

**Retention and Educational Success for Members of Equity Groups at College of the Redwoods:
A Qualitative Inquiry**

Prepared for: College of the Redwoods' Multicultural and Diversity Committee & the Student Equity Committee

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library hours

signage - white boards

communication boards

wellness events not well attended.

- how to promote events

student ambassadors

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Literature Review

This literature review provides contextualizing information concerning student equity groups and retention in California Community Colleges. First is a review of equity and retention barriers. This information provides the foundation for framing our research. Next is a review of emerging concepts in relation to retention. These concepts are learning, community, and equity group specific retention programs. By addressing these concepts, our research enters the scope of broader conversation taking place with other educational institutions. This provides better understanding of what may be impacting retention rates among certain equity groups, either negatively or positively, at College of the Redwoods.

Equity and Retention Barriers

There are many common barriers to the implementation of student equity and retention policies and/or the success of achieving the intended goals of such policies and programs within California Community Colleges. The most frequently cited barrier among the literature reviewed here is the lack of adequate funding, largely due to budget cuts, for programs aimed at increasing student equity and retention (Baker 2016; Grubb 2003; Illowsky 2008; Moore 2010; Robert 1994). Not only do California institutions of higher education often lack adequate funding, but many students also struggle with low-income status and have difficulty being able to afford attending such institutions, especially continuously (Grubb 2003; Moore 2010; Robert 1994).

Oftentimes, students, particularly low-income students, end up having to work a lot of hours to be able to support themselves. Additionally, many students have family/care-taking responsibilities that contend with their success in higher education. Competing demands on students' time – the work-school-family balance – is one of the most common barriers to student success and retention cited in this literature (Baker 2016; Center 2010; Grubb 2003; Plata 1996). This dynamic, paired with few options for course enrollment outside of peak daytime hours means many students find it impossible to fit higher education into their busy schedules (Taylor 2016:20).

Another frequently mentioned barrier to the success of student equity policies and programs, as well as to student retention, is students' lack of self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, and/or students' personal issues such as mental health struggles (Center 2010; Grubb 2003; Plata 1996, Robert 1994). This is a problem that is worsened by other barriers, causing many students to either avoid enrollment altogether, or to not seek out support services that are available to them; that is, when they are even aware such services exist. A report from the Surgeon General titled “Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity - A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General” states that the rates of mental disorders are not sufficiently studied in “many smaller racial and ethnic groups –most notably American Indians” (2). The same report also states “research on AI/AN’s,” American Indians/Alaska Natives, “is limited by the small size of this population and by its heterogeneity.

Nevertheless, existing studies suggest that youth and adults suffer a disproportionate burden of mental health problems and disorders. As one indication of distress, the suicide rate is 50 percent higher than the national rate” (9). This trend can be seen across mental health as a whole and within specific mental illness prevalence rates. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 5.9 percent of adults 18+ in the state of California have depression (30). While, according to the California Tribal Epidemiology Center, 57.5 percent of Indian Health Service patients in the state of California, when seeking health care, were screened for and found to have depression (51). Despite the increased

prevalence of mental health struggles, “members of racial and ethnic minority groups have less access to mental health services than do their white counterparts, are less likely to receive needed care, and ... are more likely to delay or fail to receive mental health treatment” (Miranda et al., 3).

In fact, lack of awareness about available student support services is yet another barrier to students getting the support they need in order to stay enrolled and/or succeed (Basic 2009; Center 2010). On top of that, the second most iterated barrier to student equity and retention in the literature we review here is the lack of access to student support services, either because there are not enough of them or because the existing ones are not as available as they need to be in order to be consistently and equitably effective (Basic 2009; Grubb 2003; Moore 2010; Plata 1996; Taylor 2016). The most mentioned support service that students lack are counseling and advising; followed by other services such as childcare, tutoring, etc. Due to the lack of counseling and advising, it's not uncommon for some students to fall through the cracks when trying to navigate confusing paperwork for enrollment, financial aid, and transfer (Basic 2009; Moore 2010). This is especially the case when language barriers are in place for students who struggle with English (Grubb 2003:220, 225).

Once students actually begin their classes, many find that they are under-prepared for the rigor of higher education and lack skills required for academic success (Baker 2016; Center 2010; Illowsky 2008; Robert 1994). Some students even have an active aversion to the educational process, particularly when it comes to Math and English (Center 2010:2). Moreover, some schools lack adequate developmental classes (in quality and/or quantity) to help students in need of remediation adjust to the structure and demands of higher education, courses necessary to help students work their way up to credit-earning courses (Basic 2009:25). The sometimes low quality of teaching and lack of professional development for higher education faculty also poses challenge for students struggling to stay in school and/or to feel comfortable in the learning environment (Grubb 2003:220, 228, 229). In a similar light, a few of literature sources we review here reference the fact that institutions of higher education can often have a culture of disrespect for, even hostility toward students enrolled in remedial/developmental courses and even toward minorities in general (Grubb 2003; Plata 1996; Robert 1994). Such non-acceptance by fellow students and, even more troublesome, by faculty and staff – whether intentional or not – creates stigma that contributes to many students not wanting to carry on in their education, and adds to the aforementioned lack of self-esteem and confidence.

Learning

When studying retention rates of equity groups, it is reasonable to acknowledge that cultural differences may have impact on the retention of these students. For example, when it comes to looking at issues of retention among Native American students, a factor to examine is how Native students learn versus dominant teaching and assumed learning styles. Research finds that indigenous pedagogy is very different from the dominant pedagogy often used in higher education classrooms (Lamb 2003; Davis 1992). Understanding this provides a framework by which to understand issues faced by Native students in the classroom, hints about where to focus research, and indication of the importance of exploring potential impacts of specialized educator trainings for educators at College of the Redwoods who work with Native students.

Research on Native American student retention also discusses the ways in which providing a multicultural classroom can be beneficial in the retention of Native students. One study by Flynn, Duncan, and Jorgenson (2011) finds that higher education settings are fraught with “limited multicultural information among faculty and advisers” (10). Furthering this, additional research

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Project Statement

In response to direct request from the Multicultural Diversity Committee (MDC) and Renee Saucedo, Director of Student Equity, our Social Research Methods team studied factors affecting retention rates of underserved equity groups at College of the Redwoods (CR). We are a team comprised of eight student researchers, one graduate student of sociology and one research methodologist. The goal of this study is to produce information useful for college improvement of retention rates for members of specific equity groups; for this reason this study focuses on variables which are within the scope of the college to address for retention improvement. California state law defines an “equity group” as “a group of people belonging to a specific demographic—racial minority, former foster youth, military veteran, etc. For the purpose of this study, “underserved” means students who lack adequate resources to succeed in their educational goals. According to the MDC and CR President, Keith Snow-flamer, the most underserved student groups at CR are Native American, African American, and Hispanic. Our research team has chosen to include two additional student equity groups for this research, English as a Second Language Learners (ESL) and LGBTQ+ students.

supports that teaching in a multicultural classroom requires training teachers to understand their students from a culturally based perspective (Davis 1992). In other words, it is important to provide instructors who are trying to implement a pedagogy that is more inclusive and fitting for a multicultural classroom with adequate training in multicultural classroom settings.

Mentoring is another technique many institutions of higher education engage. College mentoring programs work to increase student retention, and many work to increase retention among specific equity groups (Crisps & Cruz 2009; Hu & Ma 2010). In a study on role models, mentors, and Native American students, Smith-Mohamed (1998) identifies the need for role mentors. Additionally, they found that while non-Native faculty may be mentors for Native people, cultural identification “lends itself to an increase in the perceived confidence and pride in the accomplishments of members of a particular culture and ultimately in an individual, particularly where such a culture has been suppressed and/or assimilated by the dominant culture” (20).

Mentoring has become a widely accepted tool used to increase retention among equity groups and as a result there are many examples of successful mentoring programs. However, research has not been done extensively on mentoring programs specifically concerning Native American students and their retention rates within higher education. Nevertheless, research that has been done suggests that mentoring programs are also successful among Native students and that they increase not only retention, but also confidence and pride. Although the literature under review in this immediate section focuses on equity and retention as it pertains to Native American students, it is reasonable to assume that these concepts apply to other minority student equity groups as well.

Community

The role of community is integral for any address of student retention rates because, generally, having a community-centered identity is what provides an individual with a sense of belonging. This is true of many Native American and other minority students who must go through an acculturation process when transitioning from their native culture and communities into the somewhat rigid culture of higher education. As a result of this process, Native students, for example, are left to negotiate their Native community identity while engaging with the community associated with higher education, one which is built on a predominantly white narrative (Flynn & Olson & Yellig 2012; McClellan & Tippeconnic Fox & Lowe 2005). Therefore, these students are left to establish community in a setting that is historically designed to limit the space for their Native communities. In return, this ultimately affects minority student retention in higher education.

It is clear that minority students acculturating into a system of higher education must form community identity there. It is also evident that, for many of these students, family plays a large role in their community identities. For instance, research examining the various components of community and its effects on the retention of Native students in higher education repeatedly discusses the family component. Specifically, Flynn, Duncan, and Jorgenson (2011) explain that one of the most prominent social themes in Native transition and retention to postsecondary education settings includes family influence (6). Furthermore, the same study finds that families play a role in college acceptance and retention (7). Additionally, Flynn, Olson, and Yellig (2012) reinforce this by explaining that all the participants in their study directly describe the importance of family during the acculturation process (6). Better understanding the role that family plays in a specific minority community provides greater understanding of the social dimensions affecting the retention of students who are members of said minority communities. Thus, understanding retention rates, and the factors thereof, of minority students

requires understanding the role of community, specifically the position of family within minority students' communities.

When discussing community it is also necessary to address the campus social climate - the general feelings, beliefs, and attitudes of a particular campus - in which students are expected to engage in at their schools. Interactions on campus can facilitate bonds that can lead to friendships, other relationships, career opportunities, etc. As an example, for students who identify themselves as members of the LGBTQ+ community, social climate can greatly affect personal levels of comfort, as it is common for these students to feel threatened or unwelcome on campus. Renee Pleus's dissertation on assessing homonegativity – negative feelings and attitudes toward homosexuality/homosexuals - on college campuses finds that any student who experiences a negative campus climate typically has greater difficulty persisting in college (Pleus 2011 as cited in Rankin 2003).

Pleus concludes that the effects a hostile campus climate can have on gay and lesbian students typically impacts an ability or desire to develop or recognize their sexual identity and, therefore, affects student performance in and enjoyment of college (Pleus 2011 as cited in Longerbeam et al. 2007). Researcher Megan Yost (2011) explains that with the increasing visibility of LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and administrators, and with a growing number of colleges implementing LGBTQ+ inclusive nondiscrimination policies, more questions are being asked about campus climate. These questions refer to whether or not campuses are providing environments for LGBTQ+ students to feel safe and comfortable enough to continue their education with the college. Again, although the literature we review here regarding campus climate focuses specifically on LGBTQ+ students, the general concepts can be understood to apply to other minority student populations as well.

In continuing with this example of LGBTQ+ students, many studies we find address LGBTQ+ student experiences on campus; this includes research about the opinions of heterosexual/cisgender (cisgender refers to a person whose sense of identity and gender corresponds with their assigned sex given at birth) as well as experiences of LGBTQ+ students. Yost reports that in one study, six large liberal art campus climates are analyzed, but that this study exclusively looks at heterosexual/cisgender students as a way to gauge LGBTQ+ climate in higher education (Yost 2011 as cited in Hinrichs & Rosenberg 2002). Studies such as this are problematic, they serve as examples of heterosexual/cisgender opinion and experience being favored over those who actually identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community. To properly gauge campus climate for LGBTQ+, or for any group minority students, it should be obvious to predominantly or completely focus solely on their experiences in environments of higher education rather than allowing additional space to the dominant majority group to give testimony.

In contrast, Rankin's research specifically pertains to how sexual/gender minority students perceive campus climate. This research finds that negative experiences are still commonplace and range from a lack of social inclusion to name calling, graffiti, and physical abuse (Tetreault et al. 2013). These types of negative or traumatic experiences create a hostile climate toward LGBTQ+ individuals and groups. The same could be understood to be true, to various degrees, of other minority groups' campus experiences.

