It's a Family Affair: Exploring the Needs of Families in Supporting Trio Upward Bound Students

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ABSTRACT

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR: EXPLORING THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES IN SUPPORTING TRIO UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS

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Northern Illinois University, 2020
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First-generation and/or low-income families have a difficult time navigating the college-going process. These families have daily obstacles that make preparing and entering postsecondary education challenging, including family trauma, financial hardships, decision-making skills, and lack of knowledge regarding college-going strategies. The purpose of this study is to uncover what specific support tools low-income and/or first-generation families participating in the Danielsville College (a pseudonym) TRIO Upward Bound program need as they support their students through the college-going process at Hinley Park High School (a pseudonym). This qualitative study utilized a research methodology case study approach to understand the lived experiences of fifteen participants (one student, three program alumni, and 11 parent(s)/legal guardians). Interview participants had been engaged with the program since the beginning of 2017.

The interviews followed the semi-structured interview protocol, which is a strategy of asking participants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions. The data was analyzed using vivo/first cycle coding, second cycle/pattern codes, and analytic memoing. The findings of this study showed that the participating families have a desire to persist towards college but they
need extra support and resources. Seven themes emerged from the research study: (1) Family Trauma, (2) Safety Concerns, (3) Financial Hardships, (4) Family Support/Motivation, (5) College Resources/Information, (6) Life Skills, and (7) Support from TRIO Upward Bound. These themes indicated the perceived barriers, life experiences, needs, and support received as the participants' trudge through the college-going process. The study also revealed that the Danielsville College TRIO Upward Bound program is/was instrumental in the preparation for entry into postsecondary education.
IT’S A FAMILY AFFAIR: EXPLORING THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES IN SUPPORTING TRIO UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS

BY

TASHENA D. BRIGGS
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Doctoral Director:
Xiaodan Hu, Ph.D.
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“God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day” (Psalms 46:5 NIV). “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13 NKJV). “She believed she could, so she did.” “Believe you can and you’re halfway there.” Thank you to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for giving me life, strength, favor, and blessings through this process. Without Him, I am nothing. Special thank you to my family (Odom, Brown, Briggs, Roberts, Chinn, Taylor, Starks, Wiggins, Butler, Giwa, Williams, Johnson, Jackson, and many more!); friends (childhood, high school, college, work turned family, etc.); my Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated, line sisters (ships); and my church family at the Rock Christian Church.

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Lastly, I want to acknowledge Tinley Park High School, including the staff who believed in me and those who did not, as well as Western Illinois University, the higher education institution that presented me with many educational and student leadership opportunities that helped me blossom into the woman I am today.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to God and his son Jesus Christ, who has given me strength that I did not know I had. To my dear husband, Aaron, who has loved, encouraged, and supported me even when I felt that I did not deserve it. Thank you for picking up the slack at home when I spent hours at the library and late nights at the office working on this dissertation. I cannot say thank you enough for the many times I was frustrated, overwhelmed, and emotional. If I feel like I have no one in this world, I know you have my back, front, and sides.

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To my grandparents, Floyd and Mertis. I miss you every day, Grandad; thank you for watching over us. Grandma, thank you for teaching and supporting me all my life. You are the true pillar of our family. Last but not least, I dedicate this dissertation to my hometown, Markham, Illinois, and all the youth who have the chance to rise and prosper from the low-income community in which I was born.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Historically, first-generation and/or low-income students have been considered underrepresented concerning college access and success (Tate, Fouad, Marks, Young, Guzman, & Williams, 2015). High school and college students whose parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have not completed a bachelor’s degree are considered “first-generation students.” Low-income students are defined as students whose family income is below 125% of the federally established poverty level for their family size (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004). In 2014, the Pew Research Center shared that less than 46% of the U.S. population who are younger than 18 years of age are living in a home with two married parents (Livingston, 2014). More and more, students are residing in households where their primary “parent(s)/legal guardian(s)” are not their biological parents (Livingston, 2014). According to the 2016 High School Benchmarks Report released in 2018, a growing number of first-generation and/or low-income students are pursuing higher education. In fact, 51% of students in high-poverty schools enrolled in college right after high school graduation (College for America, 2018). Additional support from the K-12 system, higher education institutions, and precollegiate programs is needed to assist these families in the college-going process.

In 1964, the United States Department of Education developed three programs known as TRIO: Upward Bound (UB), Talent Search, and Special Services for Disadvantaged Students.
The TRIO programs are federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. They are administered, funded, and implemented by the United States Department of Education. The general mission of these programs is to assist first-generation and low-income students and students with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs (McElroy & Armesto, 1998). To this day, Upward Bound is one of the most renowned of the eight TRIO programs in the country and is offered through many high schools and non-profit agencies. UB’s emphasis is college readiness, which requires the attention of both students and parents. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of low-income and/or first-generation students tend to focus on work to provide for their families, lack higher education experience, leave older siblings to be caretakers, and remain stuck in a constant generational cycle of poverty and broken households (Berg, 2016). Still, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of low-income and/or first-generation students want better for their children but do not always know how to break the cycle (S. Williams, personal communication, August 2019).

For confidentiality purposes, “Hinley Park” is the pseudonym of the town in which “Hinley Park High School” (HPHS) resides. “Danielsville Community College” (DCC) is the pseudonym of the community college within the Hinley Park School District. Through contextual information gathering, it was discovered that members within the Hinley Park community have been trying to implement college readiness programs within the elementary and middle schools to support low-income and first-generation families. Community members see a clear segregation between the impoverished neighborhoods and the affluent neighborhoods
within Hinley Park. Decades ago, there was an attempt to implement a UB program in Hinley Park, which was to be housed by the local university. However, Hinley Park could not be “served” because the town did not meet the low-income and/or first-generation college student ratio requirements required by the U.S. Department of Education. It was discovered that member within the community do not see a need for further support tools for low-income and/or first-generation families since Hinley Park is a “college town.”

The historical educational context and structural poverty barriers of Hinley Park created a need for the TRIO UB program at DCC and HPHS. More low-income and/or first-generation families are coming together to break the cycles of poverty and lack of education in the community. Due to the mixed views on the poverty and education issues in Hinley Park, the UB program staff experienced many issues when the program was introduced, such as hesitant participation from students, evasive participation from parent(s)/legal guardian(s), reluctant partnership and collaboration from administrators, and guarded interactions with community members. Thus, was the goal of this study to learn about the specific issues families are facing daily and the support they need through the college-going process.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the backgrounds of DCC TRIO UB families and their current daily lives which impact the college-going process for the families. The purpose is to also provide a practical guide for the DCC UB staff as they incorporate more purposeful techniques for the families being served. However, it was not until 2017 that the Hinley Park/Danielsville community received a grant to help close the achievement gap for low-income and/or first-generation students in the area. HPHS is a public four-year high school located in
Hinley Park, Illinois. The high school is part of Hinley Park Community Unit School District 617. The enrollment for the high school is approximately 1,800, which is a small portion of the 2008, School District 617 experienced a large enrollment increase that could be attributed to growing families within the area.

The immediate and external family unit is an important factor in the college-going process for students. A study by Bronfenbrenner (1989) discovered seven themes representing first-generation participants’ college experiences. The most common theme was that students need close-knit families and communities to successfully enter and complete postsecondary education. Since low-income and first-generation students are the first to potentially obtain college credentials, there is great pride in pursuing this journey. Khanh (2002) noted some first-generation college students have expressed a desire to honor their families through their educational and career pursuits. Family is essential to the success of low-income and/or first-generation students. In the meantime, Bronfenbrenner (1989) found that often parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of first-generation college students generally have no idea what their children are embarking upon.

