

## ABSTRACT

### THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF STUDENT AFFAIRS CASE MANAGEMENT: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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Colleges and universities are incorporating case management services to support the increasing needs and psychosocial stressors of their students. While there is quantitative research on the efficacy of case management services in higher education, there is dearth literature examining the experiences of minoritized college students engaging in these services. The purpose of this study is to better understand how case management services foster minoritized students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors. This study was informed by the Student Affairs Case Management Model and utilized an intrinsic, qualitative, case study methodology. Data was collected via interviews with six minoritized students participating in case management services and one case manager at a large, private, liberal arts institution in the Midwest. Five themes emerged from the research: (1) supporting the whole student supports minoritized students' needs; (2) dependability and proactive outreach facilitate minoritized students' help seeking behaviors; (3) student insight is mutually constructed; (4) collaboratively organizing goals and interventions foster minoritized student ownership of managing life stressors; (5) and providing reassurance builds confidence. The findings of this research can inform case management practice on college campuses to support students that may be experiencing difficulty.

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THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF STUDENT AFFAIRS CASE  
MANAGEMENT: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

BY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## DEDICATION

To my mother, Julia Lynn Johnson, who is reading this manuscript from heaven. You always knew that I would earn a terminal degree and never stopped believing in me. I love you, Mom.

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## PREFACE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION OF PRACTICE

The dissertation of practice is a scholarly inquiry examining an intricate, often pervasive problem in practice with the purpose of providing knowledge, improving outcomes, and/or mitigating issues (Perry, 2015). The dissertation of practice advances the study of practical concerns in the field of higher education and student affairs while incorporating theory and best-practices for scholars and practitioners alike.

The dissertation of practice has three distinct sections: (a) The dissertation of practice research proposal (Chapter 1) to demonstrate the essential components that informed this inquiry. The dissertation proposal highlights the problem of practice this study aims to address, grounds the study within existing literature, and details the methodological approach to examining the study. The purpose of this study was to better understand how case management services foster students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors. The proposal outlines the qualitative case study design used to explore students' experiences with case management at the research site. The dissertation proposal was constructed by the student in consultation with their chair with final review and authorization by the student's dissertation committee. Once approved, the student is permitted begin their data collection and research. (b) A scholarly article (Chapter 2) designed for professional journals. Students prepare a manuscript and are encouraged to select a journal that aligns with the student's professional goals to present for publication after defending their dissertation. In particular, this document features the findings of

this study while providing a discussion and associated recommendations to guide the reader of the study's importance for research and practice. Five themes emerged from the research: (1) supporting the whole student supports minoritized students' needs; (2) dependability and proactive outreach facilitate minoritized students' help seeking behaviors; (3) student insight is mutually constructed; (4) collaboratively organizing goals and interventions foster minoritized student ownership of managing life stressors; (5) and providing reassurance builds confidence.

(c) A scholarly reflection (Chapter 3) to review the dissertation process, discuss how this research can be applied to practitioners in the field, and explore how this study can apply to research. This chapter illustrates the challenges of writing scholarly research for the beginning researcher, overcoming obstacles and unexpected difficulties, and strategies utilized to alleviate these concerns. Also, the scholarly reflection explains how this study has already started to impact practice and research at the case site and how the dissertation process has reiterated the relationship between theory and practice.

## CHAPTER 1

### DISSERTATION OF PRACTICE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

#### Introduction and Problem Statement

College students face several life stressors that may hinder their achievement while seeking a post-secondary degree (Evans et al., 2020; McCarthy, 2021; Van Brunt et al., 2012). Campus case managers who help address these concerns play an increasingly important role on college campuses (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; S. D. Adams & Kutnak, 2022; Rouse, 2021; Shelesky et al., 2016; Snyder et al., 2019). Tongsri et al. (2017) explains that “higher education case managers serve their university and individual students by coordinating prevention, intervention, and support efforts across campus and community systems to assist at-risk students and students facing crises, life traumas, and other barriers that impede success” (p. 6). Case managers display their varied skill-set and education in addressing student concerns regarding mental health, sexual misconduct, insufficient essential needs (e.g., food, water, shelter), and concerning or threatening behaviors (Snyder et al., 2019). As a recent component of many institutions’ portfolio of support services (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Snyder et al., 2019; C. Wilson et al., 2013), case management models, procedures, and best practices vary depending on the needs of the institution (Dugo et al., 2017; Van Brunt et al., 2012). The profession continues to establish itself through enacting professional standards of practice (Snyder et al., 2019), providing guidance on student learning outcomes and measures for success as a result of case

management programs (Tongsri et al., 2017), and creating professional organizations such as the Higher Education Case Managers Association (Snyder et al., 2019; C. Wilson et al., 2013).

Sufficient and comprehensive case management support at higher education institutions has been found important to ensuring positive student outcomes and student development (Evans et al., 2020; Rouse, 2021). Case management services have demonstrated student success by increasing student retention and graduation (Evans et al., 2020; Van Norman, 2017) while decreasing the rate of students completing suicide (Van Norman, 2017), which can only improve outcomes for students and the institution alike. Moreover, case management services have the ability to encourage a student's capacity to cope with the challenges of life by helping them solve problems (Evans et al., 2020; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012), recognize and address concerning or distressing behaviors (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Hollingsworth et al., 2009; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013), and develop plans for academic success (Evans et al., 2020; Hoffhines, 2018). Past research has primarily focused on quantitative outcome measures such as student retention, persistence, and completion rates (Evans et al., 2020; Self, 2018; Van Norman, 2017). There is a dearth literature describing the experiences of students participating in case management services. Such research could offer important contexts of the ways in which students are able to cope with their personal challenges, make their own decisions, and develop further into young adulthood as a result of participating in case management services.

### Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to better understand how case management services foster students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors. The research site of this study is a newly

developed case management program at a large, private, liberal arts institution in a large, midwestern city serving a diverse student body of approximately 18,000 students. The Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010), which was used to develop the case management services at the research site, will be used as the guiding framework for the study. Given the increasing need for post-secondary institutions to support students with case management services (Evans et al., 2020; Francis & Horn, 2017; McCarthy, 2021; Snyder et al., 2019), practitioners are looking for promising approaches to case management services at their respective colleges and universities. This study will provide insights into students' experiences utilizing case management services based on the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010); thus, this research may provide valuable recommendations with regard to adapting this model at other institutions and/or improving the utilization of this model in guiding case management services.

In order to understand the insights of students utilizing case management services, this research will strive to answer: How, if at all, do case management services facilitate students' ability to address potential barriers to their success during the case management process? Additionally, three sub-questions will be addressed: (1) How, if at all, do students develop insight on how their concerns may be impacting their academic success and overall well-being? (2) How, if at all, do students develop the capacity to self-advocate to overcome impediments to achieving their goals? (3) How, if at all, do students develop skills of self-determination (e.g., expressing their concerns to campus officials, developing an intervention plan, and changing behaviors to mitigate problems)? For the purpose of this study, self-determination will be defined as one's ability to engage in actions that improve one's condition without external pressure or

sway (*APA Dictionary of Psychology*, n.d.). As will be discussed further in the research design, this study will follow a qualitative case study design to adequately answer these questions of inquiry.

### Literature Review

The increasing concerns of college students has resulted in the dramatic rise of case management positions on college campuses (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Snyder et al., 2019; C. Wilson et al., 2013). A 2017 survey with the Higher Education Case Managers Association found that most case managers in the United States work in urban and suburban environments encompassing 41 states with about 63 percent of case managers working at public, 4-year institutions (Dugo et al., 2017). As an emerging field in student affairs practice, it is important to understand the types of concerns that are present and how practitioners are supporting students that may be experiencing difficulty, how case management services developed and established best practices, and how institutions are creating procedures and office structures. Accordingly, this literature review will provide the reader with the most salient points of case management services including an overview of common psychosocial stressors addressed by campus case managers (i.e., housing and food insecurity, mental health concerns, concerning behaviors and behavioral intervention, and academic concerns), frequent student affairs case management institutional structures (i.e., administrative model, counseling center model, and behavioral intervention team model), and necessary historical and background information.

### Common Psychosocial Stressors

Case managers are charged with supporting students that may be experiencing difficulty. Institutions are using case management services to coordinate care for student experiencing a variety of concerns, which most frequently include mental health concerns, housing and food insecurity, academic performance issues, substance use difficulties, medical issues, and behavioral concerns (Dugo et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021; McCarthy, 2021; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012; Van Norman, 2017). Below is a list of commonly reported concerns that case managers address, but please note that this list is not exhaustive. Additionally, while categorized into classifications, these concerns are not mutually exclusive and often are co-occurring with other concerns.

#### Housing and Food Insecurity

Housing and food insecurity are frequent issues presented to campus case managers (Dugo et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021; Snyder et al., 2019). It is estimated that about a third of the college student population are without secure housing (Bowers & O'Neill, 2019; Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Hallett et al., 2018; Trawver et al., 2020) with comparable evaluations for food insecurity (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018; Nazmi et al., 2019; Trawver et al., 2020; Weaver et al., 2020). Inadequate basic needs considerably impact the achievement of college students including a reduction in engagement with fellow students and campus support services (Gupton, 2017; Hallett et al., 2018; Henry, 2017; Trawver et al., 2020), declines in academic progress (Camelo & Elliott, 2019; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018; Gupton, 2017; Henry, 2017; Smith & Knechtel, 2020), decreases in completion and



retention totals (Gupton, 2017; Hallett et al., 2018), and increased rates of mental and physical illness (Gupton, 2017; Trawver et al., 2020; S. L. Wilson et al., 2019). Many states are beginning to introduce legislation to designate a campus benefits navigator to assist with basic needs assistance on college campuses (Hatch, 2022). Addressing housing and food insecurity requires a comprehensive approach (Freudenberg et al., 2019; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018; Larin, 2018; Sackett et al., 2016; Snyder et al., 2019; Trawver et al., 2020; S. L. Wilson et al., 2019), and higher education case managers are best equipped to address these concerns. Most often, case managers are charged with addressing these basic needs by providing stop-gap housing and food services such as temporary housing or food provisions, referrals to campus and community resources, and assistance with enrolling in federal and state assistance programs (Dugo et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021).

### Mental Health Concerns

Rates of mental illness in college student populations are steadily on the rise (Baldwin et al., 2017; Lipson et al., 2019; Xiao et al., 2017) with a World Health Organization study completed in 2017 concluding that approximately one-third of college students are presenting with mental health symptoms (Auerbach et al., 2018; Cartor et al., 2020). Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have only increased the rates of mental health concerns for college students (Copeland et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020; Zimmermann et al., 2021). The typical age range for many college students of 18 to 25 are when their mental health symptoms seem to manifest (Auerbach et al., 2018; Cartor et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2017). Students presenting with mental health concerns are more likely to drop out of college

(Bruffaerts et al., 2018), have decreased academic progress (Auerbach et al., 2018; Baldwin et al., 2017; Bruffaerts et al., 2018) including a lower grade point average (Auerbach et al., 2018; Bruffaerts et al., 2018), and have affected sleep patterns, which impacts academic performance (Baldwin et al., 2017). While mental health concerns have increased, so has students' willingness to seek out mental health services (Lipson et al., 2019; Xiao et al., 2017), which some research attributes this to a decrease in stigma in seeking treatment (Lipson et al., 2019). To ameliorate these concerns, campus case managers support student mental health by coordinating on and off campus resources, providing wellness checks and crisis assessment, and monitoring compliance with treatment recommendations (Dugo et al., 2017).

### Concerning Behaviors and Behavioral Intervention

Many colleges and universities are incorporating case management services to mitigate concerning behaviors on their campuses (Dugo et al., 2017; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Perloe & Pollard, 2016; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012, 2018; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013). Frequently, multidisciplinary teams of campus officials are formed to address concerning behaviors and are referred to as "Campus Assessment Team (CAT); Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation (CARE); Student Behavior Consultation Team (SBCT); Assessment and Care Team (ACT); Alert Team; Behavioral Assessment Team (BAT); and College Concerns Team" (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010, p. 12). Case managers are a central figure on these teams for addressing concerning behaviors (Dugo et al., 2017; Van Brunt et al., 2012, 2018; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013) such as suicidal ideation, homicidal ideation, or self-injurious behaviors (Dugo et al., 2017; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Snyder et al., 2019)

and violence management, prevention, and threat assessment (Dugo et al., 2017; Perloe & Pollard, 2016; Snyder et al., 2019; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013). Mental health emergencies often intersect with behavioral intervention services especially when a risk to self or others may be present (Dugo et al., 2017; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Perloe & Pollard, 2016; Snyder et al., 2019). As a result, case managers will conduct a safety assessment, and the student of concern will be connected with the appropriate level of care (Dugo et al., 2017; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Snyder et al., 2019). Lastly, case managers are often critically important to supporting the institution's Title IX policy regarding sexual misconduct by supporting both complainants and respondents with information to aid in decision-making (Dugo et al., 2017; Snyder et al., 2019).

### Academic Concerns

Case managers commonly see students experiencing academic concerns impacting their scholastic progress, which often occur as a result of their other life stressors as previously discussed (Dugo et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021; Hoffhines, 2018; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012). Some research points to the importance of integrating academic advising and case management services to encourage academic success that could be impeded by psychosocial stressors (Evans et al., 2020; Hoffhines, 2018). Consequently, case management staff regularly help these students with academic concerns by linking them with campus resources such as tutoring services, academic advising, and disability services (Van Brunt et al., 2012). Case managers commonly facilitate the institution's leave of absence process for students seeking withdrawal due to medical and mental health issues (Dugo et al., 2017).

Likewise, campus case managers facilitate the post-hospitalization procedures to assist students with a medical absence seeking assistance in transitioning back to their classes (Dugo et al., 2017). As a member of the college and university staff, supporting student success for case managers must include both an examination of the student's personal well-being in addition to advocating for academic progress (Evans et al., 2020; Hoffhines, 2018; Rouse, 2021).

### History and Background

The varied concerns case managers address are not new phenomena. Historically, elements of case management such as addressing student personal or academic concerns have been delivered by college and university staff and faculty since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Long, 2012; Snyder et al., 2019; C. Wilson et al., 2013). Many institutions at this time took the role of *in loco parentis* (i.e., in place of the parent) to demonstrate a familial position of establishing discipline and providing guidance (Dungy & Gordon, 2010; Long, 2012; Rouse, 2021). The formation of student affairs personnel began in the 1900s (Dungy & Gordon, 2010; Long, 2012), and a new concept of “education of the whole student—intellect, spirit, and personality” (Long, 2012, p. 4) followed shortly thereafter with the publishing of *Student Personnel Point of View* in 1937 to demonstrate holistic support of students. *In loco parentis* was later dissolved in the 1960s after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling, and this further shifted the role of student affairs away from strictly discipline to include student development (Dungy & Gordon, 2010; Long, 2012). Specialized skills and best practices have continued to be established in the field of student affairs in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries to provide a holistic view of student development and growth during the college years (Long, 2012). In recent years, case managers have been incorporated into the

campus environment as an adjacent partner to other student affairs practitioners to further support students that may be experiencing difficulty (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Evans et al., 2020; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012).

Formalized case management in higher education has been developed out of necessity sparked by campus tragedy as a result of deficiencies in communication across college campuses (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Shelesky et al., 2016; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012; Van Norman, 2017; C. Wilson et al., 2013) and managing the increasing mental health concerns experienced by students (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Rouse, 2021; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013). Universally, the shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007 and Northern Illinois University in 2008 prompted colleges and universities to develop policies and procedures to communicate about students of concern and create initiatives to mitigate risk to the campus community (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Day et al., 2017; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Self, 2018; Shelesky et al., 2016; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012; Van Norman, 2017; C. Wilson et al., 2013). The lack of communication across campus and identification of students with serious mental illness and concerning behaviors directly resulted in these tragic events (Hollingsworth et al., 2009; Snyder et al., 2019). Subsequently, post-secondary institutions began to recognize that they must identify students with concerning and/or threatening behaviors, track and communicate with allied campus partners, and distinguish symptoms of mental illness that may pose a risk to the safety of the campus community (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013). Shortly thereafter, multiple roundtables with several colleges and universities were triggered to discuss how these potential safety risks are being presented and addressed on their respective campuses

(C. Wilson et al., 2013). As a result, case managers, both clinical and non-clinical, were established to meet this need (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Rouse, 2021; Van Brunt et al., 2012; C. Wilson et al., 2013) with a charge that extends beyond merely a crisis management model of managing an emergency or disaster to provide a holistic approach of addressing a student's social/emotional, academic, and basic needs (S. D. Adams et al., 2014). This comprehensive approach to student support affirms the student affairs value of educating the whole student while reducing risk to the campus community.