Key findings of the national survey performed by Rankin indicate that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer respondents experience higher rates of harassment and discrimination than their heterosexual allies (Tetreault et al. 2013). Respondents identifying as transmasculine (one who identifies on the masculine side of the gender spectrum but does not necessarily identify as male), transfeminine (one who identifies on the feminine side of the gender spectrum but does not necessarily identify as female),

and gender non-conforming (also referred to as GNC: a person whose behavior or appearance does not conform to prevailing cultural and social expectations of their assigned gender) report higher rates of harassment based on gender identity than those who identify as cisgender (those whose gender identities are the same as the gender they were assigned at birth) report experience of (Tetreault et al. 2013 as cited in Rankin et al. 2010). The same researchers' study of social climate at Midwestern University finds that LGBTQ+ students' perceptions of campus climate are more negative than those of the general student population. All LGBTQ+ respondents indicate that anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes exist to some extent, and 47% report these attitudes exist to a great or very great extent. For the non-LGBTQ+ individuals in the same sample, 74% report that anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes exist to some extent, whereas a much smaller percentage (24%) indicate that such attitudes exist to a great or very great extent (Tetreault et al. 2013 as cited in Brown et al. 2002). These types of disparities between the majority student population and the LGBTQ+ student community mirrors that of the disparity between the majority student population and other minority groups on many integrated college campuses.

When examining student experiences in higher education, it is vital to view things with an intersectional lens. Sexuality and gender are not the only identities an individual possesses. For instance, race is also an important factor that affects how one is treated. It is possible for one to possess multiple minority identities, which intersect and can compound the effects of such identities. Using an intersectional point of view allows us to compare how LGBTQ+ students of color experience higher education versus white LGBTQ+ students or other combinations of identities. Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer (2010) find in their research that LGBTQ+ respondents of color are more likely to report race as a reason for experiencing harassment than white respondents (although both groups report sexual identity as a risk factor). Transmasculine, transfeminine, and GNC respondents report higher rates of harassment than cisgender men and women of color (Rankin et al. 2010 as cited in Tetreault et al. 2013). These are examples of how being a member of more than one minority group affects one's experiences and perceptions of campus climate.

In another example, Marissa Lang (2014) takes a different approach in her research about LGBTQ+ retention and how this intersects with race. Her research views the climate of an unnamed historically black college (HBC) as it pertains to acceptance of sexual minorities. Many studies have tested for attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender groups at Predominantly White Universities (PWUs), but have failed to include black institutions of higher education into the discussion. This study fills the scholarly gap by addressing students' attitudes towards lesbian, gay and bisexual persons at HBCs. Results indicate males at both PWUs and HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges/Universities) hold the least amount of favor toward gay men and bisexual men. Herek (2000) argues that asking heterosexual males about feelings toward gay men may trigger feelings associated with masculine identity and its duty to prove heterosexual identity by the rejection of gay men and bisexual men (Lang 2014 as cited in Herek 2002).

Equity and Retention Programs

There are many different types of equity/retention programs for students in higher education: from resource-specific programs to inclusion programs that promote community. Since cultural differences have real impacts on group level social experiences and in part constitute structural inequalities in our society, is imperative for researchers to investigate retention programs that are specific to their research's equity populations. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. For example, research about Native Americans in higher education is limited in general, and even more limited regarding successful equity or retention programs designed specifically for Native students. For

underrepresented minority students, inclusion programs are vital for retention.

Foremost, it is important to have a facility in which underrepresented minority students can gather in solidarity. When these students have a place in which they can safely gather and discuss issues specific to their population, they are more likely to stay enrolled at their facility of higher education because this gives them a feeling of safety and inclusion on campus. For instance, Edwina Welch (2009) is a researcher who studies campus inclusion centers for minority groups and is motivated to do so as the nature of community centers currently lacks research. She and others feel that these centers impact students' sense of belonging, thus yielding new insight in the study of underrepresented and marginalized student retention (Welch 2009).

Similarly, in a study that works to identify factors that motivate LGBTQ+ students to interact with other students and their campus itself, Jeffery Anderson (2016) finds that the absence of queer student centers on most campuses contributes to a feeling of invisibility (Anderson 2016 as cited in Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg 2002). He also claims that colleges and universities that do not provide services for queer students (e.g. through the creation of queer student centers) may be perpetuating a heteronormative (a world view that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation) campus climate that can be an unwelcoming place for anyone considered outside of “the norm” (Anderson 2016 as cited in Schueler et al. 2009). Anderson not only shows the impact that queer centers have in general, but also how they impact students specifically at two-year higher education institutions. Two-year institutions do not typically have space on campus specifically for queer student populations. He states, “[t]he LGBTQ Center at Midwest Community College, one of the first at a two-year institution in the state in which the institution is located, represents the college’s commitment to cultural diversity and the dedication of individuals at the college who have fought for such a space” (Anderson 2016). The center’s importance among LGBTQ+ students is astounding as students cite feeling protected and wanted because the school created a center specifically for queer students and advocates its use. Again, these results can be logically and reasonably extended to other URM student populations. At the heart of it all, feelings of inclusion are an extreme motivator for persisting in one’s education on campus.

An additional topic to acknowledge here is that policies and programs designed to increase student equity and retention sometimes have unintended consequences that may conflict with their goals due to the way they are implemented (Baker 2016; Basic 2009). For example, “[w]hile mandatory placement was found to be positively correlated to student retention in four-year colleges, a negative correlation is shown for two-year colleges. ... However, developmental course success rates were positively correlated with mandatory placement in both two- and four-year schools” in one study (Basic 2009:24). This means that for two-year colleges, mandatory placement of students into the level of courses most appropriate for them leads to less retention overall, but more success for those placed into remedial courses, leaving these schools with the choice between increasing retention rates or increasing tangible student success. According to the Basic Skills Initiative article, “Program Components,” (2009) “[s]ince fewer than 10 percent of those needing remediation survive college without it... mandatory placement's loss to attrition is the lesser of the evils” (24). What's more, not all of the consequences of equity and retention efforts – for whom and in what ways - are clear (Baker 2016:629).

Research and program evaluation is extremely helpful in catching these sorts of unintended consequences; yet, there is generally a lack of enough research to develop better, more effective equity and retention policies and programs (Basic 2009; Grubb 2003). Moreover, different methodologies of research yields different results, which means that inequities can be misidentified (Taylor 2016:4). One

of the ways such mistakes get perpetuated is through the lack of communication and coordination among California's institutions of higher education (Taylor 2016). Standardization of standards and evaluation measurements, according to what has proven to be the most effective and accurate, across schools can prevent mismatched research and help control for the uneven implementation of policies. Communication and coordination among higher education institutions can also lessen the issue of credentials earned by students at one school in California not being transferable to other California institutions (Grubb 2003:229). Having a surplus of non-transferable credits serves to discourage some students from continuing their education. Lastly, it is prudent to highlight that most, if not all, of the barriers listed above are amplified in California's *rural* institutions of higher education because rural areas have a more severe lack of funding and access to quality resources, as well as a general lack of diversity (Illowsky 2008:90).

Research Methods

Triangulation, Participatory Action Research & Grounded Theory

The research approach guiding this project is participatory action research. This means that information has been gathered directly from students with intent to create pathways toward institutional change. Our research design consists of exploratory, explanatory, and comparative components. The exploratory component combines systematic qualitative data collection—open-ended questionnaires and formal interviews—so we can hear from students, in their own words, about the exact obstacles faced in order to remain enrolled at CR. We chose a qualitative research approach here because we understand that the college already has access to relative quantitative data and we believe qualitative data best captures what students consider to be obstacles to their education. We also want to create genuine opportunity to receive student suggestions for improvement.

The explanatory component of this project is our process of analysis of this data; we use a partial grounded theory approach. In other words, we have analyzed data for emergent common themes of needs from members of different student equity groups represented within this study. The contextually comparative component of this project includes a site visit to Shasta College. This was done so we have some grounds for comparative context about how community colleges meet some of student needs that are within the power and scope of CR to address.

Our intention is to use research methods to ask students what resources they need to meet their educational goals? Although this foundational research question may seem quite simple, simplicity is necessary here so that the perspectives of students can be centered for institutional resource allocation. A relevant role to acknowledge about the researchers for this project is that we, the researchers, are also participants in this educational institution. This dual role dynamic shared by the majority of our research team is, perhaps even of benefit for this project.

Peer-to-peer research process is likely to garner honesty from participants, deep insight in analysis of data and a unique vantage of sincerity in our recommendations. There are multiple perspectives when it comes to the procuring, allocating and utilization of CR resources. The purpose of this project is to focus on the needs of students as opposed to those of other participants of the educational institution. To help us listen more directly and deeply to students, we intentionally use multiple qualitative research methods- methodological triangulation- to create a more institutionally coherent platform for students to articulate needs.

Hypothesis

Academic resources necessary for success in college include things such as library materials, writing support, and subject tutoring. Campus based interactions that are necessary for academic successes include effective communication and interaction with college faculty, staff, and peers. Additionally, a student needs to be able to attend class to engage in face-to-face learning. Therefore things such as childcare and transportation are necessary for a student to succeed. Our team anticipates that these variables will emerge as foundational variables to inform college improvement for retention of equity group members.

Data Collection

Data collection for this semester long project is funded by CR Student Equity funds and took place on two CR campuses (Eureka and Del Norte), as well as at Shasta College. Since this project includes only variables that are within the scope of the college to address for retention improvement and is intended for resource allocation and campus decision making purpose, we elect not to include community education data in this study. Distance education is not included here either because face-to-face interaction is prioritized for the purpose of reaping efficient, meaningful, contextualized data about student experiences and needs. We deeply regret that only two of our three campuses are included in this study.

Miscommunication Between Researchers & the KT Campus: Data Collection Process Reflection

Our team intended to include CR's Klamath-Trinity (KT) campus in data collection for two separate data collection trips on April 12th and 13th, 2017. In attempt to prepare for the KT visit, multiple researchers used the professional CR contact suggested by the project research methodologist, the sociology division dean, and the CR Student Equity Director. We reached out to this contact repeatedly through email. Researchers did not receive reciprocal correspondence and were therefore unable to plan a successful campus visit for data collection to appropriately include CR's KT campus in this study.

This failure created disappointment, stress, and as a feeling of failed responsibility for the researchers who advocated strongly for KT's inclusion in the project. Since we felt ultimate responsibility to see the project through, concern about being disrespectful to the work of education that takes place on a college campus, and were juggling time as a limited resource, we opted not to show up at KT unexpected. Without access to a campus host, we decided to cancel the trip- a trip that had yet to effectively be interactively planned- a week or so before the date we had hoped to negotiate for our arrival. We realize now, in retrospect, that telephone would have been a wiser choice for effective communication in this case.

This failure has caused what feels to us like an important loss because several student researchers advocated quite strongly for the inclusion of KT in data collection, Student Equity funds were offered to cover cost of travel to all of our campuses, and a number of CR students were excited to visit our KT campus, and the important work done at CR's KT campus could have greatly informed this project. At the same time, meaningful dynamics which can perhaps help aid in building understanding about how communication can work in ways that results in potential alienation of some students of color from campus participation did still unfold as a result of this communication pitfall. Participatory action research means that social researchers are also part of the research project and, since the goal here is to create space for student voices to be heard, reflexivity is necessary. Our challenge, as researchers, is to engage in the research reflection process to share information that may be meaningful for understanding this project. We tell this story here, complete with honesty about our own misstep, with hope that it can inform our collective thinking, decisions, and practices in a meaningful way to help students who are members of equity groups be retained at CR so they can meet their educational goals.

A Native American student sampled from the Eureka campus agreed to be interviewed by a student researcher shortly before our previously intended KT site visit. We will call her Kay here so we can humanize this research story. We understand that this is a small community and that anonymity is important, but we also know through our studies of research methods that the telling of stories is how

communities share information that can be effective for making change. Stories are how we make sense of our shared social reality.