While the role of family is very important to many students’ college-going process, families may face barriers and lack the knowledge to support their students in the college-going process. Before this study, the DCC UB engaged eligible families by providing financial literacy workshops, college-going resources, and social and emotional support. This was advertised to DCC UB families through emails, mailings, phone calls, and an educational text message system. Since 2018 when outreach was started, participating families have been engaged in supportive of the services being offered. Many parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have expressed that
they welcome college-going resources, they seem difficult to navigate for some families. This speaks heavily as to why this study is needed and why unconventional support tactics are needed. This study aims to help practitioners at DCC to enhance the community collaborative relationship with HPHS in better supporting TRIO UB students and their families. This case study will improve efforts in assisting families on how to support their low-income and/or first-generation students in the college-going process. This study was guided by the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** What are the perceived familial/structural barriers by parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and students involved in the DCC UB program?

**Research Question 2:** What are the perceived benefits by parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and students around family involvement in the DCC UB program?

**Research Question 3:** What recommendations do families have for the Danielsville UB program to build better support services for students and their families?

The following sections will discuss literature related to K-12 equity, risk factors for first-generation and/or low-income students, college readiness, the basic college-going process for underserved students, and UB. An outline of Yosso’s community cultural wealth model and a discussion of the research design will follow. Ultimately, this study improved the community collaborative relationship between DCC and HPHS to better support UB students and their families.
**Literature Review**

The literature below will focus on 1) K-12 equity for first-generation and low-income students, 2) the college-going process for first-generation and low-income students, 3) the role of families in the college-going process, and 4) the pre-college program UB.

**K-12 Equity for Low-Income/First-Generation Students**

Increasing college access, retention, and completion for low-income and first-generation college students is one of the most prominent challenges facing our country. The U.S. public education system does not give all K-12 students equal access to education (Bernhardt, 2013). When students enter the school system, they are immediately positioned into a complex system of stratification influencing academic, social, and emotional experiences (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). This educational hierarchy, which purposely separates students from one another, is a disadvantage to students from low-income populations (Apple, 2004). For example, living in a more affluent neighborhood can provide access to technology and other educational materials, whereas students living in a neighborhood below the poverty line might not have their personal school supplies. The concentration within the education network should be to provide equal access for everyone in the K-12 school system.

Having such a discrepancy in the K-12 school system hinders low-income and/or first-generation college students. In transitioning this group of students to college, there may often be extended racially motivated barriers within admissions processes. Gaertner and Hart (2013) suggest an admissions strategy that accounts for socioeconomic disadvantage and present the results of a study from the University of Colorado that demonstrates the class-based affirmative action efforts are not only valuable for increasing socioeconomic diversity but may also help
schools maintain racial diversity (pp. 367-368). In 2012, college enrollment rates were about 30% age points lower for high school graduates from the lowest family income quintile than from the highest (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013). To address the access barriers, many colleges have started to admit students on a more holistic criteria and no longer focus on strictly standardized test scores and high school grade point averages (Perna, 2015). Additionally, 77% of dependent students from families in the highest income quartile had attained a degree of higher education, compared with just nine percent of dependent students from the lowest family income quartile (Cahalan & Perna, 2015). While the socioeconomic cycle continues to perpetuate itself, however, low-income and/or first-generation students must be prepared for the college-going process.

College readiness has been a pressing issue in higher education for quite some time. Conley (2007) described college readiness as the level of academic preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed - without remediation - in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program. Students’ high school experiences often do not prepare them effectively for postsecondary education or the workforce (Tsoi-A & Bryant, 2015). Bangser (2008) noted that special attention should be paid to increasing the rigor, relevance, and engagement of the high school curriculum, including for students who have traditionally faced obstacles to successful postsecondary transitions. Focusing on such matters should minimize the various challenges low-income and first-generation students encounter to ensure college readiness.

College readiness can also be perceived as preparing students to meet various college-level expectations and achieve success, as focal points of the K-12 system do not always coincide with the culture of postsecondary education and its expectations. The K-12 gap
continues to create difficult postsecondary transitions for students going into higher education (Yun & Moreno, 2006).

**The College-Going Process for Low-Income/First-Generation Students**

Five major foci of TRIO precollegiate programs will be discussed below: 1) academic preparation for college, 2) educational and career planning, 3) financial literacy, 4) self-efficacy, and 5) support systems.

The most important indicators of future college success are how often and how well students are prepared academically, given structure, prepared financially and supported through their educational and future career endeavors (Conley, 2010). Snell (2008) discussed a direct correlation between low educational attainment and low-income families. Surveyed families with annual incomes under $10,000 fell in the lowest income group. Approximately, one-third of these families stated that they had read literature for leisure during the survey year. This is compared to families with income of $75,000 or more. The higher income families totaled at 61% when it came to reading regularly. Snell (2008) suggested that the lower the income and education levels, the lower the literary reading rates and the lower the ability or inclination of students to engage academically and socially. It is vital that low-income and first-generation students should be taught literacy and encouraged to strengthen their academic skills to be successful in higher education. Boden (2011) revealed that having academic skills addresses the student’s need to have the necessary time management and organization skills and aptitude in reading and mathematics. These skills build upon the educational and career-planning skills that first-generation and low-income students also need. It is also important for low-income and first-generation students to learn and understand how to advocate for themselves.
Low-income and first-generation college students are typically drawn to career paths they have seen in the media, within their communities, and inside their households. A study by Wright, Jenkins-Guarnieri, and Murdock (2013) explained that career counselors should do the following to aid in students’ educational and career-planning success: help students identify positive support systems, help students effectively address hurdles they may encounter, and encourage students to enroll in First-Year Seminar courses. High school counselors also play an instrumental role in supporting low-income and/or first-generation students in their college-going process. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s)’ level of education has a direct impact on their students’ career goals, choices, and knowledge of resources and skills to pursue their goals (Tate et al., 2015). Students need to see representation in the academic spaces and careers to which they aspire. Career exploration is an important factor in the college-going process for low-income and first-generation students. Such exposure is needed to aid in improving objectives within the DCC UB program. Before first-generation and low-income students enter higher education and potentially receive high-paying salaried jobs, financial literacy also needs to be taught.

It is relatively more common for low-income and first-generation families to have restricted financial opportunities to pursue higher education. Kezar (2009) pointed out that, on average, low-income students face an $8,000 deficit between the total amount of financial aid they receive and the annual cost of tuition. While Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) can be financially helpful to low-income and/or first-generation students, they are widely underutilized. IDAs are a financial tool designed to encourage and support low-income families to save toward and acquire an appreciating asset. Kezar (2009) mentioned that IDAs typically include a matched savings account, financial literacy education, training to acquire the asset,
critical case management, and the opportunity to foster critical life skills and behaviors concerning credit, debt, and financial management. Exposing low-income and/or first-generation students and their families to IDAs could fill one of the missing pieces to college and life preparation.

Exposing first-generation families to resources and educating them on financial literacy can improve future generations’ experiences with financing higher education (Engle & Tinto, 2008). More specifically, to reduce the impact of financial obstacles, low-income, first-generation students and their families need to participate in workshops about the financial aid process, especially filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). First-generation families need extended knowledge on options for covering the cost of attending two- and four-year institutions. There needs to be a guided, hands-on experience to help this population understand the student loan process. Resources need to be given to first-generation and low-income families to help cover the unmet financial need on a level they can comprehend.