As a new profession, student affairs case management did not have specific guidelines for best practices. In 2010, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) established core competencies for student affairs practitioners (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). While many of these competencies are related to the work case managers engage in, the competencies do not include a formal case management section. Student affairs practitioners providing case management services, thus, lack guidance on the competencies needed to address student needs within their specific job responsibilities. In 2011, the Higher Education Case Managers Association (HECMA) was established as a professional organization for case managers (Tongsri et al., 2017; C. Wilson et al., 2013), but this still did not enact standards of practice (*History & Evolution*, n.d.). To address this gap, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) in partnership with HECMA established guidelines and standards for case management services in post-secondary institutions with the most recent iteration in 2019 (Day et al., 2017). Some highlights of these 12 standards include: (1) establishing a clear mission that addresses students of concern and meets the needs of the institution; (2) ensuring that program procedures

incorporate methods for receiving reports, providing referrals and interventions, and reducing risk; (3) measuring learning outcomes to justify student development and growth; (4) enacting mechanisms of assessment for measuring program effectiveness; (5) developing programs that encourage and foster diversity, equity, and inclusion; (6) providing effective and strategic leadership; (7) safeguarding that departments are adequately staffed with ethical hiring practices, and staff are provided with professional development; (8) communicating necessary information with allied campus and community partners; (9) abiding by applicable laws and regulations and delivering ethical practices; (10) allotting and designating appropriate funds to allow for successful operations; (11) utilizing technology and software to meet program objectives and mission; and (12) allocating appropriate facilities that meet program needs (Snyder et al., 2019). Many of the competencies overlap with those provided by ACPA and NASPA for student affairs professionals, more generally. The CAS standards, however, are more specifically geared toward the work case managers engage in.

The field of student affairs case management is ever evolving. Case managers must be knowledgeable in many areas of practice, well-informed of legal and ethical obligations, educated on the needs of their students and their institutions, and agile to changing requirements of the profession (Snyder et al., 2019). As such, it is important that student affairs practitioners remain educated on current standards and best practices to assist students that may be experiencing a myriad of concerns.

### Student Affairs Case Management Institutional Structures

Colleges and universities use a variety of different approaches to case management. Case management services are frequently provided by student affairs practitioners within the dean of students office, clinical staff within the campus counseling services office, or as part of a multidisciplinary behavioral intervention team (Dugo et al., 2017; Hollingsworth et al., 2009; Rouse, 2021; Shelesky et al., 2016; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012; S. L. Wilson et al., 2019). The needs of each college and university are unique, and the institutional structures utilized to effectively administer case management services are implemented to meet the individual goals of each of these institutions. This section highlights differing models (i.e., administrative, counseling center, and behavioral intervention team) for executing a case management program on a college campus. Moreover, while listed as separate types, it is important to recognize that these models can be co-occurring on college campuses to meet the needs of their institutions (Shelesky et al., 2016).

#### Administrative Model

The “Administrative Model” (Van Brunt et al., 2012, pp. 13–18) houses the case management functions within the campus dean of students office, which may often include several departments such as disability services, residence life, and student conduct. A HECMA survey from 2017 found that 46 percent of case managers are housed within the dean of students office (Dugo et al., 2017). In many ways, this makes sense as students may present with varying difficulties within these campus offices and the transition to case management services could be swiftly executed to address these concerns. If a student presents with a concern, the staff within



the dean of student office can assess the student's situation, advocate with on and off campus partners to connect the student to appropriate resources, provide the student with skills to feel empowered to self-soothe or manage their concerns in the future, and connect with the student at a later date to ensure adequate resolution has been achieved. The "Administrative Model" (Van Brunt et al., 2012, pp. 13–18) has been praised for its ability to provide a centralized location for addressing student issues, but it does present with some challenges. For instance, staff need to be adequately competent in many areas to provide holistic support to students, and some students' needs may be out of the scope of practice for some practitioners—like addressing mental health concerns (Van Brunt et al., 2012). Similarly, students may be unsure if their interactions with college administrators are confidential or private (Van Brunt et al., 2012).

### Counseling Center Model

Many student concerns that may be addressed by case management services intersect with a student's mental health (Shelesky et al., 2016), and this may be best served by a mental health professional via the "Counseling Center Model" (Van Brunt et al., 2012, pp. 21–23). HECMA determined in 2017 that about 22 percent of campus case managers are located in the college counseling office (Dugo et al., 2017). As many counseling offices on college campuses have procedures and protocols for addressing student issues, implementation of essential case management functions such as "assessment, care, and referral" (Shelesky et al., 2016, p. 286) should be mostly seamless. Counseling staff would assess the needs of the student, advocate for the care that the student needs, provide skills so they can address their concern independently in the future, and monitor the student's progress to ensure the matter has been adequately

addressed. The “Counseling Center Model” (Van Brunt et al., 2012) does seem to provide a more holistic view of managing student difficulties; however, limitations regarding confidentiality may prevent successful case management delivery. Communicating with campus and community partners is a necessity for effective case management (Hollingsworth et al., 2009; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012), and this may be stifled with the requirement of a release of information form to share information. In this way, communicating across the college presents as a barrier to a student’s concern being addressed.

#### Behavioral Intervention Team Model

The “Behavioral Intervention Team Model” (Van Brunt et al., 2012, pp. 19–20) emphasizes campus communication as campus partners and administrators from many disciplines typically participate in these teams. The primary goal under this model is to provide behavioral intervention services for students that may be exhibiting distressing behaviors that could present as a risk to themselves or the campus community (Self, 2018; Snyder et al., 2019; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013). HECMA determined in 2017 that 86 percent of case managers provide some follow-up and/or support to students involved in behavioral intervention services while about 31 percent of case managers chair the behavioral intervention team (Dugo et al., 2017). The case manager on the behavioral intervention team can assess for the student’s risk to self and others, connect the student with the appropriate resources, provide skills to mitigate risk, and connect with the student afterwards to ensure their concern has subsided and adequately addressed. Despite this, students may feel hesitant to work with someone on the behavioral intervention team as it may feel punitive or not applicable to their situation. For

instance, a student expressing housing insecurity does not present as an immediate risk to the campus community warranting behavioral intervention. As a result, putting case management services solely within the behavioral intervention team may feel less supportive and inappropriate in some scenarios.

### Summary

Addressing student concerns is complicated, and every institution has their procedures for supporting these students and their respective concerns. The mandate to support students is multifaceted and requires guidelines, best practices, and objectives to sufficiently meet these campus needs. This review of the literature examined case management services in higher education by providing common psychosocial stressors addressed by case managers (i.e., mental health concerns, housing and food insecurity, behavioral concerns and behavioral interventions, and academic concerns), and frequent institutional models to employ these services (i.e., administrative model, counseling center model, and behavioral intervention team model), and pertinent historical and background information.

The necessity for case management services in post-secondary education is increasingly evident. Much of the literature on this topic is focused on quantitative measures of student outcomes such as student retention, persistence, and completion (Evans et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021; Self, 2018; Van Norman, 2017). While important to demonstrating student success, these measures do not illustrate the impact on a student's development and growth as a result of their institution's implementation of student affairs case management. As such, this

study will incorporate the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) as a guiding framework to better understand how case management services foster students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors.

### Guiding Framework

Post-secondary institutions are beginning to define and refine how case management may look on their campuses without a guiding framework to shape their practice. For instance, Van Norman (2017) describes the impact of case management services regarding student persistence and retention rates as well as reports of suicidal ideation within the Colorado State University system. The students participating in the case management program completed a satisfaction survey, and the vast majority of the students reported improvement in solving their concerns and positive support for the case management program (Van Norman, 2017). Similarly, Self (2018) presents that reader with an article that details how behavioral intervention, an essential component of case management (Van Brunt et al., 2012), has the potential to encourage student retention and persistence. Self (2018) found two themes that collective teams and communication helped to garner retention and persistence in students as a result of the case management services provided by the behavioral intervention team. Despite these convincing results of the efficacy of case management, a formal theoretical framework was not utilized in these studies. Van Norman (2017) and Self's (2018) research could have been enhanced by informing the reader of how these services were being guided and possibly boosting the institution's positive outcomes. This illustrates a lack of a theory informing case management practice in higher education. The Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) has

been developed to fill this gap, but its explicit application in both practice and research is missing. Therefore, this study will utilize the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) as a framework for effective case management implementation to demonstrate this model in real-world practice and inform this research.

### Student Affairs Case Management Model

Thus far, case management programs on college campuses have used existing case management models largely from healthcare and the social work profession (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Rouse, 2021; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012; C. Wilson et al., 2013). The Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) seeks to provide a framework to guide practitioners on how to best support a student that may be experiencing difficulty. The Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) integrates elements of the Broker Model of Case Management (Bedell et al., 2000) and Social Work Case Management Standards (*NASW Standards for Social Work Case Management*, 2013) as established with the National Association of Social Workers, or simply NASW. Both of these case management models have overlapping themes of case managers evaluating client needs, offering resources, and observing adherence or progress (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Shelesky et al., 2016). S. D. Adams et al. (2014) explains that the Student Affairs Case Management Model as presented by Davis (2010) uses the following steps: (a) “student-client assessment” (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, pp. 451–453), which includes performing a needs assessment to gather data to fully understand the student’s current condition; (b) “student advocacy” (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, pp. 453–454), which includes partnering and connecting students with resources, intervening on the student’s behalf

when necessary, developing a student's ability for self-efficacy and self-determining their own care, and reducing bureaucratic and logistical barriers; (c) "student empowerment" (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, p. 455), which includes a student's ability to advocate for themselves, articulate plans to accomplish personal goals, and demonstrate the ability to make changes on their own; and (d) "providing follow-up and resolution" (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, pp. 455–456), which requires that the case manager has effectively addressed the presenting concerns. Adams et al. (2014) explains that this model may be used with many campus administrators irrespective of the severity of the case while emphasizing a "student-centered approach" (p. 456) that addresses the needs of the whole student in order to align with the fundamental functions of student affairs practice.

The Student Affairs Case Management Model (S. D. Adams et al., 2014) aligns with the core principles of student affairs to include: encouraging student health and wellness, providing resources and guidance to students and faculty, and implementing support for students that may have difficulty with their academics. Likewise, this alliance further supports the concept of educating the whole student (Long, 2012). HECMA recognizes the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) as presented by S. D. Adams et al. (2014) as one of its foundational documents for researchers and practitioners to reference (*Foundational Documents*, n.d.), which suggests its importance to the field. HECMA (Tongsri et al., 2017) encourages case managers to: facilitate the referral process to on and off campus resources; observe progress and adherence with treatment recommendations; assess for safety concerns for the individual student and the campus environment; continue communication with students to monitor their situation and provide support; develop self-determination skills with students so they can manage their

scholastic, individual, and monetary obligations; and stand up for students that may be facing adversity due to systems of oppression both on and off campus. It is evident that many guiding principles of student affairs practice overlap with the core elements of case management practice in higher education. The Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) appears to merge these two disciplines of student affairs and case management to better serve the needs of students and the campus community.

As will be discussed further in the research design, this study will utilize the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) to inform how this study is approached, how data is collected, and how data will be examined. Staff within the case management office at the research site currently use this model as a framework for providing direct practice to students receiving case management support, which will provide the reader with an example of its application. Interview questions will be developed based off of the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) steps previously discussed. Data analysis will determine themes informed by this model to ascertain how case management services foster students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors.

### Research Design

To better understand how case management services foster students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors as informed by the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010), this study will utilize an intrinsic, qualitative case study design. Intrinsic case study designs focus on the examination of a certain group, experience, or institution to learn more about a specific phenomenon that does not seek to generalize comprehensive study results to

wider populations (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Stake, 1995). Simply, for intrinsic case study, the researcher's interest in this individual case is of utmost importance and employing the findings of this case more broadly is irrelevant (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Jones et al., 2014; Stake, 1995). Qualitative case study designs allow the researcher to learn about how the participants make meaning of their experiences often with open-ended questions and emphasis on describing the intricacy of an event (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Instead of examining the numbers to form statistical analysis for quantitative research, qualitative research collects data from a many sources in its natural setting to see what patterns may emerge (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Specifically, qualitative case study requires the examination of a bounded system, which can be an person, a particular system, a procedure, an organization, or interpersonal connections (Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995). Typically, this also includes defining this system within a determined time and space (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995). As this study will examine students within the case management program at a certain institution during a specific timeframe, intrinsic case study research will be most appropriate in gathering this qualitative data.

### Epistemology

It is important to recognize that a researcher's worldview influences how they approach research and their participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, this can affect all aspects of the research being conducted. I plan to incorporate a constructivist worldview into this study. Constructivists strive to understand how people make meaning of their experiences while recognizing that people are shaped by their background and interactions



(Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Jones et al., 2014). Researchers with a constructivist worldview often engage in qualitative research for its ability to gather data on participants' perspectives to then construe their meanings (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Jones et al., 2014). It is expected that each student will have unique stories, experiences, and strategies to overcome their life challenges, and the constructivist viewpoint validates the importance of examining how each of these students make meaning of their experiences. As the researcher, I have the opportunity to interpret these meanings to see if patterns emerge, which aligns with the goals of this study.

### Description of the Case

The case for this research is a case management program at a large, private, liberal arts institution in a large, midwestern city, called Great Lakes Midwestern University, or simply GLMU (a pseudonym). GLMU offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees totaling nearly 18,000 students. Of these students, about 7,000 are undergraduates and nearly 11,000 are graduates. The vast majority of students are enrolled full-time and degree-seeking. One hundred percent of undergraduate students are aged 24 and under with 73 percent of graduate students being aged 25 and older. Race/ethnicity demographics include: 37% white, 27% international, 10% Hispanic, 5% Black or African American, 15% Asian, and 7% other. Undergraduate students had a 100% retention rate with a 96% completion rate.

The case management program at GLMU was recently introduced in autumn 2022 to help students overcome psychosocial stressors and navigate on and off-campus resources. Previous to this program's implementation, many campus administrators (e.g., staff within residence life, counseling and psychological services, advising, dean of students office, or other

student affairs staff) were involved in addressing student concerns without a clear protocol. As a result, students experiencing difficulty may not have had a smooth transition to campus resources nor were provided with follow-up on their progress. Rather, these students would get lost in the institution's bureaucracy. Subsequently, two, full-time staff were hired to develop the program's policies and procedures; facilitate student assessment, referral, and follow-up; document student progress; liaise between campus and community resources; and establish a campus presence through website development, event coordination, and marketing. Currently, the office is staffed by licensed mental health professionals, but the staff are operating in a non-clinical capacity. Therefore, the staff keep matters with students private to ensure that only applicable campus partners are privy to case management records, and the staff do not provide any diagnosis or treatment of mental health conditions. As GLMU has decentralized student and academic services, case management services were purposefully devised to utilize the "Administrative Model" (Van Brunt et al., 2012, pp. 13–18) for its ability to serve as a centralized place for students to navigate institutional structures and for staff to communicate across campus departments. The case management staff are uniquely poised to see how they can enact these departmental goals while simultaneously examining how these services may benefit students.