Kay asked a member of our research team if she could be interviewed at the KT campus since it would be easier for her because she lives in Hoopa. The researcher said they could arrange the interview to take place in Eureka, but that the research team hadn't received response from our contact on the KT campus and therefore could not plan to be there for data collection. The Native student related surprise that the contact hadn't responded because, in their personal experience, this contact typically replies very quickly to students. Kay, who dialogued with our researcher, understood the goal and purpose of this project. She took it upon herself to investigate this failed communication and unexpectedly contacted the researcher a few days later with an update. Our professional contact at the KT campus had related to Kay that she wasn't going to have the researchers on the KT campus because she didn't see how this was beneficial for KT students?

This related reasoning, known to us only in the partiality of second hand word of mouth, is received as a possible answer to why our KT contact did not respond to the emails researchers sent. Kay explained to our KT contact that the researcher who had emailed her was also a Native student and that a purpose of the research is to help make sure that students at the KT campus are getting the resources they need to help them be successful. It is related by Kay that our KT contact then explained that, if she had known that the student researcher was another Native student trying to help, she would have responded. About a week later our KT contact responded to inquiry emails sent previously; however, at that point data collection for the entirety of this project was already ending.

One result of this miscommunication is that there is no meaningful data included in this study from students who attended classes at our KT campus specifically. Another result is that a potential connection was missed between a Native student and a potential advocate or supportive person for Native students at CR. A third result is that a Native student is left alone to try not to question how her Native identity may seem- or perhaps be- more important to CR staff or educators than her excitement and skill development related to participating in a professional research project that stands to impact College of the Redwoods.

Open Ended Questionnaires

One method of data collection for this project is a 7 item open-ended questionnaire administered to 456 CR students. The questionnaire includes basic demographic questions. A breakdown of equity groups as represented by students who responded to these questionnaires includes: 31 Native American students, 15 African American students, 60 Latinx students, 90 English as a Second Language Learner (ESL) students, 32 LGBTQ+ students. LatinX is chosen by student researchers to denote equity group membership in groups such as Chicano, Latin American and Hispanic. LGBTQ+ is chosen by student researchers to denote lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other rainbow spectrum identity. Both are terms understood from within current politicized social change context. To facilitate written communication and stick close to student used terminology, Native and Native American are used interchangeably throughout this report, as are African American and black.

An additional 214 surveys were completed by students who do not identify themselves as members of any of the equity groups considered to be within the scope of this project. These 214 surveys comprise our control group, or the group to which we analytically compare information reaped from open-ended questionnaires. An additional 14 surveys were administered but are not included in

this study because they represent CR students who are also Academy of the Redwoods students. These surveys are not included in analysis because we do not have access to an Institutional Review Board to go through the ethical process for including minors in social research. The Questionnaire and spiel containing informed consent information given before administering questionnaires are included as Appendix A & B of this report.

We analyzed open-ended questionnaire data using six emergent variables: transportation, non-CR related obstacles, finances, courses, campus dynamics, and campus offered resources. These variables are emergent because, although driven by our hypothesis, we used an open coding process whereby surveys were reviewed before codes developed. We broke each of these variables down further into attributes for a more detailed analysis. Transportation includes the attributes, or sub-categories, of car, broken down vehicle, bus, and carpool. Non-CR obstacles includes mental health, work, childcare, family dynamics, bus schedule, and distance. The variable of Finance includes bus pass/fare, parking permit, costs of books, food costs (on campus), and money (in general). The variable Courses includes on campus course selection, online course selection, on campus class availability, and online class availability. The variable campus dynamics includes dorms, student/faculty relations, awareness of campus resources, and cafeteria. Finally, data coded as CR-offered resources includes our longest list of attributes: writing center, math lab, tutoring, library, TRIO, light center, DSPS, EOPS, academic counseling, food pantry, technology, and wifi. For this study, “obstacle” is defined by as anything external to the student that impacts the student's ability to meet their educational goals. Student participants' notions of “obstacle” expanded our understanding to include internal dynamics as well.

In Depth Interviews

Another method of data collection used is qualitative interviews with students who self identify as members of equity groups considered to be within the scope of this study. One-on-one interviews ranged from 12 ½ to 46 minutes long. A total of 10 one-on-one interviews were conducted and included students from the following equity groups: 2 Native American students, 4 African American students, 3 Latinx students, 1 ESL student, and 1 LGBTQ+ student. One of the interview respondents self-identifies as a member of more than one equity group and is included in multiple equity group categories for analysis. Interviews are largely representative of students who attend classes at the Eureka campus with two taking place with students at the Del Norte campus. The Interview questions are included in Appendix C and The Informed Consent form used for interview respondents is Appendix D of this report.

Interview questions are more in-depth than those included in the open-ended questionnaire and allow respondents space to express individual concerns and experiences. Interview dialogue was recorded by a researcher and then transcribed by a different researcher to help account for researcher bias. This method of transcription is used to increase reliability of the data. The unit of analysis for interviews is an individual student. Notes were taken by the researcher doing the interview within two hours of each interview's end to provide contextual information relevant for analysis. Each interview participant signed an Informed Consent form that was read aloud to them by the researcher who conducted the interview before the interview took place so that they fully understood the process and their rights. In order to provide incentive and beneficence for interview participants, a second raffle took place exclusively for interview participants. The raffle was drawn on 5/5/17 and the student who won was notified by whichever form of contact they indicated they prefer to retrieve their prize either by mail or face-to-face from a student researcher on campus during finals week.

Data was coded for common or distinct threads amongst student interviews of students belonging to different equity groups by using partial initiation of a grounded theory approach. According to Earl Babbie, grounded theory “is the attempt to derive theories from the analysis of the patterns, themes, and common categories discovered in observational data” (308). The partial grounded theory approach is used because it centers the students' own voices. The logic of grounded theory also creates room to discover the unexpected instead of driving analysis with preconceived categories that may reinforce our hypothesis. Grounded theory is partial here because our time constraint afforded for only one cycle of both data collection and coding; grounded theory is a lengthy research process.

Sampling

Our sampling strategy is convenience method; specifically volunteers. We collected data from colleagues and friends at CR, with intentional effort made to include members of the equity groups identified for this study. We used a formal informed consent process to ensure participants understood their participation was voluntary and that they could opt out of participation in whole or in part at any time. Questionnaires were disseminated to students in the 8 research team members' classes, as well as to classes for which instructors gave us permission to do so. Researchers sent emails to instructors they thought would have an interest in participation to ask for permission. We had more offers from professors to collect data in their classrooms than we had researchers who could keep up. The timeline for this project along with our capacity to manage a sizeable pool of data are the factors used to determine at what point offers became declined. Questionnaires took approximately 10-15 minutes to distribute, fill out, and return.

While visiting campus groups and disseminating questionnaires we asked for volunteers to participate in interviews. Purposive sampling was used to determine which of the volunteers would be interviewed. Earl Babbie explains this as “a type of nonprobability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative”(196). Additionally, due to time restrictions, only those interview volunteers selected through purposive sampling whose availability matched that of our researchers during the allotted data collection period were interviewed.

At the Del Norte campus, Chris Callahan, a biology professor and member of the MDC from Del Norte, helped arrange class visits for our research team to find participants. Three members of the research team visited the Del Norte campus on April 5th and 6th. Many students only take classes on Monday and Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday, so collecting data on two consecutive days (Mon/Tues or Tues/Wed) allowed for a more representative sample of students from Del Norte. One of the two interviews conducted at Del Norte is unique from other project interviews in that it was arranged through Chris Callahan by way of direct introduction.

Shasta College Case Observation

Two student researchers, chaperoned by Kintay Johnson, Director of Special Programs at CR, visited Shasta College's main campus on April 28th. The goal was to learn about the equity and retention related programs and student services offered at Shasta College. During this visit, the campus was toured and researchers met with several program directors and employees, as well as the Dean of Access and Equity, Sharon Brisolara, to discuss: what Shasta offers students, how Shasta runs their programs, what is working well, and what challenges are faced. Dean Brisolara arranged for the

campus tour and many of the meetings, and the rest of the people the researchers encountered were by chance. The purpose of this project component is to provide the research team with an accessible example of a California Community College of similar size and demographic makeup in a rural area that has successful equity programs and services in order to gain context for our project recommendations. The unit of analysis for consideration here is an institution: Shasta college itself.

Shasta College was chosen based on several criteria. First, it was necessary for the school of comparison to be a California Community College in a rural area. Next, we aimed for as many demographic similarities between College of the Redwoods and the CCC to be visited so any observations be more direct and applicable: size of the student population, racial/ethnic makeup of the student population and surrounding community, etc. When examining the size of the potential schools, it was determined that the researchers would not visit a school with a smaller campus or student population since much of the purpose of the comparative analysis is to provide examples of successful equity programs and services, which smaller schools are less likely to have in abundance. Other main factors involved in the selection process were time and funding. In order to keep the entire campus visit and travel time down to one day with minimal cost, it was decided that the Student Equity Committee would fund a rental car for the researchers and their chaperone to drive to a campus they could visit and return from within the same day. The rural CCC that is most demographically similar to CR, without being smaller, and within the accessible travel radius is Shasta College.

Ethics

We account for confidentiality in the following ways. The identities of questionnaire respondents are confidential. By confidential we mean that respondents' names were only collected on an individual case-by-case voluntary basis. Names were collected only from participants who wished either to do a follow up interview or to enter the optional raffle. The incentive to gain student participants was two \$100 Amazon gift cards provided by CR's Student Equity funds. Cards were raffled off to two lucky participants: one from the group of questionnaire respondents, one from the groups of interview respondents. We needed to know the identities of participants for the sake of the raffle to reward participation, but the actual names of any and all participants are not recorded in any reported data. The list of names and contact information for these participants was destroyed once the raffles were awarded.

Informed Consent for the questionnaires is ensured through the consent statement at the top of the questionnaire. Researchers also gave a standard verbal explanation before handing out the questionnaire that highlights that students choosing to participate by filling out a questionnaire is implies consent to be included in the study. Informed consent for the interviews was ensured through having participants sign a formal informed consent document, which the interviewer verbally explained before conducting face-to-face interviews.

Analysis

Analysis is reported here in two sections. The first section includes analysis of information from open-ended questionnaires and interviews. Emergent overarching themes we found involve CR student resources and mental health. The second part of this analysis is a contextually comparative look at the student resources offered at College of the Redwoods and Shasta College.

Resources Lacking at College of the Redwoods

Concerns pertaining to campus based student resources are apparent in the data representing all of this project's equity groups. Comments about College of the Redwood's campuses' student resources span to include: some resources which lack entirely, such as childcare on our Del Norte campus; lacking availability of existing resources, such as libraries being closed weekends; to lack of student awareness regarding existing resources, such as the student health center on the Eureka campus.

Childcare

One theme found in our data about resources CR lacks pertains to childcare; this is found most strongly in data taken from the Del Norte campus. In an interview with a Latinx single mother, it is stressed that there is a total lack of a childcare facility on the Del Norte campus. Another Del Norte African American/Latinx interviewee also brings up this up: "I know childcare is a big deal for a lot of people. I know I have kids and I, I'm stuck on childcare. It's hard; it's hard to find good childcare around here." In reference to a childcare program, the same student adds, "We don't have one here...you know, I have to take a class in Eureka, for instance, this summer and I, I don't know how I'm gonna do that, you know. I can't find childcare by June so hopefully, you know, I can. But if I can't, I won't be able to take that class...so childcare, I guess, is the biggest thing right now...biggest obstacle." These sentiments are echoed by a Native American student from Del Norte, "[i]t is hard to raise children and make a living while going to school full time."

Although a childcare center operates on the Eureka campus, issues with childcare interfering with education do not appear to be limited to equity group students in Del Norte. An ESL student from the Eureka campus comments that they need, "[j]ust a sitter, a trustworthy sitter to watch my kids. Sometimes it affects my attendance." A Native American/ESL student lists the "[l]ack of childcare as well as health center services" obstacles to their education. Moreover, an African American student offers "info for childcare" as a suggestion for a resource CR can provide to better serve students. This data intimates to us that our Eureka campus childcare center is not meeting some of the needs of equity group students at the Eureka campus.