Since low-income and first-generation students tend to lack guidance when it comes to the college-going process, they must have a strong sense of self-efficacy (Stebleton & Soria, 2013). Academic self-efficacy is linked to academic performance, academic achievement, and academic goals. Hsieh, Sullivan, and Guerra’s (2007) findings confirmed that students with higher levels of academic self-efficacy experience higher grade point averages.

**Role of Family in the College-Going Process**

Stepping outside of the basic/traditional educational values and workforce expectations can be a difficult transition for low-income and first-generation students (Bryan & Simmons, 2009). Family tends to play one of the most essential roles in students’ academic successes and
chances for college attainment (Tate et al., 2015). Unspoken expectations and fears are generally put on low-income and first-generation students unbeknownst to the family. Families typically want the best for their loved ones; therefore, going to college can be an expectation put on many first-generation students (Tate et al., 2015). Bryan and Simmons (2009) explained that family members, particularly parents, tend to influence adolescents’ decision making regarding educational and occupational pursuits. Per the research, this is not surprising. Tate et al. (2015) showed that “significant people” have an impact on the career decisions of low-income youth. When families forcefully demand and expect greatness, it can add undue pressure when first-generation students are trying to figure out their college journey.

Low-income and/or first-generation students are inclined to take on pressure from family and friends in the hopes of succeeding in higher education. In one study, Bryan and Simmons (2009) found that all ten of their participants felt an overwhelming sense of pressure to succeed from both their families and their home communities. While one participant noted that his parents are relatively supportive of any decision he makes, his elementary librarian was extremely disappointed and unsupportive to discover his career path was not to be a lawyer but instead a college professor. Many participants explained the pressure to succeed came from their families or themselves. The participants shared common stories about being little kids and being told they were going to college. These sentiments were due to most of their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) wanting more for them than they were able to have themselves with limited education and few job opportunities. Another participant shared her struggles of adapting to college and not feeling that specific support she needed at home. The participant explained that her family has no clue of what goes on in her everyday college life.
School and family go hand-in-hand relative to preparation for college, and family influences pre-college academic preparation at an early level of education (Lareau, 1987). During Lareau’s participant observation of parental involvement in elementary classrooms, she found that even as young as first grade, students’ expectations for the college transition process were being introduced by middle-class parents. The involvement of this group of parent(s)/legal guardian(s) began to prepare students with the expectations to attend college. Lareau (2011) noted that sociology research maintains that even the way parents spend recreational time after school with their children may influence a student’s success in education and eventual preparation for college. During an ethnographic study, Lareau discovered that Black and White middle- and working-class families who practiced what she called “concerted cultivation,” in which students were involved in more structured, formal out-of-school activities, were more successful in school.

Family role assignments can bring additional pressure to first-generation students. Messages about role assignments are passed down through the generations and traditions (Auerbach, 2007). There are certain family practices and structures that seem “normal” to a person from birth to adolescence. Not until adulthood can certain family role assignments begin to be noticed as unhealthy. London (1989) noted:

The concept of family role assignments, prominent in contemporary psychodynamic oriented family theory, envisions the family as having a division of emotional labor with different members responsible for designated psychological tasks. The living out of such role assignments--parentification, achieving, or mediating child are familiar examples--has important consequences for each family member's self-imagery, emotional life, and behavior. It should be said here that being in the psychological employ of others, such as one's parents, could form as well as deform emotional life. (p. 146)
First-generation students tend to be faced with the dilemma of “breakaway guilt.” This phenomenon causes students to feel that one or both parents are so dependent on them that to leave and go away to college is criminal; it is the ultimate level of abandonment and betrayal (Tate et al., 2015). Within the London (1989) study, many first-generation participants reported that family members send conflicting messages: one to stay at home and the other to achieve in the outside world. Some underrepresented first-generation and low-income students experience a pronounced dissonance between family expectations and the expectations they experience within graduate school (Tate et al., 2015). Processing “society’s reality” versus “family/household traditions/reality” can be a difficult task.

Low-income and/or first-generation college students and households sometimes lack the social fundamentals that aid in successfully getting to college. As Snell (2008) revealed the most common challenges that first-generation students have involve academic behaviors and negotiating student and family expectations. Snell (2008) went on to state that “students rest on the premise that education exists solely to improve work opportunities and salary” (p. 28). Some first-generation students grow up seeing people in their household work excessively and remain in poverty. These experiences can lead students to choose working overtime or extra work hours over academic classes, even to the point of missing quizzes or deadlines.

Getting to college is just half the battle for first-generation and low-income students in particular; waking up for class on time, prioritizing academics, having a social life, newfound freedom, navigating a new school system, and being financially savvy can present new hindrances for any individual (Khanh, 2002). First-generation and low-income students are more likely to lack knowledge of time management, college finances, budget management, and the
bureaucratic operations of higher education (Thayer, 2000). They are also less likely to be engaged in the academic and social experiences that foster success in college, such as studying in groups, interacting with faculty and other students, participating in extracurricular activities, and using support services (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Many campus resources are available to aid in the success of first-generation and low-income students. Still, the lack of campus knowledge can contribute to the demise of this unique student population. Finally, first-generation and low-income students may encounter cultural conflicts between home and the college community (Thayer, 2000). With all these learning opportunities for first-generation and low-income students, there is an increased responsibility for college readiness programs to help them and their families take on higher education.

UB students and their families must be introduced to terms and concepts such as college completion, college access, college readiness, the college-going process, academic preparation, educational and career planning, financial literacy, academic self-efficacy, and support systems. These terms serve as knowledge and best practices for successful college degree attainment to which people in the low-income and first-generation communities may be oblivious. The UB program addresses college completion barriers that program participants have lying ahead of them by providing mentors and college preparation services. The program addresses the deficiencies in the K-12 system by giving access to technology and one-on-one academic advisement. UB addresses the lack of fundamental skills that many program participants have of being college ready by offering after-school tutoring and a summer component filled with intensive academic preparation. The program addresses the gaps which low-income and/or first-generation families have in the college-going process by educating them on financial options for
paying for college, academic and test preparation, the high school/college transition, self-efficacy, and the importance of having a support system. It is helpful to give this particular group some of the basics in the “college-going process.” Normally families outside of the low-income and first-generation margins may have been exposed to college preparation, application, admission selection, matriculation, and so on, but the population being studied might not have been exposed to the basic education essentials.

**TRIO Upward Bound**

The UB program emerged first as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 in response to the Johnson administration’s War on Poverty (Carr, 2013). UB was the first TRIO program created by President Lyndon B. Johnson’s administration. TRIO programs were created as supplemental programs to assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds to complete high school and ultimately pursue postsecondary education (Short, 2012). There were 18 original UB pilot programs that started in the summer of 1965. There were 2,061 students served within the summer pilot programs and 1,200 of the pilot program participants received follow-up services during the academic school year of 1965-1966 (McCants, 2003). As pointed out by McCants (2003), 80% of the students were admitted to a college or university in the fall of 1965. Sixty-nine percent of the college freshmen who entered a higher education institution in 1965 stayed in college and graduated.

UB focuses on helping at-risk students overcome challenges such as retention, low socioeconomic status, and poor academic achievement (Grimard & Maddaus, 2004). UB specifically provides fundamental support to participants in their preparation for college entrance. The program provides opportunities for participants to succeed in their pre-college
performance, in their higher education pursuits, in degree completion. UB participants can receive academic instruction in composition, foreign languages, laboratory sciences, literature, mathematics, emotional and social support through mentoring, academic advisement, college admission test preparation, exposure to cultural events/activities, college visits, and financial literacy. To fulfill the program objectives, UB staff members must provide a school-year academic component, an intense six-week summer component, and a summer bridge component for outgoing seniors.