The case management program, while in its infancy, will currently only serve residential undergraduate students, off-campus undergraduate students, and occasionally will assist with complex, graduate student concerns as directed by the dean of students. As is university policy, all students must maintain full-time enrollment; therefore, only full-time students can engage with the campus case management office. Students are referred to case management services by other campus offices with residence life and the undergraduate office being the most frequent

referral sources. At this time, students are not eligible to self-select to participate in case management services, but this expected to be added in the future as the office grows in staffing. As informed by CAS standards (Snyder et al., 2019) and the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010), the case management staff adhere to the following procedures when supporting a student of concern: receiving a referral from a campus partner; performing outreach to the student of concern; scheduling an intake appointment to determine a student's concerns, strengths, and goals; creating a mutually constructed plan of action to mitigate some of the concerns mentioned; referring the student to appropriate and applicable on and off campus referral sources; reconnecting with the student of concern and reevaluating their circumstances to decide if the matter at hand has been resolved; and, lastly, formally resolving the case. Students are provided with a scope of services document that lists the types of services that are provided by the office and details limitations to privacy prior to the first meeting. All interactions, interventions, and general progress notes are documented in an electronic record keeping system to demonstrate student progress towards goals, record communications with necessary campus stakeholders, and illustrate due diligence by the institution to reduce liability. It is expected that services will continue to evolve as the office matures to meet the needs of students that may be experiencing difficulty.

### Participants and Sampling

This study will incorporate purposeful sampling to allow for a thorough understanding of a specific phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015) to include students engaging in case management services and a case manager within the program. Student participants will be

selected based off the following criteria: (1) referral to case management by a faculty or staff member expressing concern; (2) active engagement in case management services during the winter, spring, and/or summer 2023 academic terms; (3) completion of at least one meeting with case management staff; (4) current enrollment in courses. My case management colleague will also be a participant given her direct interactions with students to provide insights to the research questions of this study. Purposeful sampling will allow for an information-rich case to truly highlight the “issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Patton, 2015, p. 105). I anticipate interviewing five to seven students and my case management colleague to allow for information-rich descriptions (Patton, 2015); however, the goal of the student interviews is to reach saturation where the information being received becomes redundant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Therefore, the number of student participants may fluctuate depending on the responses obtained.

Actively engaged students will have had some form of interaction (e.g., in-person meeting, virtual meeting, email correspondence) with a case management staff member within the last 30 days and their case remains open as the matter at hand has not been fully resolved. Students that are participating in case management services are inherently referred by other campus academic and support offices due to challenging life circumstances. Staff will complete a form to prompt outreach to the student of concern from the case management team. Subsequently, an initial intake meeting will occur with the case manager participant. At the beginning of this meeting, students will be asked by this same staff member if they wish to participate in this research study. To clearly define my role as a researcher and mitigate a potential conflict of interest, I will only interview students working with the case manager

participant.

### Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Before engaging with participants for the study, I will gain approval from the Institutional Review Board, commonly known as IRB, both at GLMU and at Northern Illinois University (NIU). This will ensure that my plans to conduct this study are ethical and appropriate. Due to the sensitive nature of this work, participants will be informed both verbally and with the provision of a consent form that their personally identifying information will remain confidential. Participants will be required to complete a consent form (see Appendices A & B) before they are able to consent to participating in the study; nevertheless, their involvement in the study is completely optional, and they are welcome to continue working with case management services sans participation in this study if they wish. Participants are welcome to opt out of participation at any time, and pseudonyms will be utilized to protect confidentiality.

### Data Collection

This study will rely solely on two, semi-structured interviews with each student participant and one, semi-structured interview with my case management colleague to gain insights into their experiences and/or perspectives to effectively answer the questions of inquiry. Interviews are a very common method of data collection for qualitative research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) as interviews give the researcher an in-depth understanding of the perceptions, feelings, and beliefs of their study participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews offer an opportunity to ask

open ended questions while allowing for a more conversational approach to include asking clarifying questions or inquiring about a person's feelings (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Two interviews with each student participant and an additional interview with a case management practitioner at the research site are being utilized to demonstrate "adequate engagement in data collection" to ensure that the phenomenon has been sufficiently examined and the conclusions are truly saturated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246). Although case study research often relies on multiple sources of data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995), it was evident these other methods (e.g., document analysis, focus groups, observations) would not sufficiently provide adequate data to answer the questions of inquiry or may present with privacy and practical concerns. For instance, reviewing documents such as student email correspondence was considered to gain insight on student perceptions, but the data provided would be more comprehensive via an interview rather than an email. Focus groups and observations present with privacy and practical concerns as other students would be aware of other students' participation in case management services and/or the researcher may be disrupting the meetings between the case manager and the student. Given the sensitive nature of this case management practice, it is best to honor a student's privacy and respect the professional relationship between the student and case manager. As a result, interviews will be used to answer the research questions. Interview protocols (see Appendices C, D, & E) have been established with questions that directly align with the research questions and the guiding framework of this study.

For the set of student interviews, I will conduct the first interview (see Appendix C) within two weeks of a student completing an initial intake meeting with my colleague to get a baseline impression of their perceptions and experiences. The second interview (see Appendix D) will occur within one month after a student has completed services with student case management or at least two months after the first meeting. Completion of services is achieved once a student has effectively been able to address their concerns and accomplished their proposed goals. Performing this second interview either after completion of services or at least two months after the initial meeting can allow a student time to reflect on their experiences to be used as part of data collection. Both interviews will feature questions that highlight the questions of inquiry of this study to address how case management services foster students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors. For the interview with my case management colleague, a separate interview protocol (see Appendix E) will be utilized to provide further perspective regarding the questions of inquiry and review any emerging and initial themes from the student interviews. This single interview with my colleague will be completed within one month after the conclusion of the spring or summer 2023 academic terms to allow for reflection of student accomplishments and experiences. All semi-structured interviews will be approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length. Interviews will be scheduled at the participants' convenience in an in-person format in the case management office or virtually (e.g., Zoom). All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

### Data Analysis

All semi-structured interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed so they can be prepared to be coded into themes. Transcriptions will be read meticulously to ensure understanding of the content. Constant comparative analysis will be incorporated into the data analysis process, which allows the researcher to examine relationships between the themes at any point while evaluating the data (Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). All of the transcriptions will undergo a two-step coding process (Jones et al., 2014; Patton, 2015): (1) open coding to gather general, initial themes within the data; (2) axial coding to find the relationships between the open codes and organize them into categories. This two-step process will demonstrate how larger themes evolve into subcategories or smaller sub-themes. From the axial coding, the well-defined emerging themes can then be grouped to discuss the patterns that materialize. A particular focus will be placed on themes that directly relate to the questions of inquiry in this study to ensure that the research remains focused.

Using constant comparative analysis, the researcher is encouraged to compare and contrast raw data, initial themes, open and axial codes, and any other categories or concepts that may emerge to find any connections (Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I anticipate writing down initial themes, memos, and initial impressions after each interview. I will then review the initial themes and raw data after each interview to compare with subsequent interviews throughout the data analysis process. This will ensure that I am examining any emerging themes throughout the data collection and analysis process to determine what patterns may become apparent. Additionally, by applying constant comparative analysis, I can examine possible themes that do not align with other data being collected by my participants. For



instance, it is very possible that one student may provide a perspective that is completely different from all of my other participants. I can compare this data with the other data to try to rationalize and make sense of the data being collected. By the end of the series of interviews, I will be able to review initial themes and emerging themes along with subsequent codes that have been organized to determine findings.

### Criteria for Quality

In order to ensure that this data is trustworthy and reliable, this study will utilize member checks, peer review of data with other case management staff and my faculty advisor, and reflexivity and memoing. Member checks require reviewing the collected data with the participants to ensure the accuracy of the data being collected (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995). The students participating in the study will receive an email after each interview with interpretations of emerging themes and findings to ask for feedback. The participants will be able to confirm or deny data accuracy of the transcript and interpretations of themes and findings, which will then result in revisions if needed.

In addition, the emerging themes will be reviewed with other case management staff to confirm that the data interpretations appear dependable with typical case management cases (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The case management staff are experienced in the field and can recognize if interpretations appear inaccurate or conflicting. Likewise, my faculty advisor will review my emerging themes to verify that interpretations seem reasonable and applicable given the data. If themes are not

consistent, reflection and review will be employed to examine these irregularities to then make revisions.

As a qualitative researcher, it is important that I use reflexivity to recognize how my experiences and background may influence the data collection and data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This requires writing notes of the data collection experience, reflecting on personal experiences, and making memos during the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, it is essential to examine the relationship between the researcher and the study participants so as to not overly affect the researcher's interpretations of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As such, I will incorporate reflexivity by reflecting on the data collection process and making memos while conducting research. I discuss my positionality next to provide information about my background and perspective that may shape how I interpret data and form relationships with my participants.

#### Positionality Statement

I am a white, gay man from Southern Indiana with a family background that largely did not attend college or university due to financial constraints. Most of my family is working class and many have pursued trades as way to enter the middle class. My family instilled in me the importance of seeking a college degree as a guaranteed path to a middle-income lifestyle while also avoiding jobs that may require taxing physical labor. My family was unable to provide financial support for my education but were always very supportive of my educational pursuits. While I did not identify as a first-generation college student, I have grown into this identity as an

adult. I have been able to see directly how obtaining a college degree can elevate a student's social standing and provide a more stable and less physically demanding career.

My formal education has been in music education for K-12 settings and social work with specialties in healthcare, mental health, and substance use treatment. I have worked in many arenas including: public primary and secondary education, higher education, hospitals, nursing facilities, and community mental health organizations. My education has taught me to view the whole person when assessing needs and providing care. Additionally, social workers are trained to incorporate systems theory into direct practice, and I must understand how policies and systems can create unnecessary barriers to a person's personal growth. From my educational and professional experiences, I see how many psychosocial stressors may impact a student's ability to succeed. It is my responsibility to provide holistic support to mitigate some of these concerns to help a student flourish. Despite this mandate, I often see how these services are devalued as there is not direct evidence to support their efficacy in achieving positive student outcomes in higher education. This presents as a disservice to students from disadvantaged backgrounds that may benefit most from case management services.

I see myself as a constructivist, qualitative researcher that may need to embed myself into the research being collected. My relationship with my students is important to the data that is being collected as I am their case manager in addition to a researcher. The relationship and trust that I build with the students that I am working with is an important component to my work, and this element of service delivery cannot be separated from the research being conducted. As a result, I believe that this relationship will only enhance the data collection. Due to the professional relationship that I may have with these students, it is important that I express that

these students will not be treated differently than any other student due to their participation in the study. As projected from my training as a clinical social worker, my goal is to remain fair and impartial. Yet, my work with students does not allow me to remain completely detached as I build relationships with my students. I understand that each person's lived experiences are unique and should be validated. Incorporating my background along with the relationship that I build with my students will help inform my research inquiry and subsequent data collection.

As a white, gay man in a position of authority, I recognize that this power differential can set the tone for the interactions that I have with students in this study. It is important that I clearly define my role as the researcher in this study and not assert my authority as a college administrator from a privileged background. Furthermore, I must recognize that my identities and background may present as an impediment to students who do not share my identities or present from marginalized backgrounds. For instance, as a white person, I must acknowledge that my privileged identity may create a barrier for students of color. As a social worker, I am cognizant and educated on understanding the human condition in the environment in which people come from. My social work training requires that I examine my own personal biases so as to not inhibit the relationships built with others. Moreover, I recognize that supporting the experiences of others is crucial to building a meaningful relationship to understand their background and circumstances. Some common skills that I utilize to build understanding and rapport with students include reflections to validate their insights, summaries of their descriptions, affirmations of their strengths, and exploration of their values and goals. I acknowledge that students may feel hesitant to speak with me for many reasons, but it is my intention to ensure that students can feel as comfortable, validated, and listened to as possible

during our interactions.

### Limitations

It is important to recognize that this research will present with some limitations. For instance, only students that have been referred to case management services by staff or faculty are able to participate in case management services at our institution and this study. Thus, students cannot self-select to take part in case management services nor this study. This may present with a preference toward students that staff and faculty personally believe may benefit from these services instead of allowing any student to partake. Therefore, reports of student concerns could be skewed towards students that have more evident, outward presentations (e.g., disruptive behaviors, visible heightened emotions or crying, housing or food insecurity, et cetera). While well-intentioned, this may appear as a missed opportunity to hear a greater variety of stories and experiences of students engaged in case management services.

Similarly, students participating in case management services and this study are much more likely to have mild to moderate concerns versus more severe presentations. For example, a student with a severe concern (e.g., hospitalization or significant mental illness), may be unable to engage in case management services nor this study due to possible incapacitation or disorientation. A student with mild to moderate matters (e.g., experimental substance use, occasional food insecurity, or mild depressive symptoms), may be readily available and inclined to engage in services and this study. So, data collection may favor students with less severe presentations merely for the fact they are willing and able to participate. As a result, the types of descriptions provided may be limited and skewed towards a select group of students.

Lastly, due to the nature of having students participate in two separate interviews, there is the possibility for an uneven distribution of data. It is expected that some students will participate in the first interview, but for many reasons, some students may be unable to participate in the second interview. Students will be informed of the two interviews when discussing and reviewing the consent form, but this cannot ensure that students will always be able to fully participate in both interviews. For example, a student may anticipate that they can commit to both interviews initially, but their life circumstances (e.g., academic or family responsibilities) may hinder their participation in the second interview. Every ability to schedule interviews with students at times that are conducive for them will be used, but the possibility of an uneven distribution of data still remains.

### Significance

This study will expand the body of knowledge in the field of student affairs case management by illustrating how case management services foster students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors. While it is known that these services benefit retention, persistence, and completion rates (Evans et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021; Self, 2018; Van Norman, 2017), this only provides one aspect of how these services encourage student success. Further qualitative examination of students' ability to develop resilience and self-efficacy to address potential barriers to their success can allow the reader to see how students may benefit from case management services to effectively manage their life challenges, which may then result in persistence and graduation. Therefore, this study can provide a more holistic perspective to student success regarding student case management services.

The current research available does not explicitly utilize the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) as a theoretical framework. As formalized case management services are a developing field of practice within the area of student affairs (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Snyder et al., 2019; C. Wilson et al., 2013), it is important to have a guiding framework to inform research and practice. This study will demonstrate how a case management program applied the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) to practice while examining how students make meaning of these support services. Subsequently, researchers and practitioners can see how these services are being utilized on college and university campuses and how it may be applicable to other institutions.

Finally, this research can inform colleges and universities on why case management services should be provided on their campus. Many states are beginning to legislate that higher education institutions have a benefits navigator to assist with student basic needs (Hatch, 2022). Accordingly, post-secondary institutions must have research to inform practice for implementing case management services, and this study can demonstrate the importance of case management services. Similarly, as case management services are a new program at my institution, this study will help inform our practice and meeting the unique needs of our students. The data provided in this study will explain if our services are fostering student success to justify investing more resources into our program. Likewise, the perspectives of students can help inform how we may want to change or modify current practices so we can achieve our goals to encourage student achievement. This research can demonstrate how case management services foster students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors with the findings informing other institutions. As a

result, institutions of higher learning can see what benefits are gained from these services and how can management services can fulfill the institutional mission.



CHAPTER 2  
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF STUDENT AFFAIRS CASE  
MANAGEMENT IN SUPPORTING MINORITIZED STUDENTS  
AT A LARGE, PRIVATE, LIBERAL ARTS INSTITUTION:  
A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

Abstract

Colleges and universities are incorporating case management services to support the increasing needs and psychosocial stressors of their students. While there is quantitative research on the efficacy of case management services in higher education, there is dearth literature examining the experiences of minoritized college students engaging in these services. The purpose of this study is to better understand how case management services foster minoritized students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors at a large, private, liberal arts institution. This study was informed by the Student Affairs Case Management Model and utilized an intrinsic, qualitative, case study methodology. Data was collected via interviews with six minoritized students participating in case management services and one case manager at a large, private, liberal arts institution in the Midwest. Five themes emerged from the research: (1) supporting the whole student supports minoritized students' needs; (2) dependability and proactive outreach facilitate minoritized students' help seeking behaviors; (3) student insight is mutually constructed; (4) collaboratively organizing goals and interventions foster minoritized student

ownership of managing life stressors; (5) and providing reassurance builds confidence. The findings of this research can inform case management practice on college campuses to support students that may be experiencing difficulty.