The lack of childcare at CR interfering with education is not limited to students who belong to the equity groups that this report considers. Analysis of our control group data reveals similar concern from the general population of CR students regarding childcare as a barrier to their educational attainment. This study's control group students from Del Norte report that they "need childcare"; that one necessary improvement CR can make would be "childcare drop ins at Del Norte campus"; and that childcare is sometimes the only obstacle to educational attainment: "The only thing that has ever held me back was the last time I attended CR. I was a single parent and could not find reliable childcare." One student from Del Norte explains that childcare is the mediating factor forcing some students to choose between economic survival or educational attainment, "I chose to leave my current job, leaving just one adult with income, to further my education and care for my children 3/5. We are

renting out our home and moving to my moms to make ends meet.” Mention of childcare as an obstacle to educational attainment or as an area of improvement for CR is not limited to students in our control group at Del Norte. Students who are in this study’s control group from the Eureka campus also cite needing “better childcare options (hours, days)” and point out that stable childcare is a notable educational obstacle, “sometimes when my parents are out of town, I have to miss classes due to no childcare & I've heard that the CR childcare is limited.”

LGBTQ+ Specific Resources

On the topic of campus based student resources that CR lacks, an interview with a Eureka campus LGBTQ+ student reveals needs for more LGBTQ+ resources and extra support to affect LGBTQ+ students’ comfort on campus. This student says, “[w]e're not always understood by our peers, and sometimes we're afraid to reach out, because we worry about that misunderstanding happening; and it can--it can cause rifts in our lives...I do think there should be more resources that are specific for LGBT and queer students.” This same student reveals that they also struggle with mental health issues, implying that queer-specific mental health resources would benefit them. Another LGBTQ+ student writes on their questionnaire a request for “[a] more gender neutral bathrooms in common spaces. Not in the corner of some far off building.” LGBTQ+ specific resources for students can be a factor of retention at an institution of higher learning as they promote a safer campus climate for students for whom violence is of real concern.

Existing Resources, Availability & Quality **Library Hours**

A very common theme student iterate in this data, both in interviews and questionnaires, pertains to library hours. Most commentary about library needs is found in our data from Eureka campus students. The library is mentioned by participants in all equity groups, as well as by participants in this study’s control group. Several students included in our control group offer specific suggestions for improvement: “Maybe they could offer more systems to help us succeed and keep the library open at later hours for students to finish work.”; and that “It would be very helpful if the library was open on the weekends.” One Eureka campus student from our control group states, “[l]ibrary hours should be open longer and at night for those who need it.”

In an interview with an African American Eureka campus student, it is declared that the library is a paramount dynamic standing in the way of their ability to reach educational goals, “[m]y thing is the library. It's ridiculous. You know--how could you not be open on weekends, first of all. And then...the last bus leaves at 9:15, so you should stay open until 9. I really have a serious problem with the library situation, you know, that has to change, like ASAP, right away.” Nineteen of the 24 LGBTQ+ students surveyed make mention of library hours being problematic for them, and one LGBTQ+ student adds to this discussion that a needed resource would be to make more textbooks available in the library.

Course Availability

Course availability is another CR resource mentioned extensively to be lacking for students represented by our data. Similar to childcare, it is worth noting that a majority of the questionnaire responses to both on-campus courses and online courses come from Del Norte students. One ESL Del Norte student reports that they are “trying to graduate but the classes I need are not being offered next semester”, and a LatinX Del Norte student requests that CR “offer more classes on the DN campus.” A

black student from Del Norte needs “more variety of classes and prerequisites”.

An emergent theme to pay attention to here is the relationship between course availability and economic survival for equity group students at our Del Norte campus. A Native American student at Del Norte clearly illustrates this: “CR doesn’t offer math and English as a night class. I’m not willing to miss work for school.” Similarly echoed by a Del Norte ESL student, “...in order to live I need to work. However this greatly limits how many courses I can take.” One ESL LatinX student from Del Norte explains in a questionnaire that; “Class schedule conflicts w/ my 8-5pm job. I have to take classes one at a time; making my enrollment here long.” A Native American student from our Del Norte campus similarly clarifies that course availability is the barrier to their accomplishment of a degree: “Just not having some of the classes on campus in Del Norte and waiting for other CIS classes to be available.” This conflict is hardly limited to equity group members from Del Norte; one black student from the Eureka campus echoes this same theme: “I work full time and has not able to attend college until I was 22, it is also taking me longer to finish due to having to support myself.”

A Del Norte ESL student moves discussion about course availability further by pointing out that institutional choice to offer online solutions to Del Norte students is ineffective. They offer a solution to “offer more classes, that’s it. Years ago they had a lot of more classes to offer, most of my classes I need to get my AA is online. I enjoy actual real teachers.” This face-to-face learning preference is not limited to students at Del Norte either; one LatinX student from Eureka mentions specifically needing “more Computer Science courses that are not online.” This stands in contrast to information from two LGBTQ+ students at Del Norte who request more breadth of online classes. One possible explanative dynamic here could be that socioeconomic standing is a mediating factor of difference between many LGBTQ+ students and those from other equity groups. However, the theme of course availability being problematic for Del Norte LGBTQ+ students does still apply, as an LGBTQ+ student clarifies that “limited options of classes which keeps me from reaching my academic goal.” A black student from the Eureka campus who struggles with course availability similarly envisions online courses being helpful to their educational progress: “More online classes would be a great improvement for people like me who work full time. Or more evening classes.”

At our Eureka campus, LatinX students who are also ESL give feedback in regard to course availability: “Improve on our class selection, and give us more class options” and “I would appreciate more variety in degree programs.” One black ESL student from Eureka offers “more schedule classes can help a lot.” LGBTQ+ Eureka students request “More classes,” and state specifically “offering all classes both spring and fall would be super helpful.” One LGBTQ+ student at Eureka poignantly points out “a lot of priority required classes for CSU and UC are not offered here”.

Del Norte students who are members of our control group clarify course availability as an obstacle to educational attainment for all students in Del Norte by pointing out that in order to achieve all necessary classes, they have to commute to the Eureka campus to complete said classes. A Del Norte business major whose data is part of our control group explains “this semester the Del Norte campus did not offer classes that were business related”, and another Del Norte student from our control group offers that our Del Norte campus needs “more afternoon classes & more of a variety”. Another member of the control group at Del Norte clearly illustrates that a relationship between lacking childcare and course availability exists for our students; “I would love a change-up in the class schedule. As a mother of young children, it can be difficult to organize my schedule to get all the classes I want to take. If the class times changed or rotated (esp. Spanish) this would be easier.”

Transportation

Transportation issues regarding bus schedules, bus passes, and parking passes are also analyzed here as resources lacking at CR. Transportation issues are found mostly in the data from Eureka students. In the data from LGBTQ+ students at the Eureka campus, three specifically request free bus passes. Another LGBTQ+ student states that “[n]ot having to pay to park,” is what they would like to see improved upon on campus regarding transportation... they conclude that “it’s not like they spend a lot maintaining the parking lot.” Also from the Eureka campus, an LGBTQ+ student declares “I’m moving because I don’t own a car and the Eureka Transit Service is shit... Not having a car means I can’t participate in anything but the bare minimum (no clubs, extra time @ the library) due to the lack of consistent bus times”, and another point made here is that the only obstacle to educational progress is “just a far drive is all.”

African American students at the Eureka campus make multiple comments about the bus schedule, including clarity that bus schedules often don't match up with class schedules, so students frequently arrive either too early or too late for their classes. Management of scheduling between going to school, work, and when the bus arrives is problematic for one black student who clarifies that “it’s difficult. The school is very out the way. And if you have a full time job its kinda hard to keep getting out there for school... I live in arcata.” Another black interviewee from our Eureka campus states, “I can’t just leave class and go to work, I have to worry about a bus schedule and it just makes it harder to schedule anything.” This same student mentions how night classes run later than the buses do, which adds another layer of complexity to their work-school balance. Yet another black interviewee feels similarly: “[m]ore bus schedules or better bus schedules could definitely help people schedule their classes better.”

Like course availability, issues with transportation are not limited to data from members of the equity groups being considered here. Transportation issues appear to be a theme related to the attainment of students’ educational goals, as respondents who are members of our control group at Eureka echo equity group members concerns here. Along the same lines as the black student we hear from above, a control group member points out that its “Hard to work full time and commute to school from Arcata”. A Eureka campus control group member recommends solving this conundrum: “I have to travel to Eureka for one of my classes. More online or distance learning would help.”

One thing we expected to see among this data but did not, at least not to the level of our expectation, is transportation as a highly emergent dynamic obstacle for students who attend classes at our Del Norte campus. Perhaps this is because students in Del Norte are habituated to difficult routine travel because Crescent City residents are required to travel long distances for access to many amenities that are closer in geography for people in Humboldt County? Our concern is that socioeconomic factors present in students personal lives then enable some students- mostly those who are members of our control group- more latitude to achieve educational goals than is afforded to students who are represented within the equity groups we consider here. Here we show micro-level exemplars that illustrate exactly how structural inequality works in our society.

One Del Norte control group member has the latitude in her life to use transport of her person to solve her educational attainment issues, as she is “moving to the Eureka campus for more class variety”. Another control group member from Del Norte manages a difficult commute to Eureka but appears to wish they didn’t need to: “[Offer] more classes... wide selection, so that I don't have to commute.” Other control group members from Del Norte appear to take courses in Eureka and perhaps other places as well “the Del Norte campus should offer more science courses, the campus makes it very

difficult for health occupation students to finish a degree here without having to take classes elsewhere.” Collective analysis of Del Norte data reveals that most Del Norte students' mode of transportation is a personal or shared vehicle, however one ESL Del Norte student comments that they “would like the college to provide transportation.” Our one interview with a Native American student who takes classes both in Eureka and at Hoopa points to a long commute as a factor mediating their ability to attain educational goals, as this student recommends that CR “offer more classes in Hoopa and satellite offices...long ride to CR main branch, gas expenses”.

Resource and Activity Awareness

An important trend to note is that students report a lack of awareness when it comes to resources our campuses already provide. A multitude of comments found both in questionnaires and interviews, only some of which we highlight here, range from students not knowing about all of the campus resources the college provides, to students being completely unaware that the school offers any resources at all. Resources students are unaware of include things such as the campus health center in Eureka, counseling, EOPS, the Light Center, and this list goes on. Since there appears to be an overall lack of awareness about what does exist, we analyze this as something CR lacks because there appears to be a communication breakdown between the college and its students. Responsibility for engaging effective outreach strategies about existing resources is onus of the college.

In an interview with an ESL student at the Eureka campus, when questioned about the campus resources they use, they were puzzled and asked what those services are? The interviewer mentioned the Light Center and EOPS to prompt this student, to which the interviewee comments, “I don’t really know. I’ve seen EOPS somewhere....but I don’t even know what that stands for.” An ESL LatinX student from our Del Norte campus has need for accessing information about specific resources; “I feel like I need help finding scholarships that I fit in.” A Native American student who takes classes in Eureka, when asked in an interview about the campus resources they utilize, appears puzzled: “I am not sure. This is my first higher education attempt and so far all has been helpful...I’ve enjoyed attending CR. It would be nice to have an educational counselor to talk with rather than left to my own devices.” It appears that, although they think they might find counseling useful, this student is unaware about how to access needed counseling at CR.

Another black interviewee from the Eureka campus is concerned that students don’t have access to information about the student health center: “the only reason I know about it is because I used to live in the dorms, and yeah when you live in the dorms you walk around campus a lot. But the door isn’t even really labeled that well!” The interviewer asks this student if the info for the health center is on CR’s website, to which the student replies, “I have no idea, yeah, like I said the only reason I ever found out about it was because I physically found it”, implying that this valuable resources was found by this student in happenstance due only to living on campus. Another African American student interviewee at the Eureka campus responds to being queried about the resources he uses by noting “I have not used any of them. I didn’t even know there was any.”

