraditional students to develop a safe collaborative partnership with the institution.

Flexible hours, easy appointment accessibility, and online services give students options in contacting the services they need when they need them. A nontraditional student participant reflected, “Most schools I have attended have hours and drop in policies that are not friendly to a working person and are non-responsive to electronic/phone inquiries instead insisting you come in (F2F) to speak with someone.”

As nontraditional students enroll, continuing to show students they matter to the institution by assigning one point of contact is the single most significant element of the Educational Case Management Model. Delphi field experts and student survey participants indicated the importance of a caring institutional agent, one point of contact to assist students in navigating the college culture.

Establishing early outreach and relationships makes the services known to nontraditional students. A nontraditional student survey participant explained, "Instead of waiting for us to come to you, make a personal connection with me." Listening to students, respecting their lived experiences, and valuing the strengths nontraditional students bring into the academy is the beginning of a trusting collaborative relationship where gathering data for initial intake and needs assessment can happen.

One nontraditional student survey participant requested, "Listen and ask what are my concerns." Gathering data allows customized outreach and the institution to develop tailored services based on the specific needs for low, medium, or high touch.

Karp (2016) stated, "A status quo model of academic advising places the case manager or advisor as a registration clerk delivering a voluntary advising service with an ad hoc, temporal first year focus" (n.p.). Karp believes moving advising from registration to a model of a "sustained personal approach" by a caring institutional agent provides the personalized support necessary for academic success. One nontraditional student survey participant reported, "Being a nontraditional student is difficult and is discouraging at times. It's hard to stay connected and feel part of the college community."

As nontraditional students move into the registration process, individual support continues to show students they matter to the institution. Utilizing an intake or onboarding process will be important for gathering multiple sources of information to assist professionals in developing a full understanding of the nontraditional student experience. Soliciting career interests, prior life experiences, and current basic need challenges personalizes the planning process.

Only when the academy has a full appreciation for the obstacles nontraditional students face can customized interventions be developed, delivering services to our “at promise” student populations. A nontraditional student survey participant reported, “Understanding the needs of each student would make nontraditional students feel more welcome and connected. Make it a point to make personal connections with us.”

As nontraditional students begin the academic lifecycle, it is important the academy recognize that nontraditional students have potential to be college material. By providing an institutional agent to assist nontraditional students in navigating the college culture, the message is communicated that the academy supports and validates student strengths, thus maximizing individual potential (Neufeld et al., 2006).

Nontraditional students arrive in the academy with a unique set of needs, requiring nonacademic supports that can assist them in making the transition to college. It is important that case managers, advisors, or their proxy have the college knowledge, curriculum information, and community resource expertise that nontraditional students need for successful academic integration.

In the first semester, ongoing planning, in collaboration with the student, will require follow through to refine each personalized education plan, career map, and short- and long-term goals, guiding them to take achievable steps. Using facilitation will mean assisting nontraditional students to complete their established academic goals and outcomes.

Developing short- and long-term goals, an academic plan relevant to career aspirations, and addressing school, work, and life balance are all elements Delphi field experts and nontraditional student participants reported as important for success and retention. It is important the institution continue to show nontraditional students they matter and belong by offering flexible options, structured services based on individual student needs, and tracking progress to measure outcomes.

In this study, nontraditional students reported they needed assistance in navigating the college system, learning the new language and culture of education, and asking for help to make the college services more user-friendly. This requires proactive and customized outreach to students who may have been marginalized in past encounters with the educational process. One nontraditional student survey participant reported, “The first semester is the hardest. It is important to have someone to get all of the initial paperwork in working order and submitted on time.”

As the first year progresses, targeted outreach using nudges is essential for continued assessment, planning, and refinement of the student plan. Facilitating and advocating for change when necessary, assisting students to become aware of their potential, and partnering with them for accountability helps them develop interdependence, that is, the ability to judge

when they can do it on their own, and when they need help to assist them in becoming aware of their potential.

Evaluation will be required as an ongoing and intentional appraisal of student career and academic goals. Utilizing technology for early alerts and timely reminders can augment important face-to-face contact, providing all nontraditional students initial outreach while allowing educational case managers and advisors to concentrate on the students who require more high touch.