### Introduction and Literature Review

Institutions are using case management services to coordinate care for students experiencing a variety of concerns, which most frequently include housing and food insecurity, mental health concerns, academic performance issues, and behavioral concerns (Dugo et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021; McCarthy, 2021; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012; Van Norman, 2017). Tongsri et al. (2017) explains that “higher education case managers serve their university and individual students by coordinating prevention, intervention, and support efforts across campus and community systems to assist at-risk students and students facing crises, life traumas, and other barriers that impede success” (p. 6). For instance, case managers are charged with addressing basic needs challenges by providing stop-gap housing and food services such as temporary housing or food provisions, referrals to campus and community resources, and assistance with enrolling in federal and state assistance programs (Dugo et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021). The campus case manager aids student mental health by coordinating on and off campus resources, providing wellness checks and crisis assessment, and monitoring compliance with treatment recommendations (Dugo et al., 2017). Case managers are a central figure for addressing concerning behaviors (Dugo et al., 2017; Van Brunt et al., 2012, 2018; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013) such as suicidal ideation, homicidal ideation, or self-injurious behaviors (Dugo et al., 2017; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Snyder

et al., 2019) and violence management, prevention, and threat assessment (Dugo et al., 2017; Perloe & Pollard, 2016; Snyder et al., 2019; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013). For these behaviors, case managers will conduct a safety assessment, and the student of concern will be connected with the appropriate level of care (Dugo et al., 2017; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Snyder et al., 2019). Lastly, case management staff regularly help students of concern with academic difficulties by linking them with campus resources such as tutoring services, academic advising, and disability services (Van Brunt et al., 2012). Case managers commonly facilitate the institution's leave of absence and post-hospitalization processes for students seeking withdrawal or transition back to classes due to medical and mental health issues (Dugo et al., 2017).

Considering the aforementioned psychosocial stressors and the objective of case managers to ameliorate these concerns, the campus case manager plays an important role of supporting students of marginalized identities. Approximately a quarter of all college students are first-generation and low-income (Cahalan et al., 2018), and students of racially minoritized backgrounds are more likely to be part of this disadvantaged group (Gibbons et al., 2019; House et al., 2020; Ives & Castillo-Montoya, 2020; Kezar et al., 2023; Schuyler et al., 2021). Typically, students are deemed first-generation and low-income if their parents have not earned a bachelor's degree or higher (Ives & Castillo-Montoya, 2020; Pratt et al., 2019; Schuyler et al., 2021; Schwartz et al., 2018) and they are eligible for Pell or other need-based financial grants (Cahalan et al., 2018). The lack of access to the same financial resources, academic preparedness, and familial guidance creates an environment of more adversity for this population than their more privileged peers (Gibbons et al., 2019; House et al., 2020; Pratt et al., 2019; Richards, 2022). Limited research illustrates the intersection of minoritized students and the effectiveness of case

management services, but a consistent theme includes holistic case management services resulting in positive student outcomes for this demographic of college students (Evans et al., 2020; Kezar et al., 2023).

Sufficient and comprehensive case management support at higher education institutions has been found important to ensuring positive student outcomes and student development (Evans et al., 2020; Rouse, 2021). Case management services have demonstrated student success by increasing student retention and graduation (Evans et al., 2020; Van Norman, 2017) while decreasing the rate of students completing suicide (Van Norman, 2017), which can only improve outcomes for students and the institution alike. Moreover, case management services have the ability to encourage a student's capacity to cope with the challenges of life by helping them solve problems (Evans et al., 2020; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012), recognize and address concerning or distressing behaviors (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Hollingsworth et al., 2009; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013), and develop plans for academic success (Evans et al., 2020; Hoffhines, 2018). There is a dearth literature describing the experiences of minoritized students participating in case management services. Such research could offer important contexts of the ways in which students are able to cope with their personal challenges, make their own decisions, and develop further into young adulthood as a result of participating in case management services. Therefore, this study seeks to better understand how case management services foster minoritized students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors. In order to understand the insights of students utilizing case management services, this research will strive to answer: How, if at all, do case management services facilitate minoritized students' ability to address potential barriers to their success during the case management process?

### The Development of Case Management Services in Higher Education

Formalized case management in higher education has been developed out of necessity sparked by campus tragedy as a result of deficiencies in communication across college campuses (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Shelesky et al., 2016; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012; Van Norman, 2017; C. Wilson et al., 2013) and managing the increasing mental health concerns experienced by students (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Rouse, 2021; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013). Universally, the shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007 and Northern Illinois University in 2008 prompted colleges and universities to develop policies and procedures to communicate about students of concern and create initiatives to mitigate risk to the campus community (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Day et al., 2017; Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Self, 2018; Shelesky et al., 2016; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012; Van Norman, 2017; C. Wilson et al., 2013). The lack of communication across campus and identification of students with serious mental illness and concerning behaviors directly resulted in these tragic events (Hollingsworth et al., 2009; Snyder et al., 2019). Subsequently, post-secondary institutions began to recognize that they must identify students with concerning and/or threatening behaviors, track and communicate with allied campus partners, and distinguish symptoms of mental illness that may pose a risk to the safety of the campus community (Eells & Rockland-Miller, 2010; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013). Case managers were established to meet this need (S. D. Adams et al., 2014; Rouse, 2021; Van Brunt et al., 2012; C. Wilson et al., 2013).

As a new profession, student affairs case management did not have specific guidelines for best practices. In 2010, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and National

Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) established core competencies for student affairs practitioners (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). While many of these competencies are related to the work case managers engage in, the competencies do not include a formal case management section. In 2011, the Higher Education Case Managers Association (HECMA) was established as a professional organization for case managers (Tongsri et al., 2017; C. Wilson et al., 2013), but this still did not enact standards of practice (*History & Evolution*, n.d.). To address this gap, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) in partnership with HECMA established guidelines and standards for case management services in post-secondary institutions with the most recent iteration in 2019 (Day et al., 2017).

#### Student Affairs Case Management Institutional Structures

Colleges and universities use a variety of different approaches to case management, which can be co-occurring on college campuses to meet the needs of their institutions (Shelesky et al., 2016). The “Administrative Model” (Van Brunt et al., 2012, pp. 13–18) houses the case management functions within the campus dean of students office, which may often include several departments such as disability services, residence life, and student conduct. A HECMA survey from 2017 found that 46 percent of case managers are housed within the dean of students office (Dugo et al., 2017). The “Administrative Model” (Van Brunt et al., 2012, pp. 13–18) has been praised for its ability to provide a centralized location for addressing student issues and swift response, but it does present with some challenges. For instance, staff need to be adequately competent in many areas to provide holistic support to students, and some students’ needs may be out of the scope of practice for some practitioners—like addressing mental health

concerns (Van Brunt et al., 2012). Similarly, students may be unsure if their interactions with college administrators are confidential or private (Van Brunt et al., 2012).

The “Counseling Center Model” (Van Brunt et al., 2012, pp. 21–23) places case management services within campus counseling and psychological services via mental health practitioners. HECMA determined in 2017 that about 22 percent of campus case managers are located in the college counseling office (Dugo et al., 2017). The “Counseling Center Model” (Van Brunt et al., 2012) can provide a holistic view of managing student difficulties; however, limitations regarding confidentiality may prevent successful case management delivery. Communicating with campus and community partners is a necessity for effective case management (Hollingsworth et al., 2009; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012), and this may be stifled with the requirement of a release of information form to share information.

The “Behavioral Intervention Team Model” (Van Brunt et al., 2012, pp. 19–20) provides behavioral intervention services for students that may be exhibiting distressing behaviors that could present as a risk to themselves or the campus community consisting of a multidisciplinary team of university personnel (Self, 2018; Snyder et al., 2019; Woods-Johnson & Janosik, 2013). HECMA recognized in 2017 that 86 percent of case managers provide some follow-up and/or support to students involved in behavioral intervention services while about 31 percent of case managers chair the behavioral intervention team (Dugo et al., 2017). While well-intentioned, students may feel hesitant to work with someone on the behavioral intervention team as it may feel punitive or not applicable to their situation. As a result, putting case management services solely within the behavioral intervention team may feel less supportive and inappropriate in some scenarios.

## Guiding Framework

This inquiry will utilize the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) as a guiding framework. The Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) integrates elements of the Broker Model of Case Management (Bedell et al., 2000) from healthcare professions and Social Work Case Management Standards (*NASW Standards for Social Work Case Management*, 2013) as established with the National Association of Social Workers, or simply NASW. S. D. Adams et al. (2014) explains that the Student Affairs Case Management Model as presented by Davis (2010) uses the following steps: (a) “student-client assessment” (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, pp. 451–453), which includes performing a needs assessment to gather data to fully understand the student’s current condition; (b) “student advocacy” (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, pp. 453–454), which includes partnering and connecting students with resources, intervening on the student’s behalf when necessary, developing a student’s ability for self-efficacy and self-determining their own care, and reducing bureaucratic and logistical barriers; (c) “student empowerment” (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, p. 455), which includes a student’s ability to advocate for themselves, articulate plans to accomplish personal goals, and demonstrate the ability to make changes on their own; and (d) “providing follow-up and resolution” (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, pp. 455–456), which requires that the case manager checks in with the student, and they determine when the presenting concerns have been addressed. S. D. Adams et al. (2014) explains that this model may be used with many campus administrators irrespective of the severity of the case while emphasizing a “student-centered approach” (p. 456) that addresses the needs of the whole student in order to align with the fundamental functions of student affairs practice.



The Student Affairs Case Management Model (S. D. Adams et al., 2014) aligns with the core principles of student affairs to include: encouraging student health and wellness, providing resources and guidance to students and faculty, and implementing support for students that may have difficulty with their academics. HECMA recognizes the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) as presented by Adams et al. (2014) as one of its foundational documents for researchers and practitioners to reference (*Foundational Documents*, n.d.). As will be discussed further in the research design, this study applied the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) to inform how this study is approached, how data is collected, and how data will be examined. Staff within the case management office at the research site currently use this model as a framework for providing direct practice to students receiving case management support, which will provide the reader with an example of its application.

### Research Design

To better understand how case management services foster minoritized students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors as informed by the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010), this study will utilize an intrinsic, qualitative case study design. Intrinsic case study designs focus on the examination of a certain group, experience, or institution to learn more about a specific phenomenon that does not seek to generalize comprehensive study results to wider populations (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Stake, 1995). Simply, for intrinsic case study, the researcher's interest in this individual case is of utmost importance and employing the findings of this case more broadly is irrelevant (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Jones et al., 2014;

Stake, 1995). Qualitative case study designs allow the researcher to learn about how the participants make meaning of their experiences often with open-ended questions and emphasis on describing the intricacy of an event (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### Description of the Case

The case for this research is a case management program at a large, private, liberal arts institution in a large, midwestern city, called Great Lakes Midwestern University, or simply GLMU (a pseudonym). GLMU offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees totaling nearly 18,000 students. Of these students, about 7,000 are undergraduates and nearly 11,000 are graduates. The vast majority of students are enrolled full-time and degree-seeking. One hundred percent of undergraduate students are aged 24 and under with 73 percent of graduate students being aged 25 and older. Race/ethnicity demographics include: 37% white, 27% international, 10% Hispanic, 5% Black or African American, 15% Asian, and 7% other. Undergraduate students had a 100% retention rate with a 96% completion rate.

The case management program at GLMU was recently introduced in autumn 2022 with the hiring of two, full-time staff to develop the program's policies and procedures; facilitate student assessment, referral, and follow-up; document student progress; liaise between campus and community resources; and establish a campus presence through website development, event coordination, and marketing. Currently, the office is staffed by two, licensed mental health professionals, but the staff are operating in a non-clinical capacity. Therefore, the staff keep matters with students private to ensure that only applicable campus partners are privy to case management records, and the staff do not provide any diagnosis or treatment of mental health

conditions. The case management program currently only serves full-time, residential and non-residential, undergraduate students. As GLMU has decentralized student and academic services, case management services were purposefully devised to utilize the “Administrative Model” (Van Brunt et al., 2012, pp. 13–18) for its ability to serve as a centralized place for students to navigate institutional structures and for staff to communicate across campus departments.

### Participants and Sampling

I incorporated purposeful sampling in this study to allow for a thorough understanding of a specific phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015) with six student participants being selected based off the following criteria: (1) referral to case management by a faculty or staff member expressing concern; (2) active engagement in case management services during the spring 2023 academic term; (3) completion of at least one meeting with case management staff; and (4) current enrollment in courses. In addition to student participants, a case manager currently working in the case management office, also participated given her direct interactions with students to provide insights into the research question of this study. While participants of all backgrounds were eligible to participate in this study, all of the participants of this study identified as people of color, nearly all women, and many of whom self-disclosed as low-income and/or first-generation college students during their interviews. Because all participants identified as people of color, this provided the opportunity to explore the experiences of minoritized students with case management. Participant descriptions are provided in Table 1.

Table 1  
Participant Descriptions

Pseudonym	Age when First Interviewed	Gender	Year in School	Race/Ethnicity
<b>Student Participants</b>				
Deloresse	20	Woman	Second Year	African American or Black
Gabriela	22	Woman	Fourth Year	Hispanic/Latino
Jasmine	20	Woman	Second Year	African American or Black
Kenzo	21	Man	Second Year	Asian Japanese
Naomi	20	Woman	Second Year	Asian Japanese
Seiko	19	Woman	First Year	Asian Chinese Japanese
<b>Case Manager Participant</b>				
Teresa	35	Woman	N/A	African American or Black

Actively engaged students had some form of interaction (e.g., in-person meeting, virtual meeting, email correspondence) with the case manager participant within the last 30 days. The students participating in case management services were referred by other campus academic and support offices due to challenging life circumstances. Subsequently, an initial intake meeting occurred with the case manager participant. At the beginning of this meeting, students were asked by this same case manager if they wished to participate in this research study. Also, some of the students that had been working the case manager participant prior to the beginning of this study were asked to partake via a recruitment email (see Appendix I) if their case manager was unable to discuss participation during the initial intake appointment. To clearly define my role as a researcher and mitigate a potential conflict of interest, I only interviewed students working with the case manager participant.

### Data Collection

This study relied solely on two, semi-structured interviews with each student participant and one, semi-structured interview with a case manager to gain insights into their experiences and/or perspectives to effectively answer the question of inquiry. Semi-structured interviews offered an opportunity to ask open ended questions while allowing for a more conversational approach to include asking clarifying questions or inquiring about a person's feelings (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Two interviews with each student participant and an additional interview with a case management practitioner at the research site were utilized to demonstrate "adequate engagement in data collection" to ensure that the phenomenon was sufficiently examined and the conclusions were truly saturated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246). Interview protocols (see Appendices C, D, & E) were established with questions that directly align with the research question and the guiding framework of this study.

For the set of student interviews, I conducted the first interview (see Appendix C) within four weeks of a student completing an initial intake meeting with the case manager to get a baseline impression of their perceptions and experiences. The second interview (see Appendix D) occurred within about two weeks after a student completed services with student case management or at least two months after the first meeting. Completion of services was achieved once a student had effectively been able to address their concerns and accomplished their proposed goals. For the interview with the case manager, a separate interview protocol (see Appendix E) was utilized to provide further perspective regarding the question of inquiry and to review any emerging and initial themes from the student interviews. This single interview with

the case manager was completed five days after the conclusion spring 2023 academic term to allow for reflection of student accomplishments and experiences. Student interviews were approximately 40 to 75 minutes in length, and the case manager interview was about 120 minutes. Interviews were scheduled at the participants' convenience in an in-person format in the case management office or virtually (e.g., Zoom).

### Data Analysis

All semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed so they could be prepared to be coded into themes. All of the transcriptions underwent a two-step coding process (Jones et al., 2014; Patton, 2015): (1) open coding to gather general, initial themes within the data and (2) axial coding to find the relationships between the open codes and organize them into categories. Constant comparative analysis was incorporated into the data analysis process to examine relationships between the themes at any point while evaluating the data (Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I compared and contrasted raw data, initial themes, and open and axial codes to reveal the patterns that materialized with a particular focus on themes that directly related to the question of inquiry (Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) as informed by the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010).