Awareness about campus engagement activities is included here in analysis about campus resources because effective relationship and community building outside of classrooms builds a sense of social support vital to student success. Regarding campus activities, an ESL student at the Eureka campus states, “I’m used to a campus that’s more lively, there’s stuff going on and... more opportunities to make connections with people.” LGBTQ+ students at the Eureka campus also have little awareness of clubs and campus activities, as several questionnaire respondents specifically mention that clubs are lacking, one of whom questions, “[c]lubs? Do we even have any clubs?” As seen

within other areas of this analysis, commentary about lacking campus engagement activities is not limited to members of our equity groups, as this study's control group members from the Eureka campus also talk about campus engagement. Students want "a greater variety of fun activities", "more community building projects or organizations", "more fun activities", "more fun events to keep students motivated.", "more guest speakers on outside topics." Control group students from Eureka note specifically that they are "working a lot, and lack of social activities" and that "the Digital Media club has been a beneficial addition"

Mental Health Resources

Although the literature did point toward the importance of this, one emergent theme we did not anticipate finding to be so strongly represented by our data is noted across almost all groups of students, in both interviews and questionnaires, and at both campuses. Mental health is a strong emergent theme discussed as a notable obstacle to education by CR students. Students most commonly discuss anxiety and depression, but other disorders are also mentioned. Mention of mental health is hardly limited to equity group members here, although we do discuss how mental health is an obstacle in unique ways for students who are members of equity groups within this analysis.

Eureka campus control group respondents mention through the questionnaire that various aspects of their mental health serve to complicate their ability to succeed. This includes their citing of obstacles such as "anxiety, and getting overwhelmed easily with a lot of classes and work", "crippling depression makes school hard", "low self esteem", "Drinking, Procrastination, living situation, not having many friends, worry about future living situation, money, job". One student simply longs for "a sense of belonging" and another clarifies that they do make strides toward educational success, "yes, but running out of steam and losing hope"

Mental Health: LGBTQ+ Students

Mentioning depression, ADD, ADHD, and a Bipolar diagnosis, five LGBTQ+ student questionnaires from students at the Eureka campus acknowledge that mental illness is an obstacle that impedes their educational progress. These students also mention that they have multiple mental health obstacles: an intersection of mental disorders that affects their ability to achieve their goals at CR. One LGBTQ+ student states, "[o]ften I cannot function and get everything, or anything, done... and life does not pause while I learn and figure things out." Another LGBTQ+ student who is also Native American reveals that depression is their biggest obstacle and that "it's hard to concentrate and feel excited about school." Yet another LGBTQ+ student explains "I have a mental illness that could effect my college class or other things."

Another writes, "[I]luckily I go to therapy but I know many here with mental health issues who don't. I'm sure there are mental health facilities here but it's hard to seek such help." This student points out that it's hard to seek help as a student with mental illness, and that this difficulty is compounded by lack of availability of mental health resources on campus or the stigma attached to seeking mental health services. Their statement also insinuates that students expect their college to have mental health facilities; yet, perhaps there aren't any on campus to utilize, even if one desires and motivates to do so. In discussion about obstacles to education, one LGBTQ+ student astutely connects mental health dynamics to rural isolation; "Being too isolated in a small town with not enough resources, support, or opportunity."

Mental Health: ESL & LatinX Students

ESL and LatinX students are analyzed together here not to imply that all or most ESL students at CR are LatinX, but rather because useful quotes about mental health that we have mined from our data do happen to come from some students who are members of both of these specific equity groups. At both CR campuses ESL students report being stressed, having anxiety, depression, feeling overwhelmed, lacking sleep, and lacking self-confidence. Specific to the Del Norte campus, one ESL student explains the biggest obstacle to their education as “my mental and physical issues. Have chronic anxiety, PTSD and it can be challenging when I want to run and hide from the world. I had a partial stroke which makes it hard to retain information-that’s a real challenge.” Another Del Norte ESL student, who is also LatinX, clarifies their obstacle as “lots of stress, feeling overwhelmed on all the things I’m doing.”

For Eureka campus Latinx students, including an interviewee commenting on the mental health needs of the students in the dorms, the recurring theme of mental health struggle reiterates the need for mental health resources on campus. One ESL student at the Eureka campus shares, “recently my father passed away and I haven’t found my way to focus in school. I attend class but my mind is elsewhere.” Another faces multiple barriers, all which point toward the prevalence of mental health dynamics at play: “yes, I’m homeless and I’m a recovering addict so I’m not always equipped to deal w/ life stressors.” Another Eureka campus ESL student, one who is also LatinX, candidly shares that “I am struggling with depression, drug use, and financial setbacks. All of which is jeopardizing my success in school.”

Mental Health: Native American Students

Native American respondents from both CR campuses speak about educational challenges that mental illness presents. This theme of mental health as an obstacle for Native students is seen in both the interview and short answer questionnaire data. Two Native students interviewed explain how mental health issues continue to be an issue they deal with that affects their academic success. One states that their main obstacle is “my own mental health”, as they struggle with depression. One student shares that “I have had several health problems. Hospitalization, depression, anxiety.” Another describes being a recovering drug addict and the related experience of anxiety: “I personally get anxiety pretty bad during tests.”

One Native student’s response to a questionnaire prompt about what life circumstances serve as obstacles to their goals on the survey is, “I am suffering from severe anxiety and depression that affects me a lot in school...” Other Native students have similar sentiments. For example, one student discloses, “I have a severe anxiety condition that makes school pretty hard. This sometimes gets in the way of my education,” and another reveals, “I just like to learn, and I hope to gain knowledge and not lose my mind or mental health doing it...I have a severe anxiety condition that makes school pretty hard. This sometimes gets in the way of my education”.

In considering this data, is important to understand that mental health is an issue faced disproportionately by Native Americans as compared their white- or our study’s control group-counterparts. Regarding higher education, this means that students of the Native American equity group at CR are more likely to experience mental illness and related issues than are students from the control group. It is also relevant for consideration here that these students likely have disproportionately less access to mental health services. They are less likely to receive the mental health care that they need as a predicate to academic success.

Overall, in relation to mental health and all other themes of our analysis as well, responses from both the questionnaires and interviews from students within the Native American equity group come across as being very positive in tone. We do not interpret this to be the case because students in the Native American equity group already have enough resources for educational attainment. These students do not have access to enough resources, nor are barriers to their continued education absent. Rather, we see this overall positivity to be a reflection of the colonization of Native peoples in the United States. Due to colonization, Native students are a part of a group of people who have been left dependent on the culturally dominant social systems for their basic survival. This cultural dependency leads to Native students rarely questioning or criticizing the system, even when the system may not be working well for them. This truth is what we think explains an overall lack of negative or critical response in all analyzed categories from Native students. Given this, we highlight that Native American student responses about their mental health needs are extremely important and carry significant weight within the body of this analysis.

Mental Health: African American Students

In conducting our analysis, we note that African American students are divergent from the trend we see among students who belong to other equity groups mentioning mental health needs. With mental health comprising such a strong emergent theme among our data, we were spurred to consider what might be happening here? Additional literature is offered within this analysis subsection because, as is sometimes the case when using a grounded theory approach for social research, we found we needed to return to the literature in order to make some sense of what we find in our data. While mental health stigma exists within all communities of color (Knifton 2008), it is clear that mental health stigma is most prevalent within Black communities (Alvidrez, Snowden, and Kaiser 2008; Masuda, Anderson, and Edmonds 2012).

According to Alvidrez et al. (2008), Black individuals are less likely than Whites to seek mental health help and are also “underrepresented in outpatient mental health settings” (876). Black individuals report growing up in environments where mental health was considered a private matter not meant to be discussed (Alvidrez et al. 2008). Masuda et al. (2012) clarifies that stigma is one of the primary reasons why Blacks, particularly those who are college students, do not seek psychological services. This literature appears to be in line with our analysis, as we noticed that differently from students from other equity groups, African American students lack overall mention in our data of mental health being an issue for them.

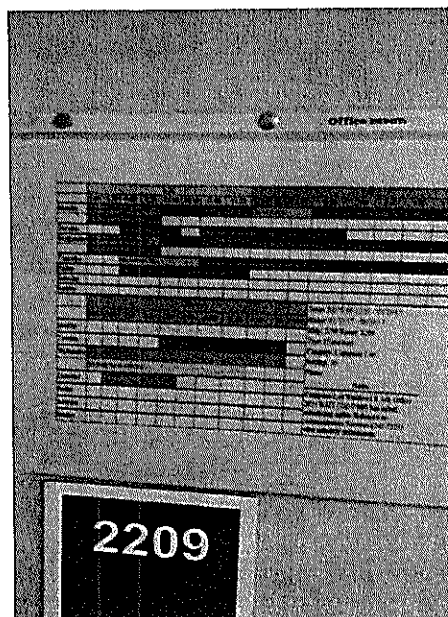
One African American student we interviewed appears to downplay his struggles, pointing to the absence of self humanizing emotion: “everyone has struggles but what I worry about is going to school and keeping my grades up and not being able to work enough hours to pay bills.” In another instance, an African American student we interviewed responds to a question about obstacles dismissively, “Uh, everyone’s got problems [laughs].” This stands in contrast to an African American student who articulates what appears to us as absence of adequate mental health support for educational attainment “I struggle with my mental and emotional health, from mental illness and extreme childhood abuse. Often I cannot function and get everything (or anything) done. It takes therapy, which takes money, and life does not pause while I learn and figure things out.”

Shasta College Comparison

An outstanding characteristic of Shasta College is the amount and quality of their campus signage. Not only are there various fliers and posters around campus advertising events, resources, announcements, etc., but there are also sizable white boards colorfully directing students to each of the departments, programs, and services with explanations of what is offered and lists of upcoming events. For example, there is a white board sign on the first floor of the cafeteria at the bottom of the staircase shaped like an arrow pointing up the staircase indicating that the TRiO facility is up there with an invitation for students to sign up for their services and a list of workshops offered through TRiO for the week.



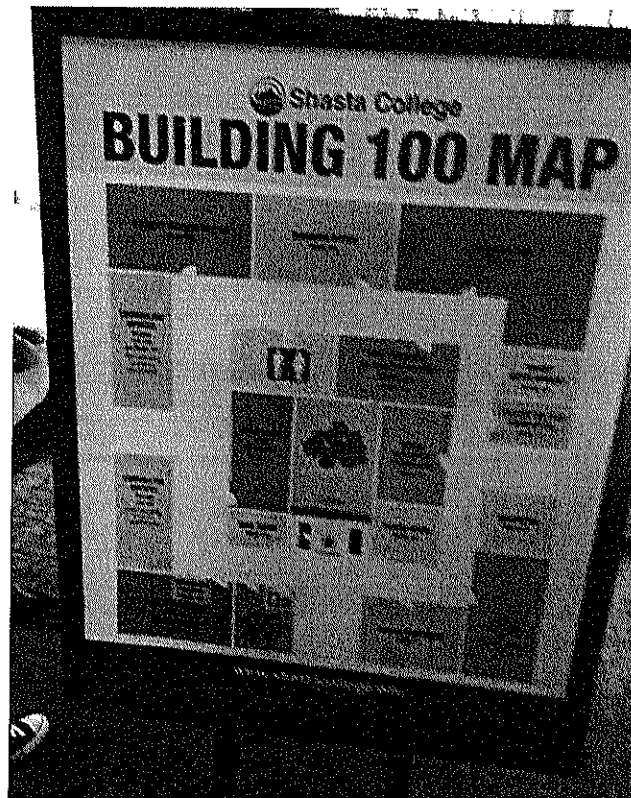
Moreover, each individual campus classroom has a sign on/near the door indicating which classes meet at what time in there.



Each campus building has a sign explaining what is offered within it.



Each building's entrances also have maps of the building's layout.