Continued advocacy requires supporting the nontraditional student's reason for being in college, and speaking on behalf of the student when policies, procedures, and processes present barriers to success. Nontraditional student participants in this study report the need for the academy to respect their values and beliefs, and to look out for their best interests and their right to participate in the college experience:

Though research on student attrition is plentiful and debate over theories of student persistence vigorous, less attention has been paid to the development of a model of institutional action that provides institutions guidelines for effective action to increase student persistence and in turn student success. (Tinto & Pusser, 2006, p. 1)

While Tinto and Pusser's (2006) article titled "Moving from Theory to Action: Building a Model for Institutional Action for Student Success" is focused on internal institutional policies, the academy can look to adopt an Educational Case Management support service model that could be utilized for all students.

For the purpose of this study, the development of a sustainable model of Educational Case Management is important to reveal the emergent themes reported by the community college Delphi field experts and nontraditional student participants and to connect them to the

foundation elements of collaboration, assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation, and advocacy.

Figure 8 presents a model demonstrating the journey of the nontraditional student in the academic student life cycle supported by the important elements of an Educational Case Management foundation of continuous collaboration, assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation, and advocacy.

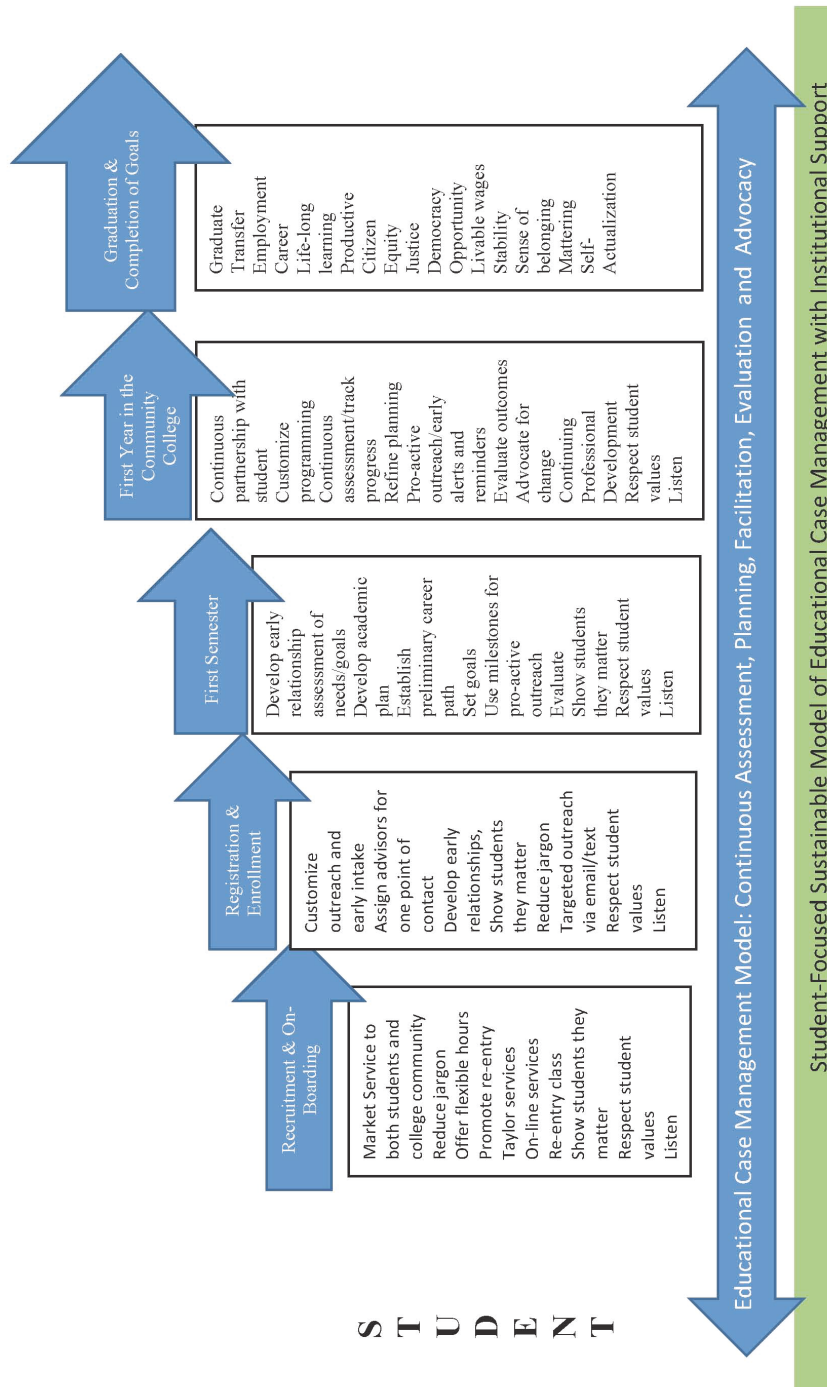


Figure 8. Educational Case Management Model for Nontraditional Students in the Community College.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study used a mixed methodology, including field-expert and student survey research. Using a survey format, community college Delphi field experts and nontraditional community college students reported the elements that are important and not important for the retention and success of nontraditional community college students.