### Criteria for Quality

In order to ensure that this data is trustworthy and reliable, I employed member checks, peer review of data with other case management staff and my faculty advisor, and reflexivity and memoing. Member checks required reviewing the collected data with the participants to confirm

the that my interpretations of the data align with the participants' perspectives (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995). For the first few interviews, I sent the student participants an email after each interview with interpretations of emerging themes and findings to allow for sufficient reflection of the presenting themes. For later interviews, I reviewed the themes at the conclusion of their interview to ask for feedback. In addition, the emerging themes were reviewed with the case manager participant to confirm that the data interpretations appear dependable with typical case management cases (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My faculty advisor reviewed my emerging themes to verify that my interpretations seemed reasonable and applicable given the data. Lastly, I used reflexivity to recognize how my experiences and background may influence the data collection and data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I wrote notes of the data collection experience, reflected on personal experiences, and crafted memos during the research process to examine my relationship with the study participants so as to not overly affect interpretations of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

#### Positionality Statement

I am a white, gay man of a working-class family and a first-generation college student from Southern Indiana. My formal education has been in music education for K-12 settings and social work with specialties in healthcare, mental health, and substance use treatment. I have worked in many arenas including: public primary and secondary education, higher education, hospitals, nursing facilities, and community mental health organizations. From my educational

and professional experiences, I see how many psychosocial stressors may impact a student's ability to succeed, which has motivated me to create this study. My background informed my research inquiry and subsequent data collection. It was important that I clearly defined my role as the researcher in this study and not assert my authority as a college administrator from a privileged background. For example, I had to recognize that my background and identities may present as an impediment to participants who presented from marginalized backgrounds and did not share my identities. While incorporating my social work training, I examined my own personal biases so as to not inhibit the relationships built with this study's participants. Moreover, I recognized that supporting the experiences of others is crucial to building a meaningful relationship. In doing so, some common skills that I utilized to build understanding and rapport with participants included reflections to validate their insights, summaries of their descriptions, affirmations of their strengths, and exploration of their values and goals.

### Findings

Five salient themes that could guide case managers' interactions with minoritized students emerged from interviews with students participating in case management services and with the case manager: (1) supporting the whole student supports minoritized students' needs; (2) dependability and proactive outreach facilitate minoritized students' help seeking behaviors; (3) student insight is mutually constructed; (4) collaboratively organizing goals and interventions foster minoritized student ownership of managing life stressors; (5) and providing reassurance builds confidence. Each theme is described in more detail next.



### Supporting the Whole Student Supports Minoritized Students' Individual Needs

Student participants described the importance of having case managers who incorporate a holistic approach that addresses a myriad of concerns. Case managers, from the student's view, serve as a single point of contact to help manage their stressors but also work in conjunction with other resources such as mental health services, financial assistance, and academic advising to streamline processes. The case manager participant agreed with this approach to their work.

For instance, Seiko, a Japanese/Chinese American student, said, "it's been good to have one person that I could go to to get at least half of the answers I need and the other half they can tell me where to get them or like what I should do." Seiko expressed to her case manager difficulty with navigating American culture after living abroad in Japan since childhood. Seiko's description of holistic case management support illustrates how having one person that can address her concerns and connect her with the correct resources to mitigate challenges was beneficial. Similarly, Deloresse, an African American/Black student who self-identified as being first-generation and low-income, stated, "I've actually told some of my friends who've been having issues, I'm like, they're like your one stop shop [referring to the case management office]. Please go to case management and they will help you figure it out." Deloresse's statement emphasized that she appreciated that her case manager would examine all facets of her life to help her solve problems. Deloresse was even able to encourage other students to utilize this service as a means to aid in addressing their issues. Gabriela, a Latinx student who disclosed recently losing familial and financial support, highlighted how all-inclusive assistance changed her perception of the institution stating:

My situation is one that is unconventional and also deserves assistance and support. And also, just that the school is willing to, or that there are some people at the school who are willing to help with like personal difficulties and mental health and finances even more than I knew already existed because I think prior to this, I thought that the school resources were largely very flawed in how they were actually connected with student's needs. So, I think that this provided me a step in the right direction and made me feel better about the way that the school treats its students.

Prior to engaging in case management services, Gabriela expressed frustration in being referred from office to office with no clear resolution to her concerns. Case management services served as a singular guiding force to help this student feel supported by the institution.

All of the students in this study were engaging in several support services in addition to case management with mental health resources being the most prominent. For example, Naomi, a Japanese American student, attributed her academic success to her support network of off campus resources with her case manager serving as her connection to the institution stating:

I was able to work with people and like, you know, get through this quarter. So, like, I felt good. I felt like I had a support system. Even though I still have distress about my support system. I did have a support system. I did have my parents help me figure out what classes I wanted to take, my brother, and my friends, and Teresa [case manager pseudonym]. I have, yeah, my therapist back home.

Naomi's description demonstrates that holistic support also can include having a support system of family, friends, mental health professionals, and the campus case manager. Likewise, Kenzo, a Japanese American, low-income, and first-generation identifying student, stated, "I started going to like student wellness, therapy, trying to work on like, personal issues," which indicated his engagement in mental health services in addition to case management services. Kenzo was also connected with academic advising and housing and residence life via his case manager to fully address his concerns. Jasmine, a low-income, African American/Black student, expressed similar sentiments stating, "so I would say that meeting with case management, meeting with my

counselor, Student Wellness, has been I guess, the best support for me.” Jasmine described that her therapist and her case manager were her most important supports on-campus, but she was also engaging in services with the financial aid office and academic advising. Teresa, the case manager who identifies as African American/Black, acknowledged the necessity of working with several campus offices to support a student saying, “being able to collaborate with campus partners has played a huge role in having things come out in a positive way.” As the student’s case manager, Teresa plays a fundamental role in coordinating services between offices for students that may be experiencing difficulty. Teresa’s and the student participants’ perspectives highlight how minoritized students require multidisciplinary support that can address all of their needs.

### Dependability and Proactive Outreach Facilitate Minoritized

#### Students’ Help Seeking Behaviors

Student participants suggested that case managers should be dependable. Most often, this required that the same case manager could meet with the student at a consistent time and frequency, and the case manager had availability to meet with the student. Moreover, students appreciated when their case manager would reach out to them to check in on their situation and offer support or assistance. For instance, Deloresse stated:

I think knowing that this was going to be an ongoing like person in my life, made it feel less anxiety inducing to know like, okay, I'm not going to have to re-explain this to somebody else. Every single time I come in here, I have, like, the same, like consistent person that I can talk to every time and so it made it, it made me feel like more open to talking about everything.

Deloresse's expression of consistent support shows that she appreciated that the same staff member would be supporting her through this process, which encouraged her to continue engaging in case management services. Conversely, Jasmine described an occurrence that lacked consistency when she sought out academic tutoring services saying, "But the meetings just weren't consistent.... And that inevitably was the quarter that was my last quarter on campus. So, I don't know. I didn't find it very helpful because our meetings weren't consistent." The inconsistent support was not enough to address Jasmine's needs, and she ended up taking a leave of absence from the institution due to unsatisfactory academic progress.

Additionally, students requested that their case manager is reliable and available to them when needed. For instance, Kenzo stated, "I feel like Teresa [case manager pseudonym] is available to me.... She was like, you know, just very helpful, and like, you know, kind of took the time out of her day." Kenzo's expressions indicated that he feels assured that Teresa will be there to support him through challenges, respond to his inquiries, and value his participation in seeking assistance. Teresa, case manager, reinforced the importance of being available for students of minoritized backgrounds stating:

I also think that sometimes students who maybe are from a racially marginalized identity, sometimes different offices may not know what to do with them. I've had a student tell me that I was their fifth Black woman that they were sent to, for the mere fact that they were Black. And so they were sent to this office because they were Black.... But they were bounced around because, 'oh, well, I don't want to deal with this.'

Teresa's narrative illustrates how students get shuffled across the institution from office to office due to their racial identity. Once Teresa has begun to engage with a student, it is her mission to ensure that the student has a consistent, available, and dependable resource to help students manage their concerns. As indicated by participants with minoritized identities, case managers

should be dependable so students can trust that they will be supported through their difficult situation.

Students welcomed persistent invitations to meet and benefited from outreach from their case manager. For example, Naomi described how her case manager would contact her stating:

‘Hey! Let's meet, like look, let's talk,’ [referring to case manager, Teresa] that sort of thing. I'm more inclined to instead of just like staying in my room and like sort of...like I'm more inclined to just like, throw myself out there. Like, I'm getting out the door. I'm taking a walk, and I'm going to talk with someone, period. That is what I'm doing. And like it may not feel that great when I first do it, but I know that like 30 minutes in I'm gonna feel so much better than I would feel just being in my room alone with my thoughts.

Naomi's narrative shows that she felt that outreach from case management encouraged her to seek out support rather than staying in her room. Gabriela described her case manager as “constant[ly] checking in and someone who was on top and familiar with my situation.” As a result of this outreach, Gabriela would seek out help from her case manager. Teresa, case manager, endorsed how she may check in with a student stating, “I might like circle back in a couple of weeks...Is anything new coming up for you or just finding a way to kind of bring it back into the conversation?” Teresa's outreach signals how she continued to encourage student engagement in services. Kenzo expressed similar feelings about having reinforcement from his case manager stating, “Her being adamant about reaching out to me, you know, persistent even when I'm not responding, I think really just showed that like she was there to really help me. It made it easy to like reach back out.” Kenzo's reflection describes how communications from his case manager pushed him to respond and continue to engage. As depicted by the participants in this study, dependability and proactive outreach are essential components of minoritized students successfully seeking out assistance.

### Student Insight Development is Mutually Constructed

Students and the case manager in this study both expressed the importance of developing insight into the challenges students were facing and what influenced those challenges to begin to solve and address areas of concern. Jasmine noted, “I also struggle with kind of recognizing what support I need.” Teresa, case manager, supported Jasmine’s observation by saying:

There have been some students who come in and they're able to say, X, Y, and Z are things that are going on. Here's how it's impacting me, boom. Others have no insight into it, and you're really naming it, or through our services, we're helping them name it. We're helping them make meaning of what those issues are and how they can navigate them and how they're impacting their daily functioning.

Teresa’s description of developing insight suggests that case managers elicit discussion that helps students to recognize how their concerns are impacting their lives. Naomi confirmed Teresa’s assertion stating, “I guess like continuously engaging in conversations. It's just like revealing how I feel about like, failure and that sort of things helped me sort of reframe how I think about not achieving goals.” The capacity to engage in meaningful conversations helped these students with minoritized identities to acknowledge that their life stressors are impeding their ability to be successful. Deloresse explained:

I think having somebody to talk to was really helpful, because I felt less alone. So, it was easier to say like, oh, like, this is what I have going on, but I have somebody in my corner who can support me through having something going on, which was really helpful. And then also, just like as time went on, it was kind of easier to like, accept what was going on.

Deloresse’s account demonstrates how having these exchanges with her case manager helped her to realize how her concerns were impacting her life.

While any support is helpful, from the student's perspective, these dialogues between student and case manager should convey validation, understanding, and unconditional positive regard. Gabriela explained:

I do think that having that support and also the validation made it so that I felt like my situation was a big deal, and that it was interfering with my studies, and so that made me feel better about asking for extensions or asking for any kind of extra timing or any kind of accommodations I would ask from a professor due to, like taking meetings or doing therapy work instead, or taking a day off because I was too anxious to work. Like, it just made me feel like my situation could use academic support.

Gabriela's reflection suggests that the validation that she had with her case manager helped to her to recognize the significance of how her life stressors were impacting her academics.

Likewise, Seiko stated, "She [referring to case manager, Teresa] would like ask open questions and was like listening a lot towards the beginning.... I think she spent a lot of time trying to like understand, like, where I was at and what I was struggling with." Seiko identified that her case manager was truly trying to comprehend her situation, which could then assist the case manager in developing Seiko's insight of her circumstances. Kenzo shared how he was able to develop insight on his concerns stating:

I think we all think our problems are bigger than they really are, especially when we don't talk about them. So, having someone there to talk to about the problems, that I know won't like freak out, actually allows me to like acknowledge that due to the things I'm struggling with—just sharing that load—makes like, I don't know....When you share your problems with someone, it feels like they're not as big as they were before like when they're just in your head.

Kenzo's narrative indicates the significance of supporting students of minoritized backgrounds with access to talk with a case management staff member about problems and concerns as this type of assistance may not have been available in prior circumstances. Kenzo was able to describe that he felt heard, understood, and accepted in his exchange with his case manager.

Subsequently, he was able to begin articulating his concerns, which will aid in resolving his concerns. Jasmine explained how being able to verbally process with her case manager was beneficial to her insight development stating:

So, I think, what's been I guess my insight is that sometimes what support I need is just being able to hear someone say things to me that I've probably already been thinking, to be able to process them out loud. That's what I—that's how I process best. So, just being a space where I can verbalize things and have someone who's like, okay, here's a perspective about that, that maybe you didn't consider, or here's an angle or a way in which we can approach this dilemma. And it's never been in like, this is what you need to do like you're doing a wrong type of way, but it's like a soundboard or a jumping board. I don't know what you would call it but just a place where I could, could process and have someone who would be willing to offer me solutions and help me get to the best one for me. So, that's what—that's what I needed.

Again, Jasmine reiterated that she felt understood, listened to, supported, and not judged in her interactions with her case manager. This dialogue with her case manager formed the foundation for her to begin to think through possible solutions and strategies to effectively manage her concerns. Building insight requires listening, understanding, and respecting the student, which is particularly relevant for students of minoritized backgrounds who are navigating spaces that were not created for them.

### Collaboratively Organizing Goals and Interventions Foster

#### Student Ownership of Managing Life Stressors

Students indicated the importance of collaboratively organizing goals and interventions to have ownership and agency in managing their life stressors. For example, Kenzo described how he was able to work with his case manager to establish his goals and interventions explaining:

I think something that case management does really well is like having someone who does kind of all the little...lays the groundwork to do the things that you want to be doing—that you should be doing. To like, you know, the lists of things to get done, kind



of setting you up with the right people, making sure things are going smoothly and on track and taking care of if it's not, fielding any questions that you do have. I think those are all things that are really difficult and require effort when you're struggling. It's just having someone who's there alongside you, kind of taking care of those things has proved extremely helpful.

Kenzo's narrative describes how he and his case manager were able to organize his concerns into a list to ensure that he is achieving his desired goals but also keeping record of his deadlines. For a student in distress, it can be very difficult to begin formulating how they would like to resolve their concerns. Naomi shared she can often feel overwhelmed with developing a plan of action saying, "How can I reconfigure my thoughts so that it's no longer getting me stuck?" Naomi further elaborated stating "sometimes it's like, it's one task becomes all these infinite, like, these infinite smaller tasks, which can be just as difficult." Naomi described how the collaborative approach with her case manager helped her to establish her goals stating, "Teresa [case manager pseudonym]...g[a]ve me a couple of perspectives about like, ways that I can view the situation differently." From there, Naomi was able to decide how she may want to approach her concerns with the guidance of her case manager.

The students further elaborated how they organized a plan for success with their case manager. For example, Jasmine shared, "she helped me formulate a document maybe halfway through the quarter that kind of had my deadlines of outstanding work...And from then on, we referenced it to just help me stay accountable." Jasmine expounded that she needed help with getting organized and staying on top of her deadlines, and her case manager enabled the space for Jasmine to establish a plan of action. Likewise, Deloresse described:

I kind of just like word vomited, everything going wrong in my life, and then Teresa [case manager pseudonym] just like took notes and was like, okay, like, it sounds like this, this, and this are your priorities. Like do you want to go like—Does that sound right? Do we need to, you know—Is anything else you'd like to add? Is maybe this not as

important? And so yeah, she was like more organized originally in terms of like, okay, like, I'm hearing XYZ. So how can we address XYZ? Which was great because I felt like a disorganized mess. Whenever I first went in there, I did not know what to do.

Deloresse's case manager was able to summarize stated goals and elicit feedback to establish how they were to collectively move forward with addressing Deloresse's concerns.

Subsequently, Deloresse was able to leave her meeting feeling accomplished in organizing her affairs and naming how she would like to address her concerns. Similarly, Gabriela described how her case manager explored several options to alleviate her challenges expressing:

When I talked about my situation, she [referring to case manager, Teresa] listened, and she just made it explicit that she would do her best to look for resources that I was eligible for.... She explicitly told me that she would be supporting me as much as she could and that she would be looking for any and all resources in the area that I might be interested in. And she offered to call for me or with me and provide me a third-party testimonial if I needed or an account of my situation in an official way...but having an adult in an established supportive role provide themselves as a resource I think is really important.