Housed primarily on college campuses, today UB is comprised of more than 816 programs that serve more than 59,143 students. UB Math-Science operates over 162 programs which serve more than 9,687 participants (TRIO 50th Anniversary Fact Sheet, 2019) and strives to strengthen mathematics, science, study, and problem-solving skills. To be eligible for the UB program, students must be between the ages of 13 and 19, have completed eight years of elementary school, be enrolled in a specific target high school, plan to attend college, and have a programmatic need (LeGree, 2019). UB-granted projects must have two-thirds of its participants be both low-income and potential first-generation college students. The remaining one-third of participants must be low-income or first-generation students or have a high risk of academic failure.

The U.S. Department of Education allocates funding to support yearly academic initiatives such as Upward Bound. In 2013, each UB project received $249,857,649, and in return, project sites were expected to provide assistance in the following areas: academic tutoring, secondary and postsecondary course selection, college entrance exams preparation, college admission applications, financial aid knowledge, financial education for families, cultural
Theoretical Framework

The framework that was used to explore the educational access and opportunity of UB participants at DCC and their families is the Community cultural wealth model by Yosso (2005). College students tend to focus on lessons and resources given by their families and communities to survive, persist, and navigate higher education. Yosso (2006) shared that community cultural wealth includes an array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts of socially marginalized groups that usually go unrecognized, unacknowledged, or uncelebrated. Low-income and/or first-generation college students, for example, are a marginalized group that have been submerged in many subcultures throughout their lives.

Low-income communities have struggled with poverty, oppression, and a lack of resources for decades. To assist underserved communities in surviving and resisting oppression and discrimination, Yosso (2005) developed the concept of cultural wealth by outlining six forms of capital that exist within communities of color, collectively termed community cultural wealth. The six forms are:

Aspirational capital. Relates to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite real and perceived barriers. This shows up in DCC UB students as they aspire to achieve more than what their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) were able to obtain. Many of the low-income and/or first-generation students in the program aspire to climb out of their poverty neighborhoods, not become parents at an early age, and successfully enroll in postsecondary education.
Linguistic capital. Consists of the skills learned through language such as “memorization, dramatic pauses, rhythm, and rhyme” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78), and the ability to communicate through visual art, music, and poetry. This shows up in DCC UB students as they navigate their individual cultural traditions while being heavily influenced by social media and the entertainment world.

Familial capital. Focuses on the forms of knowledge “nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Many DCC UB students have strong connections and a sense of loyalty to their families (immediate and extended).

Social capital. Makes up of the “networks of people and community resources” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79) that can help students navigate through social institutions. Many DCC UB students long for this social connection. Some students connect with community members in Hinley Park, members of their churches, and program staff within the DCC UB program.

Navigational capital. A form of capital inclusive of social networks and the resiliency students develop to persist through institutional barriers. Several DCC UB students connect with their high school Black Student Union and Spanish Club to help them cross through institutional barriers. Other students have formed connections within DCC UB with each other and program staff.

Resistant capital. “Those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenge inequality” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80) are grounded in a history of resistance to subordination by communities of color and guided by a motivation to transform oppressive institutions and structures. This shows up in DCC TRIO UB participants as they strive to be the
first person in their families to obtain a college degree and sometimes even the first to graduate high school. These students are constantly working hard to not be a statistic, to seek out someone successful who looks like them, to fight against the generational curses that live and breathe within their families, and to figure out the best way to navigate an educational system that was not designed for their success.

Even with various forms of support, guidance, and structure, many low-income and/or first-generation students still fall to the hands of classism, covert racism, sexism, and academic deficiencies. It is these specific forms of oppression that lead “to self-doubt, survivor’s guilt, and impostor syndrome” (Yosso, 2006, p. 156). In the context of the current study, many students who come from a first-generation and/or low-income background constantly struggle with their socioeconomic status, household demographics, community standards, academic progress, and lack of confidence in knowing that they deserve “a seat at the table” based on their hard work alone. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s)/guardians only have so much knowledge when it comes to assisting their students in getting to college. There are various forms of support needed to assist these students in the college-going process. Aspects of UB were developed to ensure first-generation and low-income students get more of the tools that are lacking within their households and communities.

The community cultural wealth model is the blueprint for this study. This theory guides this study by focusing on the life experiences, cultural knowledge, survival skills, and everyday abilities that UB families are up against that are not acknowledged or celebrated. This theory allowed me to comprehend the identities, wants vs. needs, desires, and abilities of each
participant in the study. This allowed me to get an in-depth understanding of the study about the participants and their individual situations.

**Research Design**

The research approach for this study was qualitative. Qualitative research allows the researcher to understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2012) agreed that the qualitative research approach enables researchers to explore in detail social and organizational characteristics and individual behaviors and their meaning. Qualitative research accomplishes this goal by relying predominantly on human perception and understanding. Qualitative researchers record words, pictures, or videos as data and identify patterns and themes in those data that result in narrative interpretations that create meaning (Check & Schutt, 2011). Qualitative research is not designed to be generalizable, rather qualitative researchers focus on meaning that is context and time specific (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012). To get a full picture and understand the needs of the UB program at DCC, a qualitative study was best. This approach allowed me to complete face-to-face data collection through interviews.

**Methodological Approach**

The research methodology for this study was a case study. Case study research is often used as an investigative approach to thoroughly describe complex phenomena, such as recent events, important issues, or programs, in ways to unearth a new and deeper understanding of these phenomena (Lapan et al., 2012). Case studies are often bounded by time and activity, allowing researchers to collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures
(Yin, 2014). Case studies in higher education are typically quite small but are always unique to the context in which the research is being conducted (Daniel & Harland, 2017).

The case study methodology was appropriate for this research because it is bounded to a particular context and activity - the UB program at Danielsville Community College. Analyzing the program as a case study allowed I to gain insight within the low-income and/or first-generation families being served by UB and to ultimately improve support services for DCC UB families. Merriam (2001) suggested that insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, procedures, and future research. Daniel and Harland (2017) emphasized the ability to generalize from a case study comes only through the power and worth of the ideas produced, how these contributions are seen more broadly, and the impact they make in the higher education community. Finally, the methodology was practical for this study because I was not able to manipulate different conditions.

**Research Site**

There are two research sites due to the UB program being housed at DCC and serving 60 students at HPHS. For DCC, it is a comprehensive, two-year community college that offers five transfer degrees and over 70 occupational degrees and certificates, with a total enrollment of 5,000 approximately. The DCC campus is located in the rural town of Hinley Park, Illinois. Founded in 1986, DCC currently has over 400 faculty and staff, serving in-district students. The college’s enrollment has decreased drastically by 23% over the past five years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

Hinley Park has certainly changed over the decades when it comes to poverty rates and demographics. More families have migrated to the Hinley Park area due to the lower cost of
living (Zenk et al., 2014). Hinley Park County is located within a largely rural region of north-central Illinois, and it is located 60 miles west of a major city. The 2018 population estimate for Hinley Park County was 42,611. Since 2000, Hinley Park’s African American population has nearly tripled from five percent to over 14.8% of all residents, and the Hispanic population has increased from 6.6% to over 13.2% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

Socioeconomic data for Hinley Park reveals many minority, low-income, and/or first-generation families live within higher poverty rates and lack degree attainment compared to their more affluent peers. As a comparison, the national average poverty rate is 12.3% and the Hinley Park County family poverty rate is 32.3%. More specifically, 43.9% of African American and 41.2% of Hispanic families are poverty-stricken (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The number of adults in the nation who hold a bachelor’s degree or higher is 33.4%. Within the state as a whole, nearly one-third of adults (31.9%) have completed a bachelor’s degree; just 29.1% of Hinley Park County adults meet this achievement. In Hinley Park County, just 23.5% of African American adults and 14.7% of Hispanic adults hold college degrees, which can position them for greater socioeconomic stability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

In September 2017, DCC was awarded a five-year competitive grant for UB to serve 60 low-income, first-generation, and academically at-risk students from HPHS. Recruitment for these students started in November 2017. The DCC UB staff conducted community outreach in order to introduce the towns within the high school district to the new DCC UB program. The staff partnered with the administration at HPHS to introduce the program to staff and students. The DCC UB staff also actively began recruitment with classroom presentations and tabling during lunch periods. Within the first grant cycle, the staff successfully obtained all 60
participants. Students admitted to the program had GPAs as high as 3.9 and as low as 0.4. Not many students were taking dual-credit classes, Advanced Placement (AP) classes, honors classes. Relationships with HPHS staff were strained and preparing for college was a daunting task. As the UB staff spent more time within HPHS, it became apparent why the school needs TRIO services.