Open-ended questions allowed these participants to provide additional feedback that could not be captured in the main survey. Based on the emergent themes in the open-ended questions, the researcher developed a student-focused sustainable model of Educational Case Management as a nonacademic support service for nontraditional students in the community college setting.

Strengths of this study include the use of a mixed methodology utilizing both Delphi field-expert and student survey research, a model as a visual representation of the reported elements, and implementation of electronic data collection through the use of an online website, SurveyMonkey®.

Limitations of this study include possible bias of the survey participants, due to the many variables involved in the data collection, the inability of the researcher to include all details represented in the survey, and the study's reliance on self-reported data, limited by participant perceptions and the honesty of their responses.

A primary assumption behind this study was that the Delphi field participants were experts in their field, possessed the skills to communicate and assess study questions, and were honest and accurate in their responses and comments. Thus, it is assumed that study results contribute useful and valuable knowledge to the topic under consideration.

Some researchers cite as a limitation the difficulty generalizing the results to a wider population due to sample size. However, it is important to note that the nature of a Delphi study is to gain a better understanding of an issue based on the opinions of a select group of experts and results cannot necessarily be generalized.

It is important to note there was a low level of cultural diversity, as indicated by the demographic responses from the Delphi field experts. The selected definitions of case management, element questions, and theoretical concepts may have had varied meanings to the group members. The data were collected solely based on electronic communications; thus, the study was limited to the data entered and processed electronically.

The Educational Case Management model is limited to the survey results, is only as accurate as the data in this study, and cannot be a true representation of actual processes in the real world.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focused on identifying the important and non-important elements of Educational Case Management, advising, or its proxy and the development of a sustainable model, so recommendations are based on these findings. Using this study as a guide, future research efforts should be done to refute or support the findings collected in this study. Future research endeavors should include:

1. Use of a larger sample of Delphi experts and nontraditional community college students. This could also include a variety of stakeholders and their suggestions for change, such as first generation, single parents, socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnicity.
2. Replication of the study using a different panel of Delphi field experts.

3. Replication of the study using a different set of variables.
4. Further study to refine and verify the results and to extend the results to a similar sample, but from other geographical locations (Skulmoski et al., 2007).
5. Verification of this research by a different researcher.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

This study can provide community college leadership and field experts with valuable feedback from some of the very stakeholders these colleges are meant to serve—nontraditional students. This critical insight should offer guidance and direction when addressing the impact of college policies on nontraditional student retention, success, and degree completion. In addition, the academy should use student voices to gain awareness of ways they can be change agents and lead the charge to influence a student-centered model.

According to Darlene Burnett (2002), in her book *Innovations in Student Services: Best Practices and Process Innovation Models and Trends*, the academy needs to view change from the perspective of the student, with the focus of service shifted from the “transactional to the experiential” (p. 1). This requires creating and sustaining internal change, which includes:

1. Shifting from internal policy/rule enforcement to student-centered interventions.
2. Establishing early and long-term relationships with students.
3. Implementing best practice models to focus on student satisfaction and value-added with face-to-face contact. Barriers to information for students must be mitigated.
4. Using technology to improve processes and augment direct contact and not replace this contact.
5. Consistently assessing and evaluating at each student touch point.

According to Grossman et al. (2015), in *Changing Community Colleges: Early Lessons from Completion by Design*, creating sustainable change requires a fundamental shift in leadership perspective. This means the academy must internalize a transformation about how institutional policies, values, beliefs, and mission interact with the student. The student is the focus of institutional system change. It would not be uncommon for institutions to pilot change that allows for small implementation, to identify issues, and to generate information needed to broaden support. However, these initiatives are vulnerable if the champions move on. These authors believe “the outcomes of any single reform process may be less important than creating an institutional culture that values ongoing improvement” (Grossman et al., 2015, p. 12).

To develop an effective, sustainable Educational Case Management model, community colleges must know their students. This means gathering data during the onboarding and intake process, determining characteristics and risk markers that interfere with students’ academic success, and providing nonacademic supports that benefit students in their quest for completion. Addressing student needs holistically, Chaplot, Cooper, Johnstone, and Karandjeff (2015) believe resources can be more effectively utilized if “bundled, integrated and centralized” (p. 4). Educational Case Management could be this model.