Gabriela's case manager listened, provided solutions, and offered to write a narrative to help Gabriela overcome barriers. This allowed the student to express her needs to be successful.

Teresa, case manager, further supported the idea of offering herself as a resource to provide possible solutions stating, "And so when we can help say, 'I'm sorry, you went through that. Let's change that. How can I help?' And really helping, not just talking the talk, but walking the walk, that makes it very different for them." As per the student's descriptions, student ownership can be nurtured with case managers by helping students establish their goals while organizing their plan of action.

### Providing Reassurance Builds Confidence

Once a student recognizes how their life stressors are impacting their daily functioning and has made a plan to address these concerns, it is time to begin carrying out actions and behaviors that will help students to enact their goals. For this to be accomplished, students described that they need to feel encouraged and have the confidence to make these positive changes in their lives. For instance, Jasmine explained:

I think coming to case management and still speaking with Teresa [case manager pseudonym] has been helping me reclaim confidence, and I'm thinking about our last conversations like, okay, just to extend your sense of self grace, is to be working to get stuff done. I think I've really needed to hear that especially during this time. So, I think my concerns haven't changed in that I'm still working on those things. But I do think that our meetings have been helpful and kind of keeping me a lot more motivated than I've been than I've been in the past... I'm just being reassured, being encouraged, and being just reminded of what I'm capable of doing. And even if it wasn't like an outward like, you got this type thing, being able to come to a meeting and have something done, that gave me confidence throughout my day to carry on with the rest of my day or motivated to write a discussion post I need to finish or to finish, complete a task. So, I think that helped build my confidence a lot.

Earlier in the conversation, Jasmine expressed imposter syndrome and intrusive thoughts that had her question her ability to succeed in college. However, her meetings with case management helped her to believe that she could overcome some of her obstacles, and she was able to take actions to achieve her goals. Similarly, Seiko stated, "I guess like no venture, no gain. Just like learn how to ask for help a little bit better...to be less afraid about asking for an extension or to be less afraid to ask questions about how things work." Some students of minoritized identities may not have been taught or encouraged to ask questions, but Seiko's interactions with case management gave her the confidence to ask for assistance in her courses and to take action to address her academic concerns. Deloressé described how building confidence required sequential

successes stating, “If this person hears me and can listen to me, then like, who else can do this for me?...each time you accomplish something, like, affirms that you can do it. And it like builds my confidence each time.” Deloressa recognized that she could continue to make positive changes in her life after she had reassurance each time she completed a goal. Teresa, case manager, reiterated this expressing, “I think they [students] start to feel hopeful and no longer helpless.” When a student believes that they can overcome their obstacles, they have the confidence to engage in behaviors that help them to accomplish their goals.

Of course, students in this study experienced adversity that threatened to thwart their progress. Naomi described building her confidence and capacity to persevere stating:

So, I feel confident that no matter what happens, like, I'll be able to withstand it and I'll be able to get through to the other end, and I'm able to improve things as well. I don't think I'm going to be perfect all the time that like I'm going to like, like I used to in the past. I had this impression that when I became an adult, like everything would just be like, amazing, like I'd be like, I'm so smart. So, I was like my financials would be amazing. Like all these problems, just go away. You know, I mean, there was this point, there's this one point, everything's good. And I got discouraged when that point never came. And now I'm just like, yeah, that point that may never come but like, there's still good things that are gonna come and like, I can overcome, like, whatever things gonna happen to me that's really crappy. And on the other end, there's gonna be something that's good. So, I'm confident that I'm confident that I'll be able to overcome, like, whatever comes at me.

In her work with her case manager, Naomi described how she was able to expect adversity and setbacks, but she knows that she has the capability to endure despite difficulties. Kenzo felt similarly stating, “you can fail a little bit and still be mostly successful, and you'll be okay.... That's not the end of the world if you mess up one thing. Your whole plan is not going to be over.” Kenzo previously expressed that his first-generation and low-income statuses present him with additional obstacles, but his engagement with case management has solidified that he can realize his objectives even when hindrances occur. Kenzo shared his strategy that he developed

with his case manager to managing his concerns elucidating, “I’ve learned like how to kind of share a problem, break that problem into smaller problems, and then fix it in a way where I’m not feeling absolutely horrible.” Kenzo’s description illustrates that he has developed a systematic approach to address his concerns. Students of minoritized identities must believe that they can realize their goals and feel supported to overcome their life stressors.

### Discussion

These findings provide insight on how minoritized students perceive the case management process as beneficial for helping them overcome barriers to their success. Prior research primarily focused on the quantitative measures of student retention and completion as a result of engagement with case management services (Evans et al., 2020; Self, 2018; Van Norman, 2017). This research offers personal accounts and perspectives directly from minoritized students and a case management practitioner that highlight elements of how these services encourage student success. Researchers have recognized that first-generation, low-income, and racially minoritized students frequently experience financial concerns, family stressors and obligations, academic difficulties, and mental health concerns that impact their ability to be successful (Evans et al., 2020; House et al., 2020; Kezar et al., 2023; Schuyler et al., 2021). The common psychosocial stressors often experienced by minoritized students are the matters that are frequently best supported by case management services (Dugo et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2020; Snyder et al., 2019; Van Brunt et al., 2012). Showcasing the positive experiences of minoritized students engaged in case management services, these findings illustrate why case management should be incorporated into the suite of services provided by

student affairs and how such services could be replicated at other institutions of higher learning. The findings of this study, in particular, highlights why case management services as informed by the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) can be an excellent means for supporting students of first-generation, low-income, and minoritized racial identities.

To add further context of the findings, it is important to recognize some of the limitations and considerations apparent in this study. First, all of the responses from students in this inquiry appeared with positive regard for the case management program. Given that students self-determined their participation in this study, students that were not satisfied with their experience with case management services may have felt less inclined to participate. Future research may try to intentionally seek out students who discontinued utilizing case management services to gain insights into experiences of students who may not have felt satisfied with the services provided. Second, students in this study were all engaging in case management services on their own volition. Perspectives of students who are required to work with case managers may differ from those who choose to take advantage of these services.

The findings of this study indicate that the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) may be a useful tool for developing or improving case management services. Supporting the whole student is a student affairs value (Long, 2012) that can be fostered via case management services using the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010). This study upheld this approach by indicating the importance of holistic support (i.e., supporting the whole student supports minoritized students' needs) in understanding and supporting a minoritized student of concern. Previous research highlights the importance of holistic support to promote minoritized students' success (Evans et al., 2020; Kezar et al., 2023; Museus, 2014;

Schuyler et al., 2021). This approach aligns with the aspect of the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) highlighting the need of “student-client assessment” (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, pp. 451–453) to ensure that the student feels heard and the case manager is able to ascertain the student’s goals, values, strengths, and objectives in addressing their concerns. In order to begin to help minoritized students overcome the barriers to their success, the case manager must have a full scope of understanding of what is needing to be accomplished. As indicated in the findings, students appreciated that case management can and will examine all facets of their life so they can have one place to address their concerns.

The theme of dependability and proactive outreach facilitate minoritized students’ help seeking behaviors is congruent with “providing follow-up and resolution” (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, pp. 455–456) within the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010). The students affirmed that they needed to know that their case manager would be meeting with them regularly and checking in with them on their situation. This creates an environment to encourage students to seek out help because they know that a dependable resource will be available to them. In many ways, this allows both the case manager and the student to remain in collaboration to safeguard that they are following through on tasks, reassessing if new goals or aims need to be created, and determining when the matter has been resolved. Research highlights that having support staff to follow-up and provide ongoing engagement (Evans et al., 2020; Schuyler et al., 2021) is particularly important for encouraging minoritized students’ persistence to graduation (Payne et al., 2021; Richards, 2022).

The findings also indicated the importance of supporting the development of skills that allow minoritized students to independently manage life stressors during the case management

process. Such skills included developing insight, fostering ownership of managing life stressors, and building confidence. These findings most closely parallels with “student empowerment” (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, p. 455) within the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) to encourage students to establish their own plan for accomplishing their goals and enacting these objectives. In coordination with their case manager, minoritized students recognized how their stressors were impacting their ability to thrive and take charge in making and carrying out a plan of action. Helping students transition from a place of vulnerability to a feeling of empowerment is particularly relevant for minoritized students. For instance, the literature discusses how minoritized students experience imposter syndrome that has them question their ability to thrive in a college environment historically not designed for them (T. Adams & McBrayer, 2020; Le, 2019). Similarly, they may not have the experience of navigating campus systems and may benefit from support and direction (Evans et al., 2020; Kezar et al., 2023; Schuyler et al., 2021). Minoritized students in this study affirmed that they were able to engage in activities in partnership with their case manager to encourage their empowerment to overcome adversity. The case manager is available to guide the student, but the student has autonomy and authority to determine what is best for them.

The one stage within the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) without an explicitly associated theme in this study includes “student advocacy” (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, p. 453), which consists of the case manager’s role of speaking up for students, reducing institutional barriers, and teaching students how to independently manage these life stressors in the future. Students in this study were able to articulate when their case manager would advocate for them to overcome obstacles, and this provided the students assurance of their case manager’s



ability to address their psychosocial stressors. However, typically the act of advocating for students, especially to change institutional systems or request exemptions to policies, happens in private, administrative meetings when the student may not be able to observe these exact actions. Additionally, because of the case manager's administrative role and ability at the university to advocate for change, students themselves may not be able to enact these same changes for themselves as they do not have the same power and influence. Therefore, the students were not able to describe "student advocacy" (S. D. Adams et al., 2014, p. 453) as they are not intimately involved in this process.

#### Recommendations for Practice and Research

This study provided several insights to help inform future practice and research. As previously stated, this inquiry was informed by the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010), and this was the first known research to formally incorporate this framework. Additionally, the research site utilized this framework as well to demonstrate how practitioners are using this in the field, which gives the reader an example of its application. This study has implications to suggest that the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) should be incorporated in practice for training campus case managers. Future studies and campus case management offices should consider utilizing the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) to contribute to the ongoing literature and employ best-practice in case management practice on college campuses.

Limited research examines the relationship between students of first-generation, low-income, and racially minoritized students and case management practice on college campuses.

Moreover, this study took place at a large, private institution and case management services may be particularly important for minoritized students in this specific context as a means teach skills to manage life stressors to encourage student success. Given the increase in student stressors and the impact this has on students of minoritized backgrounds, it would be helpful to have more research to support the efficacy of case management services with this population particularly in navigating privileged academic environments. Considering the previous studies suggesting the positive impact on retention and completion rates of students engaging in case management services (Evans et al., 2020; Self, 2018; Van Norman, 2017), it would be beneficial to have more quantitative data to show if and how case management services increase these indicators of student success with this population of students. Likewise, more qualitative data could support and further the research of why these services may be useful for this group of students.

Lastly, colleges and universities should allocate resources establishing a case management program or bolstering existing case management services that reflects the themes of this study to inform practice. The participants in this study shared several themes of the importance of holistic support, dependability and proactive outreach, developing insight, fostering ownership of managing life stressors, and building confidence. However, case managers with untenable caseloads may be unable to supply their students with holistic support or ensure that they are dependable and proactively reaching out to students. Equally, case managers need sufficient time, resources, and institutional support to interface with students to develop insight, foster ownership of life concerns, and build confidence in students. Therefore, institutions of higher learning must examine the needs of case managers, provide the necessary resources for practice, and encourage institutional investment in these services for these

programs to thrive. Also, practitioners should review these themes to see how they can be applied in their own case management practice to help their students overcome their life challenges. This study's findings and previous literature demonstrate the positive impact that these services can have with a student that may be experiencing difficulty. Integrating case management services into the campus environment can only encourage student success and perpetuate the goals of the institution.

### Conclusion

Case management services have been increasingly incorporated into colleges and universities to support students experiencing life stressors that are impeding their success to help promote positive student outcomes. This study highlighted how case management services with the guidance of the Student Affairs Case Management Model (Davis, 2010) can help foster minoritized students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors. While it is known that these services boost retention, persistence, and completion rates (Evans et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021; Self, 2018; Van Norman, 2017), this study demonstrated how students may benefit from case management services and develop skills to effectively manage their life challenges, which may then garner positive results in persistence and graduation. Researchers, practitioners, and college administrators seeking evidenced-based methods that encourage minoritized students' success can review this study to justify adding or improving case management services on their own campuses.

## CHAPTER 3

### SCHOLARLY REFLECTION

#### Introduction

This chapter is a reflection of my doctoral education and dissertation experience. The first section will explore the dissertation process including the highs and lows of preparing this manuscript. The second section will illustrate how my dissertation research has impacted and informed my practice. The third section will highlight how research has affected me and how I anticipate continuing to use research.

#### Reflection on the Dissertation Process

Writing a dissertation is no small task, but I knew that I was up for the challenge. This was my first time ever writing a document of this size. The dissertation includes several prescribed sections that situates the reader in the purpose, literature review, research questions, and research design. To help myself create my dissertation, I spent a large amount of time reviewing previous dissertations of similar topics to see how the author was able to devise their document. As a result, I was able to see how each section of the dissertation should be crafted and organized. Although helpful, looking at finished dissertations gave the illusion that this writing is a clearly defined, sequential process; however, I quickly discovered that reviewing a finished, polished product is not indicative of how one prepares a dissertation. I had to give myself grace that even the authors of the completed dissertations had to revise their documents

multiple times before it could be submitted for completion or publication. I, too, would need to write my dissertation numerous times before it could be considered a final product.

I have written lots of academic papers in my past experiences as a student. Nonetheless, a dissertation requires careful consideration of content, review and reflection, and collaboration with colleagues and faculty than any previous writing. My coursework provided a foundation of higher education research and practice, but I needed to go deeper to adequately demonstrate competency in formulating my dissertation. I found that I had to immerse myself in the literature to get a full grasp of the relevant topics that should be discussed and figure out to how to synthesize the data into a clear, coherent narrative. Moreover, I had to learn more on the methodologies and theoretical frameworks to effectively create my project. This required that I ensured that all sections of my project were in alignment. In other words, the research questions had to support the theoretical framework, the research design, and my researcher positionality and worldview. Accordingly, I had to write and rewrite many sections of my dissertation several times to create this document clearly, concisely, and accurately. Thankfully, I had several peers that were incredibly supportive in providing encouragement as well as constructive feedback to edit several sections. My faculty committee were also instrumental in giving advice on how to approach my topic and design my project. After receiving this guidance, I was able to revise and resubmit my manuscript.

Along with recognizing that the dissertation is an iterative process, I also had to accept that my project would change and evolve. Initially, I knew that this project would involve examining aspects of student affairs case management practice and how this would intersect and affect students in college; however, I was unsure of the angle or specific details that would define

the purpose and subsequent research questions to guide my inquiry. I worked with my chair several times on refining and wordsmithing my dissertation title, purpose, and inquiry questions to align how I wanted to approach my research design. I repeatedly had to resubmit my dissertation proposal to address word-choice, syntax, and missing themes or concepts. I fondly recall rewriting my research questions at least a dozen times with my dissertation chair. While quite tedious, this gave me clear direction on how to approach my data collection and how to analyze my data. For instance, because I was able to have a clear purpose and inquiry questions, this helped inform how I would develop an interview protocol with study participants and how I may highlight certain codes and themes in my data analysis. Eventually, we were able to craft the words that would adequately convey what this study would be seeking to accomplish. While I appreciate a linear process, dissertations are not completed in a prescribed fashion, and I had to accept this reality.

#### Unexpected Changes and Remaining Flexible

Despite several revisions to my dissertation proposal, I still had several changes to come in my dissertation. My original dissertation proposal only included interviewing students. One of the faculty on my dissertation committee requested that I also interview my case management colleague to understand her perspective of how students overcome barriers during the case management process. I must admit that I was very hesitant initially to making this change given the work that it would take to include this addition. I now realize that this recommendation was very useful to ensuring that my data was saturated with diverse perspectives to answer my inquiry questions. However, it did require that several aspects of my dissertation had to be

updated including a new interview protocol, consent form, and revisions to nearly all of my methods section. Consequently, I needed to submit several revisions to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) with changes to my project, but these were quickly and easily approved. In looking back at these recommendations from my committee, I am glad that we decided to add this additional interview protocol to my project. I would tell my past self that a little inconvenience is worth having more robust data to examine.