Immediately, barriers of the recruited students began to emerge. Below is a list of HPHS demographics:

- 63.3% of the class of 2015 enrolled in college, compared to a national rate of 68% among recent high school graduates.
- Of the students who took the college-preparatory American College Test (ACT) in 2015, the average composite and subject test scores were consistently lower than those of the state.
- Of the students who graduated and enrolled at DCC, 63.3% place into at least one developmental-level course, and 31.7% fail to persist to their sophomore year.
- There is a 344/1 student-to-counselor ratio, which is far higher than the ratio of 250/1 recommended by the American School Counselor Association.
- During the 2014-15 academic year, 40% of students earned GPAs below 2.5.
- Of the 317 students who graduated in Spring 2015, just 8.2% (26 students) completed a rigorous program of study as defined by completion of at least two Advanced Placement (AP) courses with scores of at least “3” on corresponding AP exams (Hinley Park Annual Report, 2018).
Initiatives such as after-school tutoring four days a week at HPHS and a six-week summer academy at DCC have been put into place to address academic preparedness. Financial management workshops provided by local banks and agencies have been implemented to address financial literacy. Academic improvement and academic achievement plans have been implemented to address educational and career planning. Initiatives are continuing to be developed, but there is still room for program improvement as the program is supporting Danielsville UB students in entering the third grant cycle. Family support is something that lacks research but it could potentially guide practice to support this group of students.

HPHS is challenged to address the needs of students caught in cycles of generational poverty and poor education. HPHS has 58.7% of its students qualified as low income, meaning the students have free or reduced lunch (Hinley Park Annual Report, 2018). That number is significantly high compared to other states that have nearly less than 20% of their students that qualify for free or reduced lunch (Hinley Park Annual Report, 2018). Many students at HPHS are at high risk of repeating family cycles of poor educational attainment and generational poverty.

Of the 468 students who enrolled at HPHS as freshmen in 2011, nearly a third (32.2%) failed to persist from year to year through graduation, more than double the state of Illinois rate of 14% (Illinois Report Card, 2018). The annual dropout rate was greatest among African American students; nearly half (47.0%) of African American students enrolled as freshmen in 2011 failed to persist from year to year to graduation (Hinley Park Annual Report, 2018). Of HPHS graduates who enroll at DCC, 63.3% place into at least one developmental-level course, and 31.7% fail to persist to their sophomore year at DCC (M. Crull, personal communication,
July, 2019). Ultimately, few HPHS graduates who attend college successfully complete postsecondary degrees; of students who graduated high school in 2009 and enrolled in college, fewer than half (47.7%) completed either an associate degree or a baccalaureate degree within six years, comparing poorly to a statewide college completion rate of 62% and a nationwide rate of 60% (Hinley Park Annual Report, 2018).

Participants

The criteria of inclusion for this study was specific to the UB students at DCC and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s). To be considered for the program, participants must have provided a completed application with recommendation forms, medical information, and information regarding academic needs. To be admitted to the UB program, students must be registered with HPHS, complete a family interview, and meet one of the following criteria: reside in a low-income household per government standards, be a potential first-generation college student, and/or be academically at risk.

I used a purposeful sampling method for this study, which is one of the most commonly described means of sampling in the qualitative methods literature today. Patton (2015) shared that purposeful sampling involves selecting information-rich cases for studying in-depth cases that offer insights into issues of central importance to the purpose of an evaluation, thus the term “purposeful sampling”. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research for the most effective use of limited resources. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2015). Check and Schutt (2011) noted in purposeful sampling that each sample element is selected for a purpose, usually because of the unique position of the sample
elements. Maximum variation sampling could include identifying and seeking out those who represent the widest possible range of characteristics of interest for the study. For this study, I invited all UB students and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to participate in the study via email.

The number of participants depends on when data saturation is reached. Francis and colleagues (2010) shared that data saturation is referred to as the point in data collection when no new additional data are found that develop aspects of a conceptual category. In data saturation, the appropriate sample size is a function of the purpose of the study, the complexity, range, distribution of experiences or views of interest, rather than of the statistical parameters used in quantitative research.

**Data Collection Methods**

This study collected data primarily using individual interviews. DeMarrais (2004) defined a research interview as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (p. 55). Person-to-person encounter interviewing, in which one person prompts information from another, is the most common form of interviewing. Stake (2010) noted that interviews are used for several purposes. For a qualitative researcher the main three purposes could be:

1. Obtaining unique information or interpretation held by the person interviewed
2. Collecting numerical aggregation of information from many persons
3. Finding out about “a thing” that the researchers were unable to observe themselves

I conducted separate individual interviews with participants to ensure parent(s)/legal guardian(s)’ responses were not filtered/ altered for their students and alumni and vice versa. I was able to collect exclusive information that only UB participants and their parent(s)/legal
guardian(s) hold (see Appendices A and B). The interview type followed the semi-structured interview protocol, which is a qualitative data collection strategy in which I asks participants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions (Patton, 2015). Each individual interview was scheduled for 60 minutes to give participants an adequate amount of time to share their experiences. The interviews were conducted in a private and comfortable space at DCC. There was onsite childcare provided to accommodate the families that needed this service.

As pointed out by Check and Schutt (2011), focus groups are groups of unrelated individuals that are formed and led by a researcher for in-group discussion of a topic for one to two hours. Focus groups scheduled for 60 minutes were attempted to give participants an adequate amount of time to share their experiences in a group setting. However, all participants declined and preferred individual interviews.