Establishing an Educational Case Management model for nontraditional student populations in the community college recognizes their value and vulnerability. Offering a nonacademic delivery service model that incorporates a caring institutional agent can mitigate the challenges these students bring into the academy: “Case managers serve the University and

individual students by arranging, coordinating, monitoring, evaluating and advocating for students who are identified and in need of assistance” (Wilson et al., 2013).

Supporting transformational change in the community college culture requires a shift in philosophy that requires that all institutional agents internalize responsibility for student success. This means all policies, practices, and decision making must become student-focused. Making the case for an improved nonacademic support like an Educational Case Management model for “at promise” (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995) nontraditional student populations benefits the student, their families, the community, and the workforce and strengthens the long-term stability of an interdependent and equitable society: “Undergraduate education continues to be one of the most important avenues of opportunity in American society” (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2016). Postsecondary education impacts individuals by increasing their social and civic contributions, improves their personal lives and the lives of their families, and strengthens their economic situation over the lifespan.

Building a sustainable model of Educational Case Management for nontraditional community college student retention not only is economically prudent but supports the equity and social justice agenda that promotes productive citizenship allowing all individuals to have the opportunity for participation in a democratic society. “In the current climate, the economic value (or ‘payout’) of college often receives outsized attention, but people’s lives, and our democracy, would be worse off in many ways without other positive outcomes associated with college education” (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2016, p. 5).

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APPENDIX A: STUDENT SURVEY COVER LETTER EMAILED TO GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND WASHTENAW COMMUNITY COLLEGE
NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Welcome to the Community College Case Management Student Survey

Hello, my name is Liz Orbits and I am currently in the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program at Ferris State University. I am investigating the elements of a sustainable model of advising or educational case management for non-traditional students in the community college setting. You have been asked to participate in this survey because you may be considered a non-traditional student. The Association of Non-Traditional Students in Higher Education (ANTSHE) defines a non-traditional student as having the following characteristics:

- Delays college enrollment
- Attends part-time for at least part of the academic year
- Works full- time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled
- Is considered financially independent for purposes of determining eligibility for financial aid
- Has dependents other than a spouse (usually children)
- Is a single parent (either not married or married but separated)

As part of this survey you will be asked questions about your experience with academic advising or educational case management (ECM) in your community college setting. The survey will take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete and your participation is voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point without consequence. The link to the survey is listed below. Your survey responses will be anonymous and data from this survey will be reported only in the aggregate. This means no names; identification numbers or other information that may personally identify you will be requested in this research.

As a student, your academic standing in your college will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact Liz Orbits at (734) 717-0854 and/or eorbits@wccnet.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at IRB@ferris.edu or access their web site at <http://ferris.edu/HTML/administration/academicaffairs/vpoffice/IRB/>. By clicking the link below, you consent to participate in this survey.

Thank you for your contribution and participation in this study.

APPENDIX B: STUDENT SURVEY WITH OPEN-ENDED AND DEMOGRAPHIC
QUESTIONS COMPLETED BY NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS AT WASHTENAW AND
GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

*Student Survey with Open-Ended and Demographic Questions Completed by Nontraditional Students
at Washtenaw and Grand Rapids Community Colleges*

<i>Q1. How important is it for your community college advisor/case manager to do the following: Check the box that best represents your answer.</i>					
Elements	Extremely Important	Important	Moderately Important	Of Little Importance	Unimportant
Makes me feel welcome					
Shows concern for me as an individual					
Helps me feel I am a member of the college community					
Is knowledgeable about my program requirements					
Helps me to reach my academic goals					
Encourages me to openly share their ideas					
Respects my values of different student groups					
Shows me I matter to the institution					
Helps me adjust to college life					
Helps me cope with non-academic responsibilities like family, work, etc.					
Provides the support I need to thrive in this college					
Listens to my concerns					
Provides encouragement					
Helps me navigate the college system					
Helps me learn to problem-solve					

*Q2. How important are the following qualities for a community college advisor/case manager.
Check the box that best represents your answer*

Elements	Extremely Important	Important	Moderately Important	Of Little Importance	Unimportant
Provides timely reminders like early notifications and college information					
Helps coordinate college services					
Builds relationships with students					
Uses technology for follow-up (twitter, face book, social media, etc.)					
Helps students choose classes					
Understands student values and beliefs					
Builds strong collaborative partnerships					
Helps students in taking achievable steps to "feel successful"					
Helps students gain knowledge of the college system					
Participates in professional trainings for advisors or case managers					
Shows an understanding of student feelings (empathy)					
Has knowledge of non-traditional student needs/challenges					
Has knowledge of key community resources					
Promotes student interdependence					
Helps students to build self-efficacy/self-esteem					
Helps students to build self-efficacy/self-esteem					