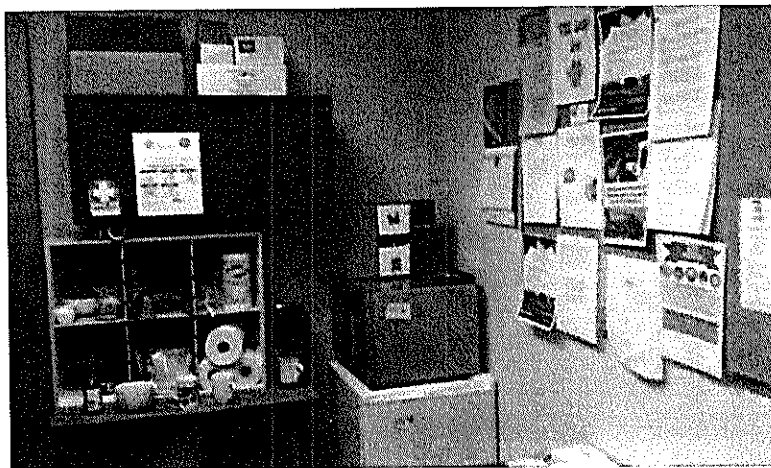


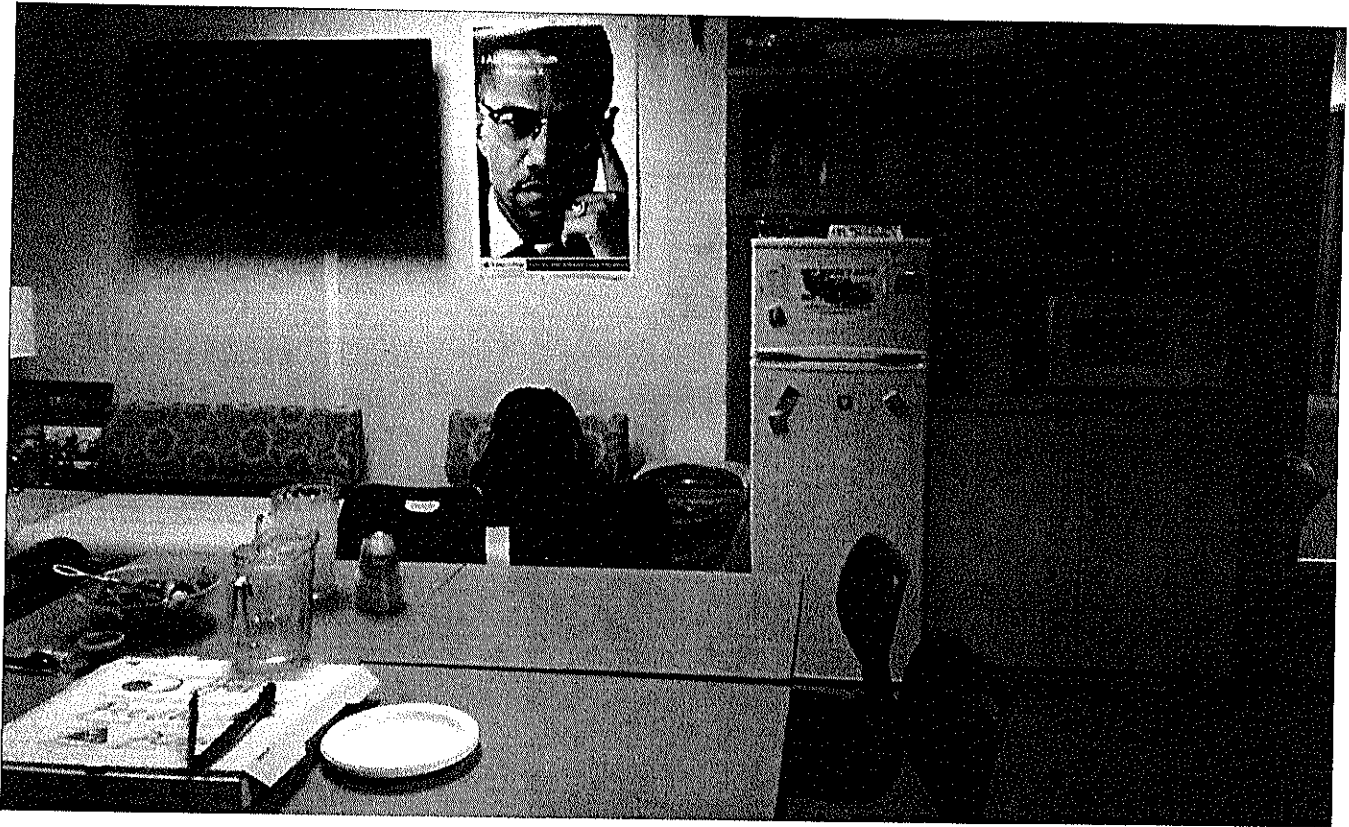
It appears that, if a person can read, that it is nearly impossible to be lost or unsure of where resources and or classes are on Shasta's campus. We consider this to be related to equity and retention

in that signs raise awareness of programs and services offered, give students the ability to easily locate programs and services, facilitate an open, welcoming, encouraging, less confusing environment, and can even help students to learn passively about classes that are offered by a college. Our analysis finds that there is a lack of awareness among CR students about the programs, services, and events CR offers. Such prevalent, informative signage could serve to increase students' awareness of what is available, which in turn may increase student participation in campus programs and services and possibly increase the amount of funding allocated to them.

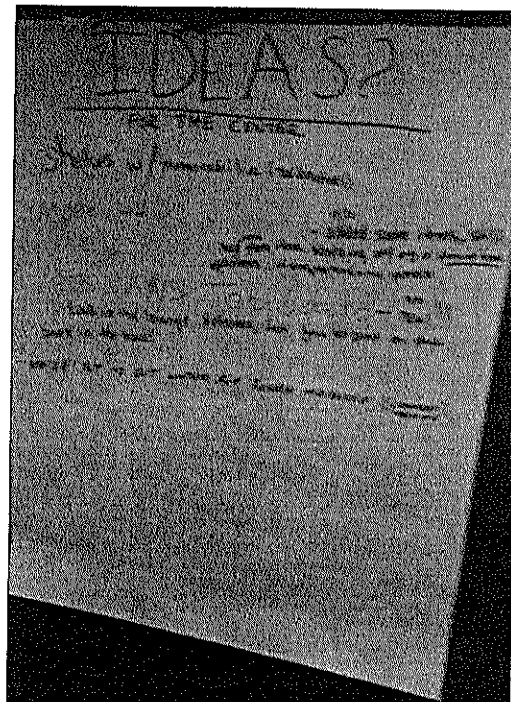
In continuation of this subject of communication, Shasta has many of the same programs and services as CR, such as EOPS, TRiO, and DSPS, but what stands out the most about Shasta here is the interconnectedness of these campus services. Every person the researchers spoke with at each program they visited on Shasta's campus mention that they not only provide the students who are part of their program with what that program offers, but that they also work to actively connect those students with all the other campus programs that they are eligible for. One effective way that this is done is by engaging in the simple act of physically walking students to the other program facilities, introducing them to a contact person within those programs. These contacts help right then and there by signing students up for additional programs. Each campus department is aware of what the others offer and collaborate to ensure that students receive all the support they possibly can. In addition, each program makes visible effort to connect students to community-based resources not offered by the school that can aid in their ability to meet their educational goals. This is a very different model from how communication fails for CR students; several student informants for our research went into length about how ineffective it is for the college to "send so many emails" as tangible examples of CR's failed communication.

Communication and cooperation role modeled for us by our visit to Shasta appear to play a role in Shasta's holistic approach to student equity, retention, and success. Each program we visited offers support for students' academic, financial, social, and emotional needs. Each has its own academic advisers and mental health counselors (sometimes the same person plays both roles) as well as its own physical space designed specifically for the students who utilize the program or service. For example, both the Veterans Center and the SCI*FI (Shasta College Inspiring & Fostering Independence – for current and former foster youth) program have private student lounges with couches, study areas, computers, free printing, a fridge, microwave, and snacks.





These are both examples of physical on campus spaces that students are encouraged to help shape. Students who are a part of these programs are encouraged to make these spaces their own and submit ideas to improve their use.



Both the Veterans Center and the SCI*FI also have mental health counselors who specialize in the specific needs of the student groups each serves. These programs provide students in need with support

regarding transportation costs, housing within the local community, textbook costs, etc. If their specific program does not fully cover the students' needs, they reach out directly to the campus Access and Equity department for access to the remaining necessary funds. Not every Shasta program has a space with couches, food, and entertainment, but they do all have private areas for studying and technology use. CR lacks mental health services, and with the exception of the Veterans Center at the Eureka campus, does not seem to provide adequate specialized space for students participating in campus programs. Counselors and dedicated, habitable space are both understood at Shasta to be dynamics that make students feel more comfortable on campus.

Shasta's holistic approach to student equity and success is evident in other ways as well. For instance, each semester is packed with equity related events; there were 17 in the Spring 2017 semester.



Access and Equity Spring 2017 Events		
Go to the Access & Equity website for more information and for the most up-to-date information: http://www.shastacollege.edu/accessandequity/		
February Events		
Safe Zone Training of Instructors	February 3, 9 to 5 pm	Room 2103 (Registration)
Steps to College, Transfer Fair	February 4, See Transfer Office	Field Trip, Sacramento
Open Mic Event: Unleash Your Voice	February 7, 3 to 4:30 pm	Room 2206
Historically Black Colleges Transfer Fair, Scholarships Available!	February 15, 10 am to 1 pm	Student Center Stage
Black History Month Celebration: Presentations & Student Panel, Dinner	February 16, 5:30 to 8:30 pm	Cafeteria
March Events		
The Neuroscience of Decision Making in Criminal Justice	March 2, 11 to 4:30 pm	Theatre (Reception to follow)
Open Mic: Women, Voices, Power	March 7, 3 to 4:30 pm	Room 2206
Kathy Buckley Presentation!	March 8 th , 3 to 4:30 pm	1103
Art Talk, Event Tactics Art Display	March 13, 2:30 to 3:30 pm	Library 1st floor
Art Talk: Tattoo Presentations, Montage	March 13, 3:30 to 6:30 pm	Library 1st floor
Community Organizing Training	March 24, 9 am to 12 am	Room 2103
Color Change Day of Service	March 25, All Day	Redding
Open Mic: Day of Service	March 25, 2 All Day	Red Hill
April Events		
Open Mic: Being Silly	April 4, 3 to 4:30 pm	Room 2206
Gender & Equity Conference	April 25 th , 9 to 1 pm	Student Center Stage
Safe Zone Miss Workshop	April 25 th , 1 to 3 pm	Student Center Stage
May Events		
Open Mic: Hope and Courage	May 2, 3 to 4:30 pm	Room 2206

Shasta has an Equity Ally Incentive Program to encourage students to participate in campus equity related events. This program offers incentives such as meal vouchers, bookstore vouchers, and even breakfast with the president and other administrators for students who are interested in learning more about equity and how to be an ally by attending at least 3 to 5 campus equity events.

Equity Ally Incentive Program		
The Student Equity Ally Incentive Program offers students who attend Access and Equity sponsored activities and events the possibility to earn incentives!		
What do I have to do?		
1) Attend the required number of events in a given semester.*		
2) Get an initial stamp on this card for attending.		
3) Complete a survey with Access & Equity.		
4) Choose an incentive.		
What can I earn?		
Attend 3 Equity Events: Food Service Vouchers, Bookstore Vouchers and Fuel Cards (Valued \$10)		
Attend 5 Equity Events: Food Service Vouchers, Bookstore Vouchers and Fuel Cards or, 16 GB flash drive, free passes to Shasta College events, Equity Ally Certificate or, Breakfast with administrators and campus presidents! <small>* You can count one Student Success workshop as a qualifying event.</small>		

These types of events and programs foster an inclusive and welcoming environment for a diverse body of students. They include structured interactive opportunities for students to build direct relationships and community with one another.

Although CR does host some equity related events, these are rarely well promoted. This points to effective communication as a consistent challenge that CR faces as an item for necessary improvement. Institutional incentives for student community-building and allyship are not offered at CR. Several CR students included in our study bring up a lack of meaningful campus events and a lack of a sense of campus community as a problem for them. Perhaps Shasta is an indicator of how well publicized, institutionally supported community-building equity events at CR can help.

The equity group at CR that mentions a lack of campus community the most is the ESL group. Many of these students mention difficulty making friends and feelings of isolation. Shasta College offers free ESL courses, specialized ESL tutoring within the main tutoring building, a language partnership program, and weekly Conversation Cafe meetings that not only address ESL students' academic needs, but also their social and cultural needs. ESL classes and tutoring help these students to have a better grip on English so that they can more confidently hold conversations with English speaking peers and write papers for their classes. Additional benefit of these offerings is that these programs and interactions build campus community.