**Data Analysis**

There are various forms of data analysis in qualitative studies. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) indicated the importance of data analysis concurrent with data collection. It helps the field worker cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better data. Edmonds and Kennedy (2017) mentioned that jotting down memos during the data collection process is critical in interpreting nonverbal communication accurately. I processed the raw data to prepare the data to be analyzed. I followed a few of the methods written in Miles et al. (2014), which are first cycle coding, second cycle/pattern codes, and analytic memoing. First cycle is when codes are initially assigned to data chunks, used to summarize portions of data. Codes are defined by Miles et al. (2014) as:

A word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. The data can
consist of interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journals, documents, drawings, artifacts, photographs, video, internet sites, e-mail correspondence, literature, etc. (p. 79)

Miles et al. (2014) explained the process of first cycle coding can range from a single word to a full paragraph to an entire page of text to a stream of moving images. For instance, if the theme of “lack of knowledge” emerges in the first cycle, additional chunks of field notes and interview transcripts that also relate to “lack of knowledge” would receive the same code. Second cycle coding allows portions to be coded in the exact units, with long passages of text, analytic memos about the data, and even a reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far (Miles et al., 2014, p. 79). Second cycle/pattern codes allow researchers to group first cycle coding summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes, or constructs. For instance, the first cycle coding theme of “lack of knowledge” can break down into “inadequate secondary education” or “family traditions” or “ethnic cultural” or “religious practices.” Analytic memoing was used for brief and extended narratives that document my reflections and thinking processes about the data. Miles et al. (2014) suggested:

Analytic memoing is not just descriptive summaries of data but attempts to synthesize them into higher-level analytic meanings. They are first-draft self-reports, of sorts, about the study’s phenomena and serve as the basis for more expanded and final reports. (p. 97)

This allowed me to capture thoughts in an efficient manner throughout data collection, conclusion drawing, and final reporting. Vivo coding was used in correlation with first cycle coding. Vivo coding uses words or short phrases from the participant’s own language in the data record as codes. It may include folk or indigenous terms of a particular culture, subculture, or micro-culture to suggest the existence of the group’s cultural categories. This type of coding is necessary when the researcher is a novice.
Criteria of Quality

Researchers strive to create trustworthiness within their studies. Many qualitative researchers rarely capture the entire “reality” or “truth.” However, several strategies are used to increase the “credibility” of a study (Dey, 2003). Daniel and Harland (2017) noted that qualitative researchers are encouraged to achieve trustworthiness through the process of research as well as from the research outcomes. Trustworthiness enhances the readers’ understanding and interpretations of findings and enables them to establish a level of confidence in the quality of an investigation. Trustworthiness includes three areas: sources and quality of data, dependable outcomes, and researcher experience. Triangulation is a vital strategy that is used to measure trustworthiness. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explained:

Triangulation uses multiple sources of data means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people. (p. 245)

I used triangulation to develop a comprehensive understanding of the data gathered within this research. Through individual interviews with program participants, individual interviews with parent(s)/legal guardian(s), follow-up interviews with the same people, and contextual information gathering, triangulation was reached. This allowed me to test the validity of the research to concentrate on the objective to increase confidence in the data findings. Seeing that the objective was achieved proves the trustworthiness of this research. Triangulation allowed me to find support by showing at least three independent measures agree with, or at least do not contradict, the research. I was able to find patterns by using data from the individual interviews, follow-up interviews, and contextual information gathering. I collected documents that were given to students and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) by the DCC UB program in order to see how the
documents are presented, received, and understood. Using these techniques assures that trustworthiness was achieved and maintained.

**Researcher Positionality Statement**

As I of this study, student support services has been my focus for almost ten years. I have worked in the K-12 system, fraternity and sorority life, student conduct, housing and residential life, and now I am the Director of the TRIO UB program at DCC. As a hands-on administrator, I advise and support low-income and/or first-generation students daily in the college-going process. Using my direct experience, I was able to effectively frame my study. This study allowed me to know the everyday struggles of the families I serve. I know what more specific things can be done to better support them, what benefits and recommendations they have for the UB program.

**Limitations**

As the researcher, I identified the following limitations for students and families to participate in the study: availability, time management, and transportation. Since the participants in the DCC UB program are low income and/or first generation, many family members work overnight, have multiple children to care for, and do not have personal transportation. Since several low-income and/or first-generation families within the program have multiple small children, I made sure to create a suitable space that was child friendly. During interviews, I was able to provide a welcoming family environment that included coloring books to minimize the distractions and create more buy-in from the families. To ensure all of these services are executed positively, professionally, and ethically, I covered the costs for the study from my personal monetary funds.
Significance

The UB program at Danielsville Community College grant is in its first cycle and is in the third year of operation. Numerous students are benefiting from the college preparation and cultural enrichment exposure. Within the college-going process, low-income and/or first-generation students need to be encouraged, gain academic confidence, travel the road to self-discovery, understand their self-worth, and feel a sense of community around them. There are low-income and first-generation students who base their future potential career choices off things they see in media, such as professional athletes and the entertainment field. Low-income and first-generation students must be exposed to careers that are not common in their communities and see professional representation that looks like them. Obtaining higher education can start breaking down barricades for these students. Educating families can help bridge the gap in knowledge regarding the college-going process. Understanding the needs of low-income and/or first-generation students and their families has helped administrators focus on more useful initiatives of support. The results of this study are important to gain a better understanding of what specific needs low-income and/or first-generation families have. These needs may be causing hindrances for families which in turn stunt students’ college-going process. In more than 100 years of operation, HPHS has never had a college preparation program geared toward low-income and/or first-generation students until now. Our program has the chance to alter many low-income and/or first-generation trajectories. This study will aid in the credibility, sustainability, and program enhancement for which our program is striving.
CHAPTER 2

IT’S A FAMILY AFFAIR: EXPLORING THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES IN SUPPORTING UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS: INTRODUCTION

There is a growing number of first-generation and/or low-income students pursuing higher education. Engle and Tinto (2008) suggested that first-generation and/or low-income students are not always aware of the college-going process and therefore do not have the ability to navigate the college-going process. In order to assist low-income and first-generation students to be college-ready, precollegiate programs are necessary to provide the support services needed to successfully enter and complete postsecondary education. Focusing on first-generation and low-income families in Hinley Park (a pseudonym), this study explored their journey as they navigate the college-going process.

For confidentiality purposes, “Hinley Park” refers to the town in which “Hinley Park High School” (HPHS) resides in. “Danielsville” is refers to the community college within the Hinley Park School District. In September 2017, DCC was awarded a five-year competitive grant to serve 60 low-income, first-generation, and academically at-risk students from HPHS. The Upward Bound (UB) staff recruited, admitted, and provided the following services to program participants: after-school tutoring four days a week, academic advising, career exploration, emotional and social support through mentoring, an intense six-week summer component, exposure to cultural events/activities, college visits, financial literacy trainings, and life skills workshops. Students admitted to the program had GPAs as high as 3.9 and as low as 0.4.
The backgrounds of all the UB families matter; they play a key role in their knowledge of the college-going process, their drive, will, and desire to pursue higher education. Socioeconomic data for Hinley Park revealed many minority, low-income, and/or first-generation families live within higher poverty rates and lack degree attainment compared to their more affluent peers. As a comparison, the national average poverty rate is 12.3% and the Hinley Park County family poverty rate is 32.3%. More specifically, 43.9% of African Americans and 41.2% of Hispanic families are poverty-stricken (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The number of adults in the nation who hold a bachelor’s degree or higher is 33.4%. In Hinley Park County, just 23.5% of African American adults and 14.7% of Hispanic adults hold college degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). By conducting this study, I was able to learn about the specific roadblocks program participant families are facing daily. In return, a better understanding was grasped as far as the support these families need in supporting their UB students through the college-going process. This study was guided by the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** What are the perceived familial/structural barriers by parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and students involved in the DCC UB program?

**Research Question 2:** What are the perceived benefits by parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and students around family involvement in the DCC UB program?

**Research Question 3:** What recommendations do families have for the DCC UB program to build better support services for students and their families?
Literature Review

The literature below will focus on 1) K-12 equity for first-generation and/or low-income students, 2) the college-going process for first-generation and/or low-income students, and 3) the role of families in the college-going process.

**K-12 Equity for Low-Income/First-Generation Students**

Reducing the achievement gap for low-income and first-generation college students has become more of a focus for numerous K-12 school districts, but there is still a long road ahead. When students enter the school system, they are immediately positioned into a complex system of stratification influencing academic, social, and emotional experiences (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). A study shows that 77% of dependent students from families in the highest income quartile attained a degree of higher education, compared to nine percent of dependent students from the lowest family income quartile (Cahalan & Perna, 2015). Although the socioeconomic cycle continues to perpetuate itself, it is vital now more than ever that low-income and/or first-generation students are prepared for the college-going process.