Concentrates on strengths of students, not weaknesses					
Clarifies career and academic direction					
Makes college user friendly					
Looks out for the best interest of students					
Helps student become aware of college programs and services					

For the purposes of this survey, the following terms are defined as follows:

- a. Collaboration means advisors/case managers and students are working in active partnership.
- b. Assessment means collecting information from multiple sources to develop a full understanding of each student's experience.
- c. Planning means establishing goals with specific action steps to achieve each student's objective.
- d. Facilitation means guiding each student to reach their full academic potential.
- e. Evaluation means using established standards and criteria to measure the outcomes for each student.
- f. Advocacy means helping each student develop choices, options and provide a voice for student concerns.

<i>Q3. Using the definitions outlined below, how important are the following elements to your educational experience? Check the box that best represents your answer.</i>					
Elements	Extremely Important 5	Important 4	Moderately Important 3	Of Little Importance 2	Unimportant 1
Collaboration					
Assessment					
Planning					
Facilitation					
Evaluation					
Advocacy					

Q4. What are the top 3 characteristics you are looking for in an academic advisor?

Q5. What knowledge or information about college and community resources do you feel is important for non-traditional community college students to be academically successful?

Q6. What do you think advisors/case managers/counselors can do to make the advising experience better for non-traditional community college students?

Q7. How do you think your college could make non-traditional community college students feel more welcome and connected?

Q8. In your experience what has been the biggest challenge for you as a non-traditional student in getting your education at the community college?

The remaining demographic questions are designed to help us understand those factors that influence non-traditional student success.

9. Gender:

- Female
- Male
- Transgendered
- Other

10. Year of birth (DOB): _____

11. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- GED
- Home Schooled
- Some High School
- H.S. Diploma
- Certificate
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate Degree
- Other (please specify an licensure/certification)

12. Please select your parent/guardian's highest level of education:

- GED
- Home Schooled
- Some High School
- H.S. Diploma
- Certificate
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate Degree
- Other

13. Are you currently: (check all that apply)

- Employed for wages
- Self-employed
- Out of work & looking
- Out of work but not looking
- Homemaker
- Working for pay on campus
- Working for pay off campus

14. Employment: Average approximate paid work hours outside the home per week: _____

15. What is your current relationship status:

- Single
- Never married
- Married
- Domestic partner
- Co-Habiting
- Widowed
- Separated
- Divorced
- Other

16. Do you live at home with parent or guardian: Y N

17. How many dependents, i.e.; children, adults, are you responsible for in your household: _____

18. During this last semester, how many hours do you spend doing the following:

- Class
- Commuting
- Working
- Studying
- Being involved in on-campus clubs, athletics, etc:
- Volunteering
- Caring for family
- Leisure time activities
- Other (please describe activities and time spent)

19. How best do you describe yourself?

- American Indian/ Alaskan Native
- African American, Non-Hispanic
- White, Non-Hispanic
- Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other (describe) _____

20. How many approximate college credits are you enrolled in this semester: _____

21. How many total college credits have you earned: _____

22. Major or program of study: _____

23. What is your approximate overall college GPA average on a 4.0 scale: _____

24. Are you a Veteran: Y N

25. Please provide the best estimate of your total family income last year. Consider income from all sources before taxes:

- _____ Less than \$5,000
- _____ \$5,000-\$9,999
- _____ \$10,000-\$14,999
- _____ \$15,000-\$19,999
- _____ \$20,000-\$24,999
- _____ \$25,000-\$29,999
- _____ \$30,000-\$34,999
- _____ \$35,000-\$39,999
- _____ \$40,000-\$44,999
- _____ \$45,000-\$49,999
- _____ \$50,000 or more

26. What type(s) of financial aid did you use this academic year? Mark all that apply

- _____ None, did not apply
- _____ None, applied and was turned down
- _____ Aid which need not be repaid (Pell grants, school scholarships or grants, tuition reimbursement, third party, military funding, etc.)
- _____ Aid which must be repaid (subsidized or unsubsidized loans, etc.)
- _____ Other, please list: _____

If you have questions as a result of taking this survey, you may contact Liz Orbits at (734) 717-0854 and/or eorbits@wccnet.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at IRB@ferris.edu or access their web site at <http://ferris.edu/HTML/administration/academicaffairs/vpoffice/IRB/>.