Finding students to participate in the study was also a challenge. As previously discussed, my recruitment method was to have my case management colleague ask her students if they would like to participate in the study. Then, students would be referred to myself and scheduled for the first interview with the second interviewing occurring after termination with case management services. Initially, I had three students that interviewed in a week, but then I had a few weeks with no students to interview. I attribute this lack of student participants due to a reduction in students participating in case management services in general with the quarter coming to a close, and my colleague had a vacation scheduled during this time. Once my colleague returned, she was able to continue inquiring if students would like to participate in this study. To help encourage more students to participate, I added an additional recruitment email to be sent to students from my case management colleague. Originally, I did not want to recruit students via email due to the additional amendment process with IRB, but I knew that getting more participants was necessary. This recruitment email allowed my case management colleague to encourage some of her current students working with case management to contribute rather than solely relying on new students to participate in the study. Thankfully, I was ultimately able

to interview more students for this study. In hindsight, I would encourage my past self and future doctoral students to consider any means to promote as many participants as possible to ensure that a sufficient amount of data can be collected in a timely manner.

I also did not anticipate that my study would be exclusive to students of minoritized backgrounds. Sampling for my study was open to all undergraduate students irrespective of their identities and socioeconomic status. Despite this, all of the students in my study were students of color, mostly women, many first-generation, and many being of low-income backgrounds. It was expected that a variety of students would utilize these services, but it was significant that the students of this study were exclusively part of these minoritized populations. Therefore, I had to restructure my study to highlight the participants of this study and ensure that my study's purpose, inquiry question, literature, research design, findings, and discussion were in alignment. In doing so, I wanted to make sure that I honored the identities of the participants to emphasize how this research is truly important for this group of students. This unintended aspect of this research only added to the significance of this study.

### Using Technology

Throughout the dissertation process, my plan for completion included using technology to be more time efficient. The following types of software were incorporated into this study: reference management, electronic signatures, scheduling management, voice and interview transcription, and qualitative data analysis. I used a reference management software to organize and streamline all of my sources, which made in-text citations and compiling a reference page much easier. While nearly perfect, I realized that this software did occasionally have difficulty



with formatting, and I would have to manually make these revisions. Signatures were collected for consent forms via an electronic signature platform. This was particularly helpful as participants could review the document on their electronic device and send back to me with their signature regardless of their location. Moreover, this provided me with an electronic signature with a timestamp, and I was able to easily document their consent to participate. I utilized a scheduling management system so students could select a time to schedule their own interview that worked well with their schedule. This reduced a great amount of administrative work, and it ensured that students could participate when best for their schedule. Transcription software was used when interviewing students to accurately transcribe the text of our interview conversations to be reviewed for data analysis later. I found that this software was about 90 percent accurate in transcribing this text, which required that I meticulously review and edit the transcripts for accuracy. While tedious, revising the text did allow me to become more familiar with the interview transcripts, formulate some initial themes, and complete some memoing. Finally, I also used qualitative data analysis software that helped me to organize and interpret my transcripts. This software allowed me to review the transcripts, develop codes and themes, examine trends and frequency of themes, and analyze excerpts that related to my themes. The software itself did not do the analysis for me, but it made organizing and reviewing this data much easier. In total, I think that using available technology has made the dissertation process more accessible. I would highly recommend that future doctoral students consider software options that may be applicable to their respective research projects.

### The Interviewing Process

I must confess that after completing my proposal, proposal defense presentation, and IRB approval, I was feeling quite exhausted with the dissertation process. My chair very kindly provided a little encouragement and assured me that the data collection process would be much more enjoyable and reinvigorating. Well, I can confirm that beginning data collection was a relief. As previously discussed, my data collection consisted of a series of interviews with students in the case management program at my institution as well as single interview with my case management colleague. Hearing the experiences of students during the interview process was a delight. I feel that students were candid with me and provided their unique perspectives of working with case management. My intention was to build rapport with students by providing active listening, validating their experiences, and asking questions that requested more relevant information. In hearing reflections from students of the interview process and reviewing their questions about the study, I think that I was able to build rapport with the student participants to better understand their experiences engaging in case management services. The interviews with students, while sometimes disheartening, was refreshing because I could verify some of the concerns that I have observed working at the institution from the students directly.

It was a pleasure to be able to interview my case management colleague for the purpose of this study. Of course, I had previously talked with my colleague about student concerns outside of this context, but the interview protocol that I had developed for this more formal interview allowed me to really investigate her perceptions of the student experience in utilizing our services. Likewise, her thoughtful responses confirmed many of my own suspicions of student concerns and how students navigate life stressors. For instance, my colleague had an

eloquent description of the importance of developing student insight, which I highlighted in my findings, that offered an excellent explanation of how students increase insight as a result of our services. Unsurprisingly, her students were also able to describe how they gained insight during their case management experience, which was truly rewarding as a scholar-practitioner. In many ways, my colleague's accounts helped to unite many of the explanations of the students. My colleague was able to describe the practices that she incorporates to help students achieve their goals, and her students confirmed how these interactions were so impactful to their personal and academic success.

Scheduling students also presented with its own difficulties. Students have their own personal schedules, commitments, and responsibilities, and this can make it problematic to schedule time to complete their interviews. To ameliorate these barriers, I utilized two strategies to more easily schedule student interviews: block off the hour after a student met with my colleague to ensure that I could be available if they wished to participate immediately after their meeting and create a virtual scheduling system that would allow students to simply schedule a virtual or in-person interview. As a result, students were able to complete their interview while in the same space as their meeting with case management or effortlessly schedule a time that could work with their schedule. Students seemed to respond and use both strategies, and I think this helped with student participation.

### Interpreting Data

Overall, I am very pleased with the responses that I received from participants, and I was able to see how their responses related to my inquiry questions. The challenge as a researcher is

multifaceted to ensure that: all participant voices are highlighted in the findings section, interpretations of participant responses are clear and as the participants intended, and themes have uniting characteristics that are sufficiently demonstrable by the quotes of participants. I made sure to review the transcripts and the audio recordings several times to ensure familiarity with the data. Similarly, I also did member checking with my interpretations of emerging themes to safeguard that I was depicting the themes as the participants intended them. My participants were very forthright with me and would confirm if I reflected their perspectives appropriately or if something needed to be changed. Obviously, each response from participants was quite unique and forming themes between participants presented as a challenge. I used my codes to see the commonalities between responses. Then, I had to create a narrative to inform the reader of how these responses validated the presented theme.

Additionally, I was able to examine responses that were not related to my inquiry questions. For instance, I had at least one student that had a tendency to veer off-topic or go on tangents about adjacent subjects during our conversation. While challenging in collecting data, these types of responses seem common in everyday conversation and should be expected during research interviews. I had to redirect the conversation back to the topic at hand while being tactful and mindful of the expressions of the student. Likewise, these types of responses made coding a little more challenging. I had to sift through these transcripts a little more carefully while also recalling and memoing the interview experience to truly capture the essence of the themes presented by the participants. In doing so, I had to reflect on if my data was truly answering my inquiry questions and make strategic decisions on realigning my questions with the data being presented. For instance, I initially thought that I would have data that would

demonstrate student self-advocacy behaviors, but this was not evident in the data. As a result, I had to edit my inquiry questions so that they were answered in the findings. This process of analysis and reflection was crucial to ensuring that my study was in alignment throughout.

### Applications to Professional Practice

My dissertation research has already had an impact on my campus, and I expect that this will continue to impact institutional policy and procedure on supporting students. My institution has a strong commitment to improving retention and graduation rates, and case management services have been identified as a means for increasing student success. Anecdotally, it has been discussed that many students are getting lost in institutional bureaucracy, and senior leadership has been analyzing the student experience as a key component of improving these metrics. Case management services have been talked about across the campus as a means of improving student success with implications that these services may help with retention and graduation rates. As a result of my data collection and data analysis, I have had the pleasure of sharing some of the raw data of student quotes with senior leadership to highlight how our students are perceiving their experiences with case management. Administration has been able to see why students may be taking leave from the institution and the types of interventions that encourage student retention. Likewise, the data gathered in this study has been able to demonstrate the milestones that students achieve in working with the case management office.

Students have shared the difficulty that they have encountered when trying to get assistance at the university and how this impacted their ability to be successful in their classes and personal life. I was able to share quotes from students that discussed how difficult it was for

them to seek out help. Prior to this information, it was only speculated that students were having trouble getting some assistance, but this data provided personal accounts that confirmed these suspicions. Moreover, I have been able to emphasize the positive experiences that students have had managing their psychosocial stressors as a result of the interactions with their campus case manager. The themes gathered in my study findings have been able to synthesize how students perceive case management services as improving their experience at the university and bolstering positive student success. Subsequently, senior leadership has been planning how to expand case management services by increasing case management staff and leveraging resources to make these services continue to thrive.

As a case manager, I have been able to incorporate some of the themes gathered in this study to apply to my direct practice with students. For example, the theme of providing reassurance builds confidence has encouraged me to truly examine how I can provide reassurance to students. I have sought to deliver affirmations, encouragement, and validations in my verbal and written communications with students to help strengthen this feeling of reassurance. Equally, the theme of dependability and proactive outreach facilitate minoritized students' help seeking behaviors has made me question how I demonstrate to my students that I am dependable and will proactively reach out to them. I am now more cognizant of making sure that I am available for my students when they need me, and I am contacting them in regular intervals so they are reminded that I am here to support them. The themes in this study have inspired me to apply these newly evidenced-based practices.

In addition to the necessity and success of case management services, this data has encouraged senior leadership to reflect on the decentralized nature of student services across the

campus and how this impedes students' ability to get support when needed. Accordingly, staff and senior leadership have been discussing how to work more collaboratively with campus offices while utilizing case management services to streamline addressing student concerns, documenting interventions and interactions with students in a unified record keeping system, and effectively communicating across units. The student voice illustrated in this study has amplified how students perceive needing holistic assistance from the institution irrespective of the individual units. As such, staff and administration must act in the student's best interest and make transitions between departments as seamless as possible. Case management services have been identified as the catalyst for increasing cooperation across units and bettering the student experience. Several departments and divisions are actively in conversation to unify the currently decentralized system as a result of this study. As a case manager and administrator, I intend to validate the student experience of siloed institutional resources and advocate for change as a result of this study.

### Applications to Research

As a mental health and higher education practitioner, I know that evidenced-based practices are always best for providing services to anyone that I am working with. Of course, I have read numerous scholarly articles to glean information and keep up with current trends; however, prior to this experience in preparing a dissertation, my research experience was quite limited. For the most part, I had primarily engaged in informal research mostly consisting of program evaluation. Typically, I was trying gather data on a program or service at my place of employment or seeing if an intervention was proving successful. I certainly had not prepared an entire research proposal with a theoretical framework, literature review, and structured

methodology. Despite my inexperience, I was ready for the challenge, and I knew that learning how to do research would be incredibly valuable to my work. Additionally, especially working in an academic environment, having a robust understanding of research methodologies can only add credibility to my profession.

Prior to working on my Ed.D. degree, I would get overwhelmed with the concept of performing research because it takes lots of time, reflection, revision, and review with other scholars before anything closely resembling a finished product can be produced. I found research to quite frustrating as it is tedious and time consuming; yet, I now have accepted that this is simply part of the process of peer reviewed scholarship. I have learned to accept that research is not completed overnight, and trial and error is part of the practice.

Through this process, I have learned to be incredibly scrutinous in reading and reviewing research. For instance, when reading the findings of a scholarly article, I often inquire now of the researcher's methodology for data collection to determine their findings, or I may question the number of participants in a quantitative study to truly be generalizable. I think that this even applies when reading the newspaper or watching the news when journalists may cite a specific study or research. I now think about how the researchers gathered their data or if the implications are founded given the data. With the knowledge gained from doing my own research, I question the validity of other studies and sometimes find myself thinking about how their study could have been improved. I anticipate that my newly-found scrutinous nature will spread into my own applications of research in my work. For example, we recently had a climate survey sent out at my institution recently, and I instantly started thinking about how the data would be analyzed to



answer specific research questions. Research serves both academic and practical pursuits, and I have the ability to assess the quality of these inquiries.

As scholar-practitioners, we are charged with investigating and solving real-world problems, and we have the capacity to take the theoretical and employ it to our daily practice. Research gives us the space to think about these problems, review how these concerns have been studied previously, examine how theory can be applied to these issues, and test and assess the outcomes. In other words, when recognizing a problem in practice, we can see what practitioners have used to correct these issues, and/or we can look at theoretical frameworks that may inform our practice. Research gives us the information to inform evidenced-based practice, and engaging in the dissertation has helped me to see first-hand how research and practice are symbiotic.

My intention is to continue to incorporate research into my work moving forward. My institution is known for well-regarded research; subsequently, decisions are often directed by data. Therefore, I must be able to produce data to support my claims and recommendations for improving our practice. I can definitely see myself recognizing a problem in practice, investigating common ways to address this concern, applying the recommendations, and testing the outcomes. For instance, my office has been considering using theory to inform questions for a survey to administer to students at the beginning and conclusion of services with our office. In essence, we would be engaging in a pre-test post-test design to measure if students gained anything from the interventions within our office. With this information, we can utilize theory and practice to provide excellent services for students, and data can inform if our interventions are successful. From my experience, funds are allocated to programs that empirically support

student success. Moreover, with this data, we can educate senior leadership on the importance of our services as demonstrated by the confirmable data produced. As a result, we may be able to get more resources to support our work. This, indeed, illustrates the power of research informing practice and influencing institutional decisions.

### Conclusion

The dissertation was the most labor-intensive, scholarly writing that I have ever written. I was able to persevere despite adversity, and I am so glad to have finally completed this manuscript. This experience will easily be one of the pivotal moments in my life. I am so grateful to all of the support that I received from colleagues, friends, family, classmates, and the faculty. Now that I have this under my belt, I am confident that I can continue to incorporate research into my practice to influence university policy and improve service for our students.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

## Student Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study

**Title of Study:** The Transformative Power of Student Affairs Case Management: A Qualitative Case Study

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### Investigators

**Name:** Thomas "Lee" Cravens II      **Dept:** Counseling & Higher Ed      **Phone:** [REDACTED]

### Key Information

- This is a voluntary research study examining the experiences of students utilizing case management services.
- This study will occur during the winter, spring, and summer 2023 quarters and involves two interviews: one 45-60 minute interview within two weeks of your initial meeting with student case management and one 45-60 minute interview one month after completing services with student case management or at least two months after the first meeting. The benefits include providing insight on how to utilize case management services to encourage student success.
- There are no known or expected risks in participating in this study.

### Description of the Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand how case management services foster students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors (e.g., mental health concerns, financial issues, housing and food insecurity, academic performance issues, et cetera). If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete one 45-60 minute interview within two weeks of your initial meeting with student case management and one 45-60 minute interview one month after completing services with student case management or at least two months after the first meeting during the winter, spring, or summer 2023 term.

### Risks and Benefits

There are no known or expected risks in participating in this study.

The benefits of participation are: advancing the field of student affairs case management, improving services for future students participating in case management services, and gaining insights into how to manage life stressors.

### Confidentiality

This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. The researcher will be the only person with access to any audio recordings. Electronic data collected will be destroyed after completion of the study. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you and pseudonyms (i.e., a fictitious name) will be used to protect confidentiality. We will not

include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

### **Compensation**

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

### **Your Rights**

The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right to skip any question or research activity, as well as to withdraw completely from participation at any point during the process.

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered before, during, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact the researcher, Thomas “Lee” Cravens II via email at [REDACTED] or by telephone at [REDACTED]. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigators or if you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your participation, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety at (815)753-8588. Finally, you may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Gudrun Nyunt at [REDACTED] or phone: [REDACTED].

### **Future Use of the Research Data**

Your information collected as a part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research, even if all identifiers are removed.

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Your signature below indicates that consent to being audio recorded during the interview process for the purpose of this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX B

CASE MANAGER CONSENT FORM

## Case Manager Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study

**Title of Study:** The Transformative Power of Student Affairs Case Management:  
A Qualitative Case Study

### Investigators

**Name:** Thomas "Lee" Cravens II      **Dept:** Ed      **Phone:** ██████████

Counseling  
& Higher

### Key Information

- This is a voluntary research study examining the experiences of students utilizing case management services.
- This study will occur during the winter, spring, and summer 2023 quarters and involves one 45-60 minute interview with one month after the end of the spring or summer 2023 term. The benefits include providing insight on how to utilize case management services to encourage student success.
- There are no known or expected risks in participating in this study.