Properly preparing low-income and/or first-generation students academically has been a misstep in the K-12 education system. It seems that more and more low-income and/or first-generation students are entering postsecondary institutions low on the college readiness scale. Conley (2007) described college readiness as the level of academic preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed - without remediation - in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program. College readiness can also be viewed as the skill set, experience, understanding, and comportment a high school student should have a grasp on before finishing
Their senior year and starting their freshmen year of college. The K-12 gap continues to create difficult postsecondary transitions for students going into higher education (Yun & Moreno, 2006). The concentration within the education network should be to provide equal access for everyone in the K-12 school system.

**The College Going Process for Low-Income/First-Generation Students**

Four major focus areas of TRIO precollege programs will be discussed: 1) academic preparation for college, 2) educational and career planning, 3) financial literacy, and 4) support systems. The most important indicators of future college success are how often and how well students are prepared academically, given structure, prepared financially and supported through their educational and future career endeavors (Conley, 2010). Low-income and/or first-generation students are already behind the education starting line when it comes to academic preparation and academic success in postsecondary educational settings. This is due to the reality of how low-income and/or first-generation families are commonly molded. Snell (2008) suggested that the lower the income and education levels, the lower the literary reading rates and the lower the ability or inclination of students to engage academically and socially. To be successful in higher education, low-income and/or first-generation students need to be taught in addition to the classroom. These students need extra resources to help strengthen their academic skills as they prepare for college. Boden (2011) revealed that having academic skills addresses the student’s need to have the necessary time management and organization skills and aptitude in reading and mathematics. These students need these skills in order to make informed decisions as they work hard towards their educational and career goals. Social media, the entertainment industry, community characteristics, and family units generally help shape low-income and/or
first-generation college students’ career interests. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s)’ level of education has a direct impact on their students’ career goals, choices, and knowledge of resources and skills to pursue their goals (Tate et al., 2015). It is extremely important that before first-generation and/or low-income families decide to attend college, financial literacy is taught.

It is very common for low-income and/or first-generation families not to have money saved for college. Kezar (2009) pointed out that on average, low-income students face an $8,000 deficit between the total amount of financial aid they receive and the annual cost of tuition. Exposing first-generation families to resources and educating them on financial literacy can improve future generations’ experiences with financing higher education (Engle & Tinto, 2008). In order to reduce the impact of financial obstacles, low-income and/or first-generation families need to participate in workshops about the financial aid process, especially filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

**Role of Family in the College-Going Process**

Low-income and/or first-generation families often create a reoccurring cycle of pursuing education up until high school and then working low-income/minimum-wage jobs. Stepping outside of the basic/traditional educational values and workforce expectations can be a difficult transition for low-income and/or first-generation students (Bryan & Simmons, 2009). Consulting loved ones in the midst of making important decisions is common for many low-income and/or first-generation families. Family tends to play one of the most essential roles in students’ academic successes and chances for college attainment (Tate et al., 2015). There tend to be undeclared expectations and worries placed on low-income and/or first-generation students. Families typically want the best for their loved ones; therefore, going to college can be an
expectation put on many first-generation students (Tate et al., 2015). Unknowingly, low-income and/or first-generation families often demand/encourage success from their student. This adds pressure as low-income and/or first-generation students are blindly navigating an educational design that they were not generally prepared for.

Low-income and/or first-generation students often deal with the predicament of “breakaway guilt.” This occurrence causes students to feel that one or both parents are so dependent on them that to leave and go away to college is criminal; it is the ultimate level of abandonment and betrayal (Tate et al., 2015). Oftentimes low-income and/or first-generation households are not eloquently exposed to the social fundamentals that assist in successfully entering college. Processing “society’s reality” versus “family/household traditions reality” can be a difficult task for this particular group of students. This group of students may encounter cultural conflicts between home and the college community (Thayer, 2000). With all these learning opportunities for first-generation students, there is an increased responsibility for college readiness programs to help them and their families take on higher education.

It is crucial that all UB students and their families become acquainted with and are guided through terms such as college completion, college access, college readiness, the college-going process, academic preparation, educational and career planning, financial literacy, and support systems. These common educational terms serve as the knowledge and best practices for successful college degree attainment that those in the low-income and/or first-generation community may be unfamiliar with.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that was used to explore the lives of UB participants at DCC and their families is the community cultural wealth model by Yosso (2005). College students typically focus on teachings and instructions given by their families and communities in order to survive, persist, and navigate higher education. Yosso (2006) shared that community cultural wealth includes an array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts of socially marginalized groups that usually go without recognition, acknowledgment, or celebration. For example, low-income and/or first-generation college students are a marginalized group that has been submerged in many subcultures throughout their lives. Low-income communities have been submerged in poverty, oppression, and a lack of resources for decades. In order to assist underserved communities in surviving and resisting oppression and discrimination, Yosso (2005) developed the concept of cultural wealth by outlining six forms of capital that exist within communities of color, collectively termed “community cultural wealth”. The six forms of capital are:

Aspirational capital. Relates to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite real and perceived barriers. This shows up in DCC UB students as they aspire to achieve more than what their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) were able to obtain. Many of the low-income and/or first-generation students in the program aspire to climb out of their poverty neighborhoods, not become parents at an early age, and successfully enroll in postsecondary education.

Linguistic capital. Consists of the skills learned through language such as “memorization, dramatic pauses, rhythm, and rhyme” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78) and the ability to communicate
through visual art, music, and poetry. This shows up in DCC UB students as they navigate their individual cultural traditions while being heavily influenced by social media and the entertainment world.

*Familial capital.* Focuses on the forms of knowledge “nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Many DCC UB students have strong connections and a sense of loyalty to their families (immediate and extended).

*Social capital.* Makes up the “networks of people and community resources” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79) that can help students navigate through social institutions. Many DCC UB students long for this social connection. Some students connect with community members in Hinley Park, members of their churches, and program staff within the DCC UB program.

*Navigational capital.* A form of capital inclusive of social networks and the resiliency students develop to persist through institutional barriers. Several DCC UB students connect with their high school Black Student Union and Spanish Club to help them cross through institutional barriers. Other students have formed connections within DCC UB with each other and program staff.

*Resistant capital.* “Those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenge inequality” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80) grounded in a history of resistance to subordination by communities of color, guided by a motivation to transform oppressive institutions and structures. This shows up in DCC UB participants as they strive to be the first person in their families to obtain a college degree and sometimes even the first to graduate high school. These students are constantly working hard to not be a statistic, to seek out someone
successful who looks like them, to fight against the generational curses that live and breathe within their families, and to figure out the best way to navigate an educational system that was not designed for their success.

Many low-income and/or first-generation students still fall to the hands of classism, covert racism, sexism, and academic deficiencies even with various forms of guidance and structure. It is these specific forms of oppression that lead “to self-doubt, survivor’s guilt, and impostor syndrome” (Yosso, 2006, p. 156). In the context of this study, many students who come from a first-generation and/or low-income background have been told or made to feel that they are not capable of achieving academic success in their pursuit to higher education. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) only have been given so much knowledge and/or have chosen to seek such knowledge when it comes to assisting their students in preparing for college. First-generation and/or low-income students need several avenues to obtain the resources needed in order to navigate the college-going process successfully. Operations of UB were developed to ensure that first-generation and/or low-income students are exposed to and given the tools that may have never been provided in their households or available in their communities. The community cultural wealth model is the outline for this study. The theory guides this study by focusing on the personal life experiences, cultural knowledge, survival skills, and everyday abilities that UB families are faced with. This theory allowed me to get an in-depth understanding of the study in relation to the participants and their individual situations.