Thank you for your contribution and participation in this research study.

APPENDIX C: CONSENT LETTER ACCOMPANYING THE DELPHI SURVEY SENT TO
WASHTENAW AND GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY COLLEGES' FIELD EXPERTS

Welcome to the Community College Case Management Delphi Field-Expert Survey

Hello, my name is Liz Orbits, LPC, NCC, manager of the Student Resource Center at Washtenaw Community College. I am currently pursuing my doctorate in the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program at Ferris State University. I am investigating a sustainable model of educational case management for non-traditional students in the community college setting and am inviting you to participate in a brief Delphi survey.

As an identified expert in the field of case management, you have been selected to participate in the following Delphi Case Management field-Expert Survey. The Delphi process involves “an interaction between the researcher and a group of identified experts on a specified topic” utilizing a series of questionnaires with the goal of consensus within that topic (Yusef, M. I. 2007, p. 1). This Delphi survey forms part of the review of possible educational case management elements and is asking you to respond to questions about the common elements of educational case management, the sustainability of such elements and how they could relate to the retention of non-traditional students in community colleges.

Educational case management in this survey could be defined as a “collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, evaluation and advocacy” which are key components towards helping an individual reach their full functioning and potential”. (www.cmsa.org). Utilizing this model in higher education, educational case management (ECM) could be defined as an individualized plan of service where an assessment is completed in order to develop a plan for academic success. This plan would require structured strategies or interventions at specific times during the student’s semesters in college.

Please try to answer all questions. You will have the opportunity to revise your answers in subsequent rounds. The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete and your participation is voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point without consequence.

The link to the survey is listed below. Your survey responses will be anonymous and data from this survey will be reported only in the aggregate. Once I have received a response from all participants, I will collate, summarize the findings and formulate a second questionnaire. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact Liz Orbits at (734) 717-0854 and/or eorbits@wccnet.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at IRB@ferris.edu or access their web site at <http://ferris.edu/HTML/administration/academicaffairs/vpoffice/IRB/>. By clicking on the link below, you consent to participate in this survey.

Thank you for your participation and contribution to this study.

APPENDIX D: DELPHI FIELD EXPERT SURVEY WITH OPEN-ENDED AND
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS COMPLETED BY FIELD EXPERTS AT WASHTENAW AND
GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

*Delphi Field Expert Survey with Open-Ended and Demographic Questions Completed by
Field Experts at Washtenaw and Grand Rapids Community Colleges*

<i>Q1. How important is it for educational case managers or advisors in community colleges to show the following behaviors? Check the box that best represents your response to the following questions:</i>					
Elements	Extremely Important	Important	Moderately Important	Of Little Importance	Unimportant
Makes students feel welcome					
Shows concern for students as individuals					
Helps students feel they are members of the college community					
Is knowledgeable about students' program requirements					
Helps students reach their academic goals					
Encourages students to share their ideas openly					
Respects the values of different student groups					
Shows students they matter to the institution					
Helps students adjust to college life					
Helps students cope with non-academic responsibilities like family, work, etc.					
Provides the supports students need to thrive in college					
Listens to student concerns					
Provides encouragement for students					
Helps students navigate the college system					
Helps students learn to problem solve					

Q2. How important do you believe the following factors are for retention of nontraditional community college students? Check the box that best represents your response to the following questions:

Elements	Extremely Important	Important	Moderately Important	Of Little Importance	Unimportant
Provides timely reminders like early notifications and college information					
Helps coordinate college services					
Builds relationships with students					
Uses technology for follow-up (twitter, face book, social media, etc.)					
Helps students choose classes					
Understands student values and beliefs					
Builds strong collaborative partnerships					
Helps students in taking achievable steps to "feel successful"					
Helps students gain knowledge of the college system					
Participates in professional trainings for advisors or case managers					
Provides empathy towards student concerns					
Has knowledge of non-traditional student needs/challenges					
Has knowledge of key community resources					
Helps to promote student interdependence					
Helping students to build self-efficacy/self-esteem					
Helps students connect to the college					
Concentrates on strengths of students, not weaknesses					

Clarifies career and academic direction					
Makes college user friendly					

The following open-ended questions are part of the Delphi study. Please answer fully using simple and concise language as this survey may be relevant to people from different backgrounds. Multiple rounds may be warranted if there is significant difference in the opinions on the topics. According to the Case Management Society of America (Retrieved from retrieved from the Case Management society of American, 2016, www.casma.org), the elements of a case management model include the list below.