The language partnership program at Shasta college pairs ESL students up with other students who are studying the languages they speak. Both students practice their language skills with each other. This program practically runs itself: the program director pairs the students up, and then students decide when, where, and how often to meet. The weekly Conversation Cafe meetings, open to anyone who wants to come, have different themes every gathering. For example, one week they may practice speaking/writing Japanese, learning about Japanese culture, and eating Japanese food. Another week, say before an upcoming American holiday, they may explain the significance of the holiday and what to expect for international students who may not be familiar with how/why Americans celebrate said holiday.



Practice your English
May 5th at 10am-12pm
in the Cafeteria

celebrate new cultures through conversation
and interactive activities



Shasta College

www.shastacollege.edu

Shasta College is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

ESL

(530) 242-7711

All of these services make it possible for ESL students to connect with peers and feel a stronger sense of community and belonging. CR offers ESL classes but has considerably limited tutoring options for ESL students. The language partnership program is most assuredly possible to implement at CR, at least for Spanish, if not the conversation cafe model too.

Shasta's dedicated tutoring building hosts a Writing Center, Math Lab, ESL tutoring, as well as other programs of academic support for students. Tutoring services are available to all students, and even to community members free of charge, all without the requirement that one be registered for a tutoring lab academic unit in order to utilize tutoring services. Some tutors are specialized in certain areas so they can better serve students' individual needs. For example, there are writing tutors who specialize in MLA format, or APA format, etc. Likewise, the math tutors specialize in specific areas of math.



CR students largely praise the benefits of the Writing Center and Math Lab, yet commonly complain that these tutoring services do not have enough hours of availability or staffing to meet student demand for them. CR tutoring and academic support students are also not accessible to all students because of the registration requirement. Registration is an additional financial investment that compounds the investment of time that students already make to engage academic support options. These barriers render tutoring outside the range of possibility for some student equity group members at CR.

Lastly, Shasta offers a multitude of employment opportunities for students. The campus even has a student employment office whose director's purpose is to help students gain employment either on campus, or in the community. For example, Shasta's student ambassador program employs students who help other students to adjust to college life, get them connected with the services they need, and feel welcome in the learning environment. As other examples, some students have the job of signage upkeep, or even taking notes for students who struggle with doing so. Ensuring that students have

employment that fits their academic and life responsibility schedules serves to keep students enrolled and engaged in continuing toward meeting educational goals. On campus jobs can add to a more positive campus climate and sense of community among students.

Often, on campus jobs give students experience within their desired field of study, experience with leadership, and give students a sense of pride and ownership regarding their school. Furthermore, the student employment director at Shasta college – whose official job title is the Employment Development Services Technician - helps students who are transferring to a University or moving out of the area to find employment at their new school or within their new communities so there is a smaller chance of having to pause or stop their education due to lack of employment. Given the conflict between education and economic survival found in our analysis of data from students who are members of equity groups at CR, exploration of campus employment opportunities for students on both CR campuses included in this analysis seems imperative.

Recommendations

To help various CR campus branches and constituents make use of this report, recommendations are organized into two categories. Some recommendations driven by our findings involve the allocation, distribution and use of campus resources such as money and space. Some recommendations driven by our findings either involve no resources, very few, or refocus how resources can be used more effectively. This report organization is intended to support various CR committees and groups already working to find ways to effectively contribute efforts toward achieving change at CR. The goal here is to work collectively and intentionally to increase retention and educational goal achievement for CR students who are members of the Native American, African American, LatinX, ESL, and LGBTQ+ equity groups.

There are areas of and topics contained within this report that need to be addressed about which we do not make direct recommendation. These topics and areas include course availability or scheduling, a conversational language connection between ESL and language learning students, access to student tutoring and academic support services, the reallocation of physical campus space for the building of program specific student use centers, and student employment. We do not offer recommendation for these items for specific reasons. Several topics are those we understand to be of recent controversy at College of the Redwoods, such as tutoring or building CR's ESL programs. It is not the goal of this research team to contribute to political controversy.

Course availability and physical campus space use are understood to be ongoing discussions about the allocation of campus-based resources that we understand to be under constant address by College of the Redwoods. In the case of course availability and space allocation, we ask existing committees to please consider information contained in this report to be the voice of the interest of CR students, most especially those who are members of the equity groups this report considers. Student employment is an area of need we ask campus administrators to please revisit and increase at all possible junctures; although to be a job a student can use, it needs to be a good job. Ten or fifteen hours a week at minimum wage does not necessarily help a student for whom the conflict between school and economic survival is a lived experience.

Non-Resource Driven Recommendations

Non-resource driven recommendations redirect campus resources that area already available to or in use for the intended benefit of students. Non-resource recommendations can be further divided into two subgroups: signage and white boards.

Lacking Communication

Data suggests that a barrier to CR equity group members' student success is in part due to a lack of effective communication between the school and the students. Communication about existing resources is largely limited to optional student orientation and emails. These methods are ineffective in communicating to students which resources, events, and services are available (as well as when, where, and for whom specifically). Two ways we identify to increase communication efficiency are changes in the use of signage on campus and increasing the use of easily and routinely updatable, strategically located campus white boards.

Signage

Currently on both CR campuses included in this report, signage is sparse and small. Analysis of data leads to recommendation that concerted effort to streamline signage on both campuses should be refocused to provide for better communication with students. At the very least, better signage is needed to direct students to the existence and location of the Eureka campus health center. In a more coherent sense, signage needs to be placed outside of every campus door: program doors, classroom doors, administration office doors, faculty office doors, and building doors. These signs need to be large, well designed, legible and visible to students. Signs need to clearly communicate what resources, services, or campus activities are provided behind each door, who or what campus department or campus program is accessible behind each door, and who or what specifically can be found behind each door. For those located on classroom doors, signage should communicate which classes meet in each classroom and at what times those classes meet.

Other sorts of signage to be better engaged at CR are those for program and events. Program signage should include the purpose, services, campus location, the name of a contact person, contact information and eligibility requirements for each campus program. If there is an application procedure or hours of operation, these details should also be included. Signs for campus events need to be more visible around the entire campus, including regular posting in outlying campus areas such as in the AT building, campus gymnasium, CA building. Additionally, at the Eureka campus, event and program signs should blanket the campus bus stop and cafeteria. Again, these signs need to be large, visible, easy to read, and accessible to students. This can increase communication and should decrease the barrier in knowledge students experience in relation to accessing resources on CR's campuses.

It is further suggested that boards for signs about specific categories of things students need be established and maintained in multiple locations on each campus, in areas where students tend to congregate such as the library foyer, the bust stop, cafeteria, or other such well travelled spots. There are some student needs found as emergent themes of need for student equity groups that may not be within the direct scope of CR to meet, such as transportation, housing, and perhaps employment. However, what CR can and should do is work to intentionally facilitate community- student and student-to-student connection so our community and students can work together to meet one another's needs.

Rideshares for gas help, trading childcare, potential roommate connection, and sharing of books or educational tools are dynamics students routinely engage in to mutually support one another's educational pursuits. Such student connection boards need to be established for routine posting of student childcare trade offers, housing offers or needs, and transportation or learning resource offers or needs (such as student engaged ride shares, book, uniform or learning technology sales, or housing availability). A sizeable scholarship board maintained near the financial aid access point on each campus with easy to take-away information about scholarship opportunities, applications and processes is also needed. A community employment board on each CR campus is also needed. CR should facilitate communication with local community employers so that jobs- big and small- which are available for students are posted for student access.

White Boards

We observe that at Shasta College, one way effective communication occurs with students is through the use of white boards. Since data analyzed here shows improvement in student communication is needed, habituating use of white boards by staff and programs on our campuses

could be a reasonably achieved task which would be an improvement upon what is perceived by students to be largely an absence of communication about potentially vital information. We suggest large dry erase white boards be secured in areas highly frequented by students. These white boards should be used to inform students about what campus events are happening, to provide information about resources available to them, and to deliver reminders about important upcoming campus processes or dates. White boards need to be regularly updated by staff or a work-study student so that the most up-to-date information is offered.

Community Building

Another barrier our data suggests may be effecting students' ability to be successful is a lack of community. We have two recommendations to increase community on the College of the Redwoods campus: implementation and habituated use of a Student Ambassador type of program and intentional, publicized, campus programming and broad scale community refocus of existing services on increasing overall wellness for all campus community members.

Student Ambassador Program

A student ambassador type program would likely involve redirecting some existing work-study funding to create jobs for students. Students working within the program provide direct outreach to other students and serve the dual functions of intentional campus welcome and peer-to-peer informal academic mentor. CR needs to provide a course for students to receive training related to serving in this position, similar to existing courses for students who work in the dorms or as tutors. Ambassadors can work assertively to help break down barriers for students with faculty and staff to build effective connections between faculty, staff, and students. Students working within the program will also serve the important function of being available in campus hub locations such as the administration building, the library, and the learning center to walk students directly to the locations of resources located elsewhere. This service provides additional opportunity for casual peer-to-peer wellness check in as well as chat time with students about what resources are available and where those resources can be found. For a program like this to be successful, its imperative is be well staffed and effectively managed by engaged staff mentoring, as well as strategic and all hours stationing of students in locations that are highly frequented to increase accessibility of ambassadors to students, staff, and faculty who may need to utilize the student support and connection service they are trained to offer.

Community Wellness Initiative

Data analyzed within this report focuses attention on the need students have for campus response to student mental health. Community wellness is a broad scale recommendation driven by this finding; it refocuses CR toward providing campus activities and events to increase the overall strength of College of the Redwoods community by improving the community's wellness. Community wellness events are a concerted effort that includes peer, staff, and invited community group or organization led discussion groups and interactive activities that are topic specific: race, depression, anxiety, scholastic stress, parenting support, safer sex, grief awareness, free health testing, etc. Events should be scheduled and promoted at least a month in advance and, in addition to campus website or email promotion, should also be promoted through large signs, white boards, and student ambassadors. Student Ambassadors should be peers who are organizing and leading some of these discussions.

It is recommended that there is an increase in diversity related and diversity exposure cultural

sharing type events. This can be done in various ways, for example, film screenings followed by discussions on the film, open discussion panels, food or ritual sharing activities, or guest speakers. It is also recommended that faculty be invited and encouraged to open their classrooms for all students when specific activities are scheduled to take place such as art or project sharing, discussions about timely topics, or anything else happening that is likely to help gain student engagement across campuses. An easily achievable recommendation is that College of the Redwoods increase communication on campus about off-campus, diversity related events. Specifically, we recommended that College of the Redwoods effectively communicate with students about events happening at Humboldt State University and offer bus and parking information, as well as campus maps or contacts who can help students find their way to these activities.

Shasta College's student incentive program for students who participate in a number of campus diversity activities is intriguing to us. We suggest exploring the potential of developing a similar incentive program for students at CR. This might involve Student Equity fund spending or cafeteria and bookstore donation in the way of meal or bookstore vouchers. Whatever the incentives might be, structuring a participation program that encourages students to seek these activities out would benefit our overall level of campus engagement and wellness.

Resource-Driven Recommendations

Given what our data shows, there are two significant areas we are led to highlight for resource-driven recommendations. This includes expanding the district's libraries and providing mental health services and support for students on our campuses.

Library

It is recommended that CR widen its overall access to the library. It is outside the scope of our findings to specify what library changes to implement on the Del Norte campus. Therefore we recommend a student survey that is library specific be engaged during 2017-2018 academic year to determine what specific expansions of library services are most needed by students on the Del Norte campus. It is also possible that this information has already been reaped through previous efforts and simply needs to be revisited. For the Eureka campus, we specifically recommended that funding be directed at the Eureka campus for the library to expand its hours of operation. Specifically, students need the library to be open later during the week and for it to be open on weekends. This recommendation is made in direct relation to student recommendations found frequently in our data.