### Description of the Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand how case management services foster students' ability to manage psychosocial stressors (e.g., mental health concerns, financial issues, housing and food insecurity, academic performance issues, et cetera). If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete one 45-60 minute interview with one month after the end of the spring or summer 2023 term.

### Risks and Benefits

There are no known or expected risks in participating in this study.

The benefits of participation are: advancing the field of student affairs case management, improving services for future students participating in case management services, and gaining insights into how students manage life stressors.

### Confidentiality

This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. The researcher will be the only person with access to any audio recordings. Electronic data collected will be destroyed after completion of the study. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you and pseudonyms (i.e., a fictitious name) will be used to protect confidentiality. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

**Compensation**

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

**Your Rights**

The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right to skip any question or research activity, as well as to withdraw completely from participation at any point during the process.

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered before, during, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact the researcher, Thomas “Lee” Cravens II via email at [REDACTED] or by telephone at [REDACTED]. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigators or if you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your participation, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety at (815)753-8588. Finally, you may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Gudrun Nyunt at [REDACTED] or phone: [REDACTED].

**Future Use of the Research Data**

Your information collected as a part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research, even if all identifiers are removed.

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Your signature below indicates that consent to being audio recorded during the interview process for the purpose of this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## APPENDIX C

### FIRST SEMI-STRUCTURED STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## First Semi-Structured Student Interview Protocol

### Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today for an interview. This interview will focus on your experiences while participating in case management services during the winter, spring, or summer 2023 terms. You have already been provided a consent form to further explain the study and any associated ethical and privacy concerns. Do you have any questions before we get started?

### Interview Questions

#### *Questions Related to Student Experiences*

- Please tell me a little about yourself and your background.
  - Where are you from?
  - What are you studying?
  - Is there anything else about yourself that you would like me to know?
- What prompted you to work with student case management?
  - You noted that [insert from student answer] prompted you to work with student case management. Can you please describe some of the life stressors and/or concerns that led to this situation?
- What factors or circumstances have contributed to these life stressors and/or concerns?
- How have you tried to manage these life stressors and/or concerns?
  - What resources have you tried to utilize?
  - What strategies have you used to address these issues?
- What obstacles or challenges have you experienced in trying to manage these life stressors and/or concerns?
- How, if at all, have these life stressors and concerns affected your academics?
- How, if at all, have these life stressors and concerns affected other areas of your life such as your mental or physical health, social life, financial well-being, et cetera?

#### *Questions Related to Case Management Experience*

- Thank you for sharing these experiences with me. I'm going to shift gears now to talk about your specific experiences of going through the case management process. To start with, how did you feel when you were referred to case management?
- How did you feel when arriving for your appointment?
- What was the experience of sharing your life stressors and/or concerns with the case manager?
- What are some of the goals that you established while working with the student case management office?
  - How were you able to determine your goals and your course of action during your first appointment with student case management?
  - Do you think that the case manager helped you to establish your goals and course of action? How so?
- How realistic do you think it is for you to accomplish these goals?

- Do you believe that the plan you have established with student case management will help you achieve your goals? Please explain and elaborate on your thoughts.
- What challenges do you anticipate in trying to accomplish these goals?
- Do you feel that your needs were met during your initial meeting with student case management? Please explain and elaborate on your thoughts.
- After your first meeting with student case management, how do you think that the case management program can best follow-up with you to see how you are doing?
- Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience with the case management process?

*Closing*

Is there anything else regarding your experiences, academics, or suggestions that you would like for me to know?

APPENDIX D

SECOND SEMI-STRUCTURED STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## Second Semi-Structured Student Interview Protocol

### Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today for our second interview. This interview will focus on your experiences while participating in case management services during the winter, spring, or summer 2023 terms. You have already completed and reviewed a consent form to further explain the study and any associated ethical and privacy concerns. Do you have any questions before we get started?

### Interview Questions

Note: As this semi-structured interview is a follow-up to the first interview, some questions will be tailored to the students' responses from the first interview. For instance, some questions may appear like, "You described [insert concerns] during our first meeting. Has this changed for you, or what is new regarding your situation since we last talked?"

#### *Questions Related to Student-Client Assessment*

- We first met after your initial in-take meeting with case management. How many meetings have you had with case management since then?
- What was your experience like working with case management?
- You mentioned [insert concerns from first meeting] during our first meeting. Has this remained the same? Have any of your concerns changed?
- What, if anything, made these life stressors easier or better to manage?
- You mentioned [obstacles and/or challenges from first meeting] that were making it difficult to address your concerns during our first meeting. Did this get better or worse? Please describe and elaborate.
- Since we last talked, how are your academics overall? Do you think that your life stressors have impacted your academic success this term? Please elaborate.
- Do you think that your life stressors have continued to impact other areas of your life (e.g., mental or physical health, social life, financial well-being, et cetera), or has this changed or improved since we last talked? If it has changed, please describe.

#### *Questions Related to Student Advocacy*

- In our first meeting, you shared that you and the case manager came up with following plan: [insert info from first interview]. Can you tell me about your experience of trying to follow this plan?
- What resources have you found to be most beneficial to your success this term?
- Do you think you were able to articulate with campus or community resources your needs to accomplish your goals? If so, please explain.
- Do you think you have been able to develop strategies to cope with life stressors? If so, what are some of these strategies?
- Please describe a situation where your case manager advocated for you to help you accomplish your goals. For example, case management advocacy may include working with your advisor on developing a plan for your academics or connecting you with

mental health resources. How was this experience for you? How, if at all, did this help your situation?

*Questions Related to Student Empowerment*

- How were you able to achieve your goals in working with student case management?
- How were you able to determine what or which course of action would be most effective and appropriate to address your concerns?
- In your conversation with your case manager, how did the two of you decide what actions to take?
- What, if any, actions did you engage in to address your concerns that you may have not done without the assistance of case management?

*Questions Related to Providing Follow-up and Resolution*

- Overall, how do you feel about your experience working with case management?
- Do you believe that you have accomplished your goals in working with student case management? If so, please elaborate.
- What have you learned about yourself and how to overcome obstacles after working with student case management?
- How do you think you will continue to apply the skills learned from this situation to future obstacles or life difficulties?
- Do you feel more confident that you can manage and overcome these life stressors? Why or why not?
- Now that you have worked with student case management, do you think that you may seek out support again when experiencing difficulty in the future? Why or why not?

*Closing*

Is there anything else regarding your experiences, academics, or suggestions that you would like for me to know?

## APPENDIX E

### SEMI-STRUCTURED CASE MANAGER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## Semi-Structured Case Manager Interview Protocol

### Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today for an interview. This interview will focus on the experiences of students participating in case management services during the winter, spring, or summer 2023 terms. You have already been provided a consent form to further explain the study and any associated ethical and privacy concerns. Do you have any questions before we get started?

### Interview Questions

#### *Brief Introduction*

- Please tell me about yourself.
- What is your professional background and experience?
- What do you find most challenging and rewarding of this work?

#### *Questions Related to Student-Client Assessment*

- What often prompts a student to work with the case management office?
- In working with students that are experiencing difficulty, what do you think are some of the life stressors that college students face that impact their personal and academic well-being?
  - Can you provide an example and elaborate?
  - Do you think most students have insight on how their concerns are impacting their academic and personal success? Please elaborate.
    - Do case management services increase this insight? Please elaborate.
- What factors do you think contribute to these life stressors?
  - Do you think some students have more difficulty than others? If so, why do you think this is?
- Prior to working with case management, do you think that most students are able to effectively manage their concerns on their own?
  - What strategies and/or resources do students often use prior to working with case management? Is this effective?

#### *Questions Related to Student Advocacy*

- How, if at all, do you think case management services tries to support students that may be experiencing difficulty?
- How, if at all, do you help students develop coping strategies?
- Please describe how you may try to advocate for a student.
  - How do you decide when to intervene and when to encourage a student to self-advocate? Please elaborate.
  - How, if at all, does a student demonstrate their ability to self-advocate?

#### *Questions Related to Student Empowerment*

- How, if at all, do you help students establish their goals and/or a plan of action to address their concerns?



- How do you balance respecting a student's autonomy while also encouraging them to achieve their desired goals?
- How do you manage when a student may make a decision that you think would be detrimental to their desired goals?
- How do you think students decide and determine what is the best course of action for themselves? For students, what do you think influences these decisions?
- For the purpose of this study, self-determination will be defined as one's ability to engage in actions that improve one's condition without external pressure or sway. Are there any actions of self-determination that you desire to see when working with a student? Please elaborate.

#### *Questions Related to Follow-Up and Resolution*

- Do you think most students achieve their desired goals by the end of their interaction with case management services?
  - If so, what are some of the common determinants that help encourage these positive outcomes?
- What, if any, are some of the skills that you think students learn as a result of case management services?
  - Please provide any examples or cases that may illustrate some of the skills that are learned.
- After working with case management services, do you think your students are often more confident in their ability to handle life stressors on their own? Please elaborate.

#### *Reviewing Themes/Preliminary Findings*

- In meeting with students, some of the themes that are appearing include [review some of the themes with case manager].
  - What are your initial reactions to these themes?
  - Do these themes seem consistent with your perceptions of student experiences? Please elaborate.
  - Do you have any additional thoughts or considerations regarding these themes.
- What do you think these themes suggest about how case management services facilitate students' ability to address potential barriers to their success during the case management process?

#### *Closing*

Is there anything else regarding your experiences, student academics, or suggestions that you would like for me to know?

APPENDIX F

INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Office of Research Compliance,  
Integrity & Safety***Division of Research & Innovation Partnerships***Approval  
Notice  
Initial Review**

06-Apr-2023

TO: Lee Cravens [REDACTED]  
Counseling and Higher EducationRE: Protocol # HS23-0319 “**The Transformative Power of Student Affairs Case Management: A Qualitative Case Study**”

In a preliminary review, the **Initial Submission** of the above named research protocol was determined to meet the definition of human subjects research according to the federal regulations. The submission was then reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board through the expedited review process [45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) category 6, 7] under **Member Review** procedures on **06-Apr-2023**. Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

**Protocol Approval period:** 06-Apr-2023 - 05-Apr-2024

It is important for you to note that **as an investigator conducting research that involves human participants, you are responsible for ensuring that this project has current IRB approval at all times.** If your project will continue beyond the above date, or if you intend to make modifications to the study, you will need additional approval and should contact the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety for assistance. In addition, you are required to promptly report to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems or risks to subjects or others.

Please note that the IRB has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

**Informed Consent:**

Unless you have been approved for a waiver of the written signature of informed consent, this notice includes a date-stamped copy of the approved consent form for your use. NIU policy requires that informed consent documents given to subjects participating in non-exempt research bear the approval stamp of the NIU IRB. This stamped document is the only consent form that may be photocopied for distribution to study participants.

If consent for the study is being given by proxy (guardian, etc.), it is your responsibility to document the authority of that person to consent for the subject. Also, the committee recommends that you include an acknowledgment by the subject, or the subject's representative, that he or she has received a copy of the consent form.

**You are responsible for retaining the signed consent forms obtained from your subjects for a minimum of three years after the study is concluded.**

**Continuing Review:**

Continuing review of the project, conducted at least annually, will be necessary until data collection is complete and you no longer retain any identifiers that could link the subjects to the data collected. Please remember to use your **protocol number (HS23-0319)** on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

**Closing the Study:**

Please note that a **final report submission** should be created in the record in lieu of an annual continuation form if data collection has ended and the data are free of identifiers. The final report is a separate submission form in the list of options in the InfoEd record, and it may be submitted prior to the annual review deadline.

With all of this said, the IRB extends best wishes for success in your research endeavors!

**Please see the RIPS website for guidance on the impact of COVID-19 on research(including face-to-face data collection) <https://www.niu.edu/divresearch/covid/index.shtml>**

APPENDIX G

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PROTOCOL AMENDMENT 1



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Office of Research Compliance,  
Integrity & Safety**

*Division of Research & Innovation Partnerships*

**Approval  
Notice  
Protocol  
Amendment**

12-Apr-2023  
Lee Cravens  
Counseling and Higher Education

RE: Protocol # **HS23-0319** “**The Transformative Power of Student Affairs Case Management: A Qualitative Case Study**”

Dear Lee Cravens,

Your **Protocol Amendment** submission was reviewed and approved under **Member Review** procedures by the Institutional Review Board on **12-Apr-2023**.

Proposed changes:

**Additional Recruitment Technique**

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval period: **06-Apr-2023 - 05-Apr-2024**

If your project will continue beyond that date, or if you intend to make modifications to the study, you will need additional approval and should contact the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety for assistance. Annual review of the project will be necessary until you no longer retain any identifiers that could link the subjects to the data collected.

It is important for you to note that as a research investigator involved with human subjects, you are responsible for ensuring that the project has current IRB approval at all times, and for retaining any signed consent forms obtained from your subjects in a secure place for a minimum of three years after the study is concluded. The committee also recommends that the informed consent include an acknowledgement that the subject, or the subject's representative, that he or she has received a copy of the consent form. In addition, you are required to promptly report to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

Please remember to use your **protocol number** (**HS23-0319**) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please

contact the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety at (815) 753-8588.

**Please see the RIPS website for guidance on the impact of COVID-19 on research(including face-to-face data collection) <https://www.niu.edu/divresearch/covid/index.shtml>**

APPENDIX H

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PROTOCOL AMENDMENT 2





NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Office of Research Compliance,  
Integrity & Safety**

*Division of Research & Innovation Partnerships*

**Approval  
Notice  
Protocol  
Amendment**

17-Apr-2023  
Lee Cravens  
Counseling and Higher Education

RE: Protocol # **HS23-0319** “**The Transformative Power of Student Affairs Case Management: A Qualitative Case Study**”

Dear Lee Cravens,

Your **Protocol Amendment** submission was reviewed and approved under **Member Review** procedures by the Institutional Review Board on **17-Apr-2023**.

Proposed changes:

**Add a new participant and, subsequently, add an additional interview protocol and associated consent form.**

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval period: **06-Apr-2023 - 05-Apr-2024**

If your project will continue beyond that date, or if you intend to make modifications to the study, you will need additional approval and should contact the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety for assistance. Annual review of the project will be necessary until you no longer retain any identifiers that could link the subjects to the data collected.

It is important for you to note that as a research investigator involved with human subjects, you are responsible for ensuring that the project has current IRB approval at all times, and for retaining any signed consent forms obtained from your subjects in a secure place for a minimum of three years after the study is concluded. The committee also recommends that the informed consent include an acknowledgement that the subject, or the subject's representative, that he or she has received a copy of the consent form. In addition, you are required to promptly report to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

Please remember to use your **protocol number (HS23-0319)** on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please

contact the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety at (815) 753-8588.

**Please see the RIPS website for guidance on the impact of COVID-19 on research(including face-to-face data collection) <https://www.niu.edu/divresearch/covid/index.shtml>**

APPENDIX I

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD CASE MANAGER RECRUITMENT EMAIL

### Case Manager Recruitment Email

“Hi [student],

Thank you for meeting with me to discuss some of your concerns. Our office is continuously examining how we can improve our services. As such, my colleague, Lee Cravens, is currently doing a study to understand the experiences of students engaging in case management services. If possible, I would appreciate it if you would consider participating, but please know that this is completely optional.

#### Key Information

- This is a voluntary research study examining the experiences of students utilizing case management services.
- This study will occur during the winter, spring, and summer 2023 quarters and involves two interviews: one 45-60 minute interview within two weeks of your initial meeting with student case management and one 45-60 minute interview within one month after completing services with student case management or at least two months after the first meeting. The benefits include providing insight on how to utilize case management services to encourage student success.
- There are no known or expected risks in participating in this study.

If interested, please sign up for an interview time here. A copy of the consent form is included in the sign-up page and an electronic consent form will be sent to you once you have signed up for an interview time.

We greatly appreciate your participation.”