- Collaboration and working in partnership with students
- Gathering information to fully understand the student’s experience
- Establish goals with students to determine clear achievable action steps
- Guide students to meet their goals
- On-going evaluation of processes and interventions to measure future change
- Advocate for student issues and the case management profession

<i>Q3. Of the elements listed below, please rank the most critical for the academic success of non-traditional students in the community college.</i>					
Elements	Extremely Important	Important	Moderately Important	Of Little Importance	Unimportant
Collaboration					
Assessment					
Planning					
Facilitation					
Evaluation					
Advocacy					

Q4. Considering the 6 elements of case management, please rank how valuable these elements would be in a sustainable or on-going model of Educational Case Management for non-traditional community college students.

Elements	Extremely Important	Important	Moderately Important	Of Little Importance	Unimportant
Collaboration					
Assessment					
Planning					
Facilitation					
Evaluation					
Advocacy					

Q5. Considering the 6 elements of case management listed and defined below, what kind of institutional support would you need to make Educational Case Management more sustainable for non-traditional community college students?

Elements	Extremely Important	Important	Moderately Important	Of Little Importance	Unimportant
Collaboration					
Assessment					
Planning					
Facilitation					
Evaluation					
Advocacy					

Q6. What knowledge or information about college and community resources do you feel is important for nontraditional community college students to be academically successful?

Q7. What do you think advisors or case managers can do to make the advising or case management experience better for non-traditional community college students?

Q8. How do you think your college could make non-traditional community college students feel more welcome and connected?

Demographics:

You are asked to respond to the following demographic questions. Research has shown that answers to the following questions help us better understand those factors that influence non-traditional student success.

1. Gender:

- Female
- Male
- Transgendered
- Other

2. Year of birth (DOB): _____

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's/PhD/EdD
- Other (please specify an licensure/certification)

4. What is your present marital status:

- Single
- Never married
- Married
- Domestic partner
- Co-Habitat
- Widowed
- Separated
- Divorced

5. How do you describe yourself?

- American Indian/ Alaskan Native
- African American, Non-Hispanic
- White, Non-Hispanic
- Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other (please specify)

6. What is your current job title at your college: _____

7. How many years have you had this job title: _____

8. Estimate your institution's enrollment as measured by HEAD count at all sites?

- Less than 500
- 500-999
- 1,000-2,999
- 3,000-5,999
- 6,000-8,999
- 9,000-11,999
- 12,000-17,999
- 18,000-23,999
- 24,000-29,999
- 30,000-35,999
- 36,000+
- Unknown

9. Is advising/counseling/case management mandatory each term for all students in your college?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please explain) _____

10. Which of the following assessment efforts are currently in place in your advising/case management situation? Check all that apply.

- Survey of student satisfaction of academic advising/case management
- Formally identified academic advising/case management student learning outcomes
- Established academic advising/case management goals/ outcomes
- None of these efforts are in place
- Other (please specify)

11. For which of the following efforts have you utilized data to assess the effectiveness of advising/case management?

- Student satisfaction of academic advising/case management
- Student achievement of academic advising/case management learning outcomes
- Student retention and persistence to graduation
- Academic advising/case management/s program achievement of goals/outcomes
- None of this data has been used to assess academic advising/case management, but assessment plans are being developed
- Other (please specify)

Thank you for your contribution to this study. If you have any questions, please contact Liz Orbits at 734-717-0854 or eorbits@wccnet.edu.

APPENDIX E: INFORMAL SURVEY RESULTS OF ADVISING AND CASE MANAGEMENT
PROFESSIONALS

<p>What are the common elements of Educational Case Management?</p>	<p>Intrusive advising, Coordination of service Building a good rapport, Time Management Use of technology for follow-up and touch points Resources Choosing students classes based on their life environment Case manager's temperament, attitude and values Understanding student's attitude, values and learning styles. Strong partnership with a collaborative nature. Attainable academic goals Small achievable steps for student to "feel successful" Goals must be congruent with student's learning styles, personality and values</p>
<p>What are the common elements in existing Educational Case Management programs that are reported to be sustainable over time?</p>	<p>Intrusive Advising, Coordination of service Building a good rapport, Time Management Use of technology for follow-up and touch points Resources they receive Choosing their classes based on their life environment Student's investment to succeed based on case manager's temperament/attitude/values Understanding student's attitude, values and learning styles. Strong partnership with a collaborative nature. Attainable academic goals - small achievable steps for student to "feel successful" Goals of case manager must be congruent with student's Learning styles, personality and values</p>
<p>What do you believe makes those elements sustainable?</p>	<p>Elements are always changing and so does the ECM to continue to accurately assist students Automatic</p>