It is also recommended that the school increase student library access in Eureka by providing scheduled, funded, and CR staff accompanied trips for College of the Redwoods students to the Humboldt State University library. This will introduce students to a large functioning library environment and orient them to the resources available through Humboldt State University (HSU) for community members. Libraries are cultural resource centers centered around books and the sharing of information; connecting CR students to the library resources at HSU creates a larger, more unified student culture in Humboldt County, helps CR students who transfer to HSU with their transition, and augments the underfunded and space challenged resources offered by CR's library by adding those offered by HSU's library to CR students' repertoire of library resources. This kind of access and resource socialization is what can help CR students become more successful students.

Mental Health

The final recommendation we make for this report is based on a theme we were surprised to find so heavily insinuated in our analysis of the data. CR needs to provide ample, destigmatized, well-publicized variant mental health services on our campuses. Several full time licensed professional mental health clinicians who have stable jobs at the Eureka campus, and one at the Del Norte campus, all whose primary purpose for CR is to provide mental health services for CR students, are needed to provide the mental health services students at CR say they need. Therefore, on behalf of all CR students, especially those who are members of the equity groups considered here, we are making an unsolicited direct staffing recommendation to College of the Redwoods that funding be prioritized for these positions. It has been explained to use that staffing is a highly political and routinized process at College of the Redwoods, but we contend that our needs are let unmet, unheard, and disregarded by whatever processes are currently in place toward this end.

A mental health counseling office needs to be staffed at set, known, accessible and publicized campus locations on both CR campuses. These hours also need to include scheduled drop-in hours for students who seek assistance without appointments. The office needs to disseminate information about other counseling offices in students' local communities, share mental health resources such as books or videos and participate in raising awareness across our district about the importance of mental health for student success.

Campus small group discussions related to wellness should occur either within or near to these mental health offices on both campuses. It is also recommended that this office's signage, the training of its staff and its environment be culturally inclusive and sensitive to peoples differences. Regularly occurring discussion groups specific to students at the level of group needs are necessary; such as an lgbtq+ group, a Native Students group, a social anxiety group, perhaps an eating disorder or a parenting group, etc. A campus wellness committee containing and involving of students that becomes part of the routine jobs of CR's staff, faculty, and administration is needed. This group is needed to help create targeted mental health and wellness programming, to receive regular feedback from students about how CR's efforts are working toward building community wellness, and to undergo intentional mental health destigmatization work at CR.

Given additional analysis of equity groups addressed by this study, it is suggested that campus mental health centers collaborate with Pottowot and other tribal services to network Native Students to other mental health support available in our communities. Concerted effort needs to be made in the areas of outreach and cultural sensitivity to help destigmatize mental health needs and the seeking of services among students who are African American. However, it remains that the most important part of groups provided through campus mental health services should be networking students with one another, so we can create effective community networks for social support.

Conclusion

Our data suggests that barriers students within Native American, African American, LatinX, ESL, and LGBTQ+ equity groups face reflect similar obstacles also faced by students who are not members of these groups. Perhaps it is the case that obstacles and barriers to success of educational goals are simply more prevalent for students who are also members of equity groups. Therefore, it is the case that the recommendations we make here, to increase strategic use of signage and white boards on our campuses, to structure and implement a student ambassador type program, undergo a district wide refocus on wellness, and hire ample mental health staff, will not only increase student success and retention of students belonging to these equity groups but it is also the case that these recommendations, if implemented well, stand to be beneficial for College of the Redwoods students at large. We understand this to be how it works often when considering diversity. What tends to unfold is a from the margins to the center sort of process. This process, if embraced, holds incredible potential for College of the Redwoods. When we look to students who strive for education at the margins of our campus communities- those who are members of equity groups- for answers about how we can strengthen our system to serve their achievement related needs and retain them as learners at our college, we find answers that stand to benefit an entire community.

We recommended that further research be conducted to increase our collective understanding about retention of students of equity at College of the Redwoods. We are proud that a small group of student researchers has accomplished this much and wonder what more might be revealed if a funded, institutionally supported report was engaged? Clearly information is needed about how to improve access to library services at the Del Norte campus; or perhaps this information already exists and just needs to be looked at again? Information is lacking in this report about students from our Hoopa campus, but we have learned that staff and student interactions can create deep questions about identity for students. Furthermore, research needs to be done throughout the process of implementing the recommendations to assess the success and failures of integrating and furthering these services into the College of the Redwoods campus environment and the college's everyday operations. The Sociology 15 Intro to Research Methods team thanks you for your time in consideration of our research, findings and recommendations.

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College of the Redwoods Student Questionnaire

Appendix A

The following is a survey to be conducted by the Sociology 15 Research Methods class. We estimate this questionnaire should take about 10 minutes to complete. You may skip any question(s) or opt out entirely. The purpose of this research is to identify trends in retention so that College of the Redwoods can better provide the resources students need to meet educational goal(s).

By participating in this survey, you are granting the research team permission to use the data provided, and that you have not taken this survey before. If you wish to enter a raffle for a \$100 Amazon gift card please provide your name and e-mail on the back of this form.

If you are interested in participating in an interview to double your chance at winning the raffle, please specify that you are interested in scheduling a one-on-one interview. Please contact Dr. Dana Maher at dana-maher@redwoods.edu with questions, complaints or concerns about this research.

Race/ Ethnicity (Please check all that apply to you)

Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American Latino or Hispanic American Asian
 Native American or Alaskan Native White (of non-Hispanic descent)
 Other _____

Enrollment Status: (Please check all that apply to you)

Full-time student (12-18 units) Part-time student (less than 12 units)
 Over-time student (more than 18 units) Academy of the Redwoods Student

Gender/Sexuality (Please check all that apply to you)

LGBTQ+ Male Gender Female Gender Transgender or Agender

Work: check the box which most accurately reflects your current work situation

20+ hrs/week for pay 1-19 hrs/week for pay Not currently working for pay

Please check all that apply regarding the transportation you use to transport yourself to/from school *most often*

I use my own vehicle I use a vehicle that tends to break down I use cash to take a bus

I use a bus pass to take the bus daily parking permit purchase semester parking permit purchased

I use a car shared with one or more people Other: _____

Are you the primary caregiver for 1 or more children, sick, or elderly person(s)? Yes
 No

Is your native language a language other than English? Yes No

1. Are you planning on returning to College of the Redwoods next semester? Yes____. No____.

Please explain why or why not.

2. What do you hope to gain from your education at College of the Redwoods?

3. Do you feel that these gains are within your current reach? For example, do you feel like you are making small steps toward a larger goal or are already gaining what you hope for? Please explain.

4. What does College of the Redwoods currently provide that is working well to support your education? Please be as specific as possible in naming any CR resources you currently utilize.

5. In terms of helping you gain what you hope to gain from your education here, what specific resources could College of the Redwoods improve upon or offer in addition to what is currently offered?

6. Are there any obstacles in your life that you feel comfortable telling us about here which stand to effect your ability to gain what you hope to gain from your education at College of the Redwoods? Please explain what is going on.

7. Is there anything else you would like to add here?

Name: _____; Contact info for Raffle

Would you like to be contacted to schedule an interview: _____No _____Yes

Permission to give surveys in classes; request from instructors prior to attending class.

- Ask to do surveys at the beginning of a class time. If other time is what is offered, please indicate this in your "questionnaire sheet" for the correlating instance.
- Read this statement to students before handing out surveys

"Sociology 15, social research methods, has created a team of student researchers to study educational resources and the retaining of students at College of the Redwoods. You are being invited to participate in taking a questionnaire as part of this project.

Your participation is voluntary. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO PROVIDE YOUR NAME IF YOU DON'T WANT TO; however, there is the option for you to give us your contact information to include you in a reward being offered through a raffle for project participation. Whether you choose to offer your name or not, your confidentiality is ensured by our research ethics. Your name will not be shared in any research reports or by other means.

There is a short statement at the beginning of the survey which explains more about the project. If you'd like to have another class you are in receive this survey, please let me know after class today. If you'd like to schedule a one on one interview to provide more information, you are welcome to indicate this at the end of your survey."

- After receiving surveys, please write a short note about the questionnaire instance.
 - o Date/time/location & # of surveys received @ the top
 - o Any unique dynamics of the encounter
 - Paperclip your questionnaire instance write up to the surveys received from the encounter.
 - Keep questionnaires with the write up; separate from other surveys.
 - You are creating "batches" to hand off.
-

- Can you tell me about how you were selected for this interview?
- Tell me about what you feel is relevant for me to understand your identity; for example do you identify as male or female, are you in recovery or negotiating past conviction, or do you have an identity indicative of a racial, ethnic or sexuality group such as white, black, queer?
- Tell me about your current courses. What are you studying, how are these classes going for you? (PROBES)
- Tell me about your experiences on campus. Describe how the environment is for you; for example, are there things you would like to be able to access or use more, ways that you feel in shared campus spaces, or other things that affect your experiences here?
- Tell me about your peer relationships at CR. For example, do you have close friends on campus or in your classes or do you choose to keep your school and personal life separate?
- Tell me about the campus support resources you tend to use.
- Are there any campus support resources you can mention that you know about but don't use?
 To Follow up: What keeps you from using these resources?
- Tell me about your personal experiences of the professors you've taken or are currently taking. You can use names or not. Please include both positive and negative experiences if you have them.
- Please describe any obstacles in your life which impact your ability to gain what you hope to gain from your education at CR. (PROBES)
- Are you planning to return to CR next term? Please explain why or why not.
- Do you have any additional comments you would like to add to this interview?

Informed Consent Form: Interviews

Appendix D

Title of Project: Equity Groups at College of the Redwoods: Addressing Retention Rates

Principal Investigator(s): Spring 2017 Soc 15 Students

Advisor: Dr. Dana Maher

- 1. Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to provide information that can be used by CR to improve the retention rates of Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, English as Second Language Learners, and LGBTQ+ students. Soc 15 Students will gather information on what resources students are needing on campus that will help them achieve their educational goal(s). The Multicultural Diversity Committee and the Student Equity Committee will review our findings so they can allocate resources accordingly.
- 2. Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to participate in a 30-60 minute interview with one Soc 15 researcher.
- 3. Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort. If you wish, you can choose not to answer any question(s) or opt out of the study entirely at any time during the interview.
- 4. Benefits:** The benefit to you in participating is potentially gaining the resources you need to meet your educational goal(s) at College of the Redwoods. This will of course benefit College of the Redwoods students in general as well.
- 5. Duration/Time:** The interview with one Soc 15 researcher will happen once and should take approximately 30-60 minutes. The interview will be recorded. At a later time, a different Soc. 15 researcher will transcribe the interview.
- 6. Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential, meaning that your name will never be disclosed outside of the research team. Respondents who choose to disclose their name for raffle purposes will also not have their name shared outside the research team.

7. Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Dr. Dana Maher at dana-maher@redwoods.edu with questions, complaints or concerns about this research.

8. Payment for participation: You can volunteer to be included in a raffle for a \$100 Amazon gift card. The raffle will be drawn on 5/5/17 and if you win, you will be notified by email to retrieve the prize either by mail or face-to-face from a student researcher on campus during finals week.

9. Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time by choosing not to answer questions and/or informing the researcher(s) that you are choosing to end your participation. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be a College of the Redwoods Student (not an Academy of the Redwoods student) to take part in this research study.

By signing I agree to voluntarily participate in this research. I understand what is being asked of me and I am currently a College of the Redwoods student.

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Print name of participant _____

Interview protocol

Determine your method of recording: Direct questions about methods of recording to Cozy. She will help you mitigate any tech questions or concerns.

Interviews: one on one is as private of a space as possible.

- Give the informed consent form first. Make sure the person has read and understands it.

While participant is doing informed consent; do a "mic check"

Giving interview

Ask each question unbiasedly;

- If asked for clarity; first repeat the question;
- If you rephrase a question, note this for yourself in the moment

Probes: use a probe only if you think one will yield data increase.

Only neutral (not leading) probes;

Make an in-the-moment note for yourself for *every probe* you offer

End every interview with "is there anything else you'd like to add?"

Ask if they'd like to be included in the raffle.

Within an hour of ending an interview; **do an interview write up**

- Date/time/location of interview (mode)
- Method of recording the interview
- No verbal communication notes (discomfort, anxiety, joy)
- Notation of all and any probes or additional interview question support needed by participant
- Notes about disturbances or other things which may have affected the data