<p>Why do you believe ECM is important for community colleges?</p>	<p>College Colleges are open-door institutions</p> <p>ECM is important to give academically and/or emotionally unprepared students tools to be successful</p> <p>ECM is important to give academically and/or emotionally unprepared students assistance in overcoming barriers.</p> <p>ECM is important for diverse populations and personal touch that non-traditional pops need</p> <p>ECM is important because it is where students get full educational assistance</p> <p>ECM is able to have life needs met to assist them in obtaining their education</p> <p>ECM builds trust to create a sustainable relationship between case manager and student</p> <p>ECM provides a one-stop venue to address student needs/interests/goals</p> <p>ECM works intensively with students to address barriers and work on preventive measures</p>
<p>Why is a sustainable model of case management important for Community Colleges?</p>	<p>Many of these students want and need to be accountable</p> <p>They have barriers that may need addressing in order for them to be successful</p> <p>ECM needs to be continuous for these students, not just once when they enroll.</p> <p>Serving diverse and non-traditional populations is important for their completion.</p> <p>Students will continue to battle life challenges while trying to obtain their education and the ECM is the only person that assists in those types of obstacles that happen while a student is obtaining their degree.</p> <p>Cost effective</p> <p>Contributes to less abuse of Financial Aid and other funding assistance.</p> <p>Gratitude of successful students has sustainable impact on larger community and "word of mouth spreads"</p> <p>Partnership with community resources establishes college image as viable community partner.</p> <p>The Community College is a vital partner in the economic, social and psychological growth of the community.</p> <p>Increased educated workforce creates communal harmony and possibly decreases crime rate.</p> <p>Low cost for the community and bridges to 4 year colleges and careers that require a fast track skill set.</p>

<p>What are those characteristics of ECM that you believe contribute to retention of CC students?</p>	<p>Assessment (evaluating their needs)</p> <p>Developing a plan (which may include wrap around services)</p> <p>Follow up which hopeful also builds a good rapport with the students.</p> <p>Personal touch follow-up at crucial points in semester</p> <p>Connection that the student develops with the case manager that is continuous therefore students are able to discuss strategies to keep them on target for graduation and work through obstacles that may be in their way.</p> <p>Collaborative partnership with student</p> <p>Increase student self-awareness of academic and career paths</p> <p>Strength-based which builds on student's skill sets, interests and achievable goals.</p> <p>Positive reinforcement</p> <p>Transfer of life skills to the academic setting</p> <p>Reinforce positive student's academic and career goals</p> <p>Instill "can do" attitude vs. self-defeating attitude.</p> <p>Understand student's learning styles</p> <p>Develop an individualized education plan.</p>
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APPENDIX F: FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL LETTER

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects in Research

Office of Academic Research, 220 Ferris Drive, PHR 308 · Big Rapids, MI 49307

Date: May 7, 2015

To: Dr. Mike Ennis and E.L. Orbits

From: Dr. Stephanie Thomson, IRB Chair

Re: IRB Application #150406 (*The Elements of a Sustainable Model of Education Case Management for Non-Traditional Students in a Community College*)

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, "*The Elements of a Sustainable Model of Education Case Management for Non-Traditional Students in a Community College*" (#150406) and determined that it meets Federal Regulations *Expedited-category 2G*. This approval has an expiration date of one year from the date of this letter. **As such, you may collect data according to the procedures outlined in your application until May 7, 2016.** Should additional time be needed to conduct your approved study, a request for extension must be submitted to the IRB a month prior to its expiration.

Your protocol has been assigned project number (#150406), which you should refer to in future correspondence involving this same research procedure. **Approval mandates that you follow all University policy and procedures, in addition to applicable governmental regulations and the outside approval from Washtenaw Community College.** Approval applies only to the activities described in the protocol submission; should revisions need to be made, all materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. In addition, the IRB must be made aware of any serious and unexpected and/or unanticipated adverse events as well as complaints and non-compliance issues.

Understand that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and participant rights with assurance of participant understanding, followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document and investigators maintain consent records for a minimum of three years.

As mandated by Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46 (45 CFR 46) the IRB requires submission of annual reviews during the life of the research project and a Final Report Form upon study completion. Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor. Please let us know if the IRB can be of any future assistance.

Regards,



Ferris State University Institutional Review Board
Office of Academic Research, Academic Affairs

Version 1.2015