**Research Design**

The qualitative approach used for this study allowed me to understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to
their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research accomplishes this goal by relying predominantly on human perception and understanding. Qualitative researchers record words, pictures, or videos as data and identify patterns and themes in those data that result in narrative interpretations that create meaning (Check & Schutt, 2011). Specifically, to be able to understand the needs of the UB program at DCC, a qualitative study allowed me to complete face-to-face data collection through interviews.

**Methodological Approach**

The research methodology for this study was a case study. Case study research is often used as an investigative approach to thoroughly describe complex phenomena, such as recent events, important issues, or programs, in ways to unearth a new and deeper understanding of these phenomena (Lapan et al., 2012). Case studies are often bounded by time and activity, allowing researchers to collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures (Yin, 2014). Case studies in higher education are typically quite small but are always unique to the context in which the research is being conducted (Daniel & Harland, 2017).

The case study methodology was appropriate for this research because it is bounded to a particular context and activity - the UB program at Danielsville Community College. Analyzing the UB program as a case study allowed me to gain insight within the low-income and first-generation families being served by UB. This path of research allowed me to improve support services for DCC UB families. Merriam (2001) suggested that insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, procedures, and future research. Finally, the methodology was practical for this study because I was not able to manipulate different conditions under any circumstances.
Data Collection

Data was collected through separate individual interviews with parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to ensure their responses were not filtered/altered for their students. Data was also collected through separate individual interviews with students and alumni to ensure their responses were not filtered/altered for their parent(s)/legal guardian(s). Data was conducted by one researcher. Interviews were conducted to gain information on the participants’ experiences with the college-going process as low-income and/or first-generation families. Each interview lasted between 16 and 64 minutes and was audio-recorded. Consent forms and an explanation of the research were provided to each participant before their interview to further reiterate that participation was entirely voluntary. After agreeing to participate, contributors were asked the following questions on the following subjects: experiences growing up, current day-to-day life experiences, personal contribution to college-going processes, experience with the UB program, and any recommendations for the program. At the end of each interview, participants were asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire in order to obtain their ethnicity/race, gender, age, highest level of education completed, family income, family size, and occupation.

Documents for the data analysis were gathered from the DCC TRIO UB’s computer drive and physical storage unit at DCC. Triangulation was used to develop a comprehensive understanding of the data gathered within the research of this study. Through contextual information gathering, individual interviews with students and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s), and a thorough review of documents, triangulation was reached. This allowed me to test the validity of the documents to concentrate on the objective to increase confidence in the document analysis. My experience with the formation of the documents adds validity to the document.
analysis as well. Seeing that the objective was achieved proves the trustworthiness of this research.

**Participants**

A qualitative case study approach was used to explore the needs of UB students and their families as they persist through the college-going process. Participants were chosen using the purposeful sampling method. Only students who were admitted to the DCC UB program and registered with HPHS and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) were included as participants. All current and prior DCC UB students and their families who met inclusion criteria were invited by e-mail to voluntarily participate in this study (see Appendix C). Among the 15 participants, there was one man student who currently attends HPHS, one man UB alumnus who currently attends DCC, two women UB alumnae who currently attend DCC, and 11 women parent(s)/legal guardian(s). There are 11 households represented in the sample and all four students/alumni reside in a home shared with four of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) within the sample. All participants range in age from 18 to 52, all of whom have been affiliated with the program since its inception in the 2017-2018 academic school year. Nine participants identified as African American, four participants identified as Caucasian, one participant identified as Hispanic American, and one participant identified as biracial (African American and Caucasian).

All participants were raised in low-income families at some point in their childhood. Twelve participants are currently considered to low income, defined as 80% of the median family income for the Hinley Park area, subject to adjustments for areas with remarkably high or low incomes and/or housing costs. Income limits are adjusted for family size so that larger families have higher income limits. Several families qualify for free and/or reduced lunch at
HPHS. This is defined by the National School Lunch Program (NSLP; low-income children are eligible to receive reduced-price or free meals at school. Children in households with incomes below 130% of the poverty level or those receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) qualify for free meals. Those with family incomes between 130 and 185% of the poverty line qualify for reduced-price meals.

All parent(s)/legal guardian(s) were/would have been potential first-generation college students. Eleven participants lived in a single-parent household for extensive parts of their lives either due to divorce or absent fathers (this included all four UB alumni/students). Fourteen participants live in a home with three or more individuals. Three parent(s)/legal guardian(s) pursued some form of higher education but did not complete due to finances, difficulties balancing a single-parent household, or romantic relationships. Three parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have received a postsecondary degree, with the most recent being in December 2019. Two-parent(s)/legal guardian(s) do not meet the low-income qualifications for the program, but neither of them has credentials past a high school diploma (see Table 1). For the purposes of this study, names and possible identifiers have been removed from quotes to protect the confidentiality of all the participants. Table 1 shows participant demographics directly associated with this study.
Table 1
Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ronald U1</td>
<td>Biracial</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>High School Or Below</td>
<td>Did Not Meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenn U2</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>High School Or Below</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie U3</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>High School Or Below</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith U4</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>3 Members</td>
<td>High School Or Below</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dameris P4</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>3 Members</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree Or Above</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angie P</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>40-50+</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>High School Or Below</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie P</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>High School Or Below</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth P</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>40-50+</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>2 Members</td>
<td>Attempted Higher Education</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen P</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>40-50+</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Two-Parent</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>Attempted Higher Education</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry P1</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>High School Or Below</td>
<td>Did Not Meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitney P</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>3 Members</td>
<td>High School Or Below</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loreal P</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>40-50+</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>Associate's Degree Or Above</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica P2</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>40-50+</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>3 Members</td>
<td>High School Or Below</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erika P</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>Attempted Higher Education</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcia P3</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Single-Parent</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree Or Above</td>
<td>Meets Standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Family Trees consist of UB student/alumni that reside in the same household as their parent(s)/legal guardian(s)
U=UB Student/Alumni
P=Parent(s)/legal guardian(s)
1=Family Tree 1
2= Family Tree 2
3= Family Tree 3
4= Family Tree 4
Data Analysis

After all of the interviews were completed, I transcribed each interview verbatim for analysis. Every transcript was read through thoroughly and coded individually by me. While going through every transcript, codes were assigned. During the coding process, I followed a few of the Miles et al. (2014) methods, specifically first cycle coding, second cycle/pattern codes, and analytic memoing. Since I am a novice researcher, vivo coding was used in correlation with first cycle coding. After the coding was complete, I identified common themes from the codes. The themes were then defined in great detail to connect smaller themes into larger overarching themes.

In order to maintain the validity of this study, triangulation was used to develop a comprehensive understanding of the data gathered within this research. Through individual interviews with program participants, individual interviews with parent(s)/legal guardian(s), follow-up interviews with the same people, and contextual information gathering, triangulation was reached. This allowed me to test the validity of the research to concentrate on the objective to increase confidence in the data findings. Triangulation allowed me to find support by showing at least three independent measures agree with, or at least do not contradict, the research. Using these techniques assures that trustworthiness was achieved and maintained.

I used a document analysis by evaluating DCC UB program artifacts that had been given to students and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) by the UB program. The artifacts consisted of event flyers, college preparation timelines, program calendars, welcome letter, college success books, HPHS course selection information, and the college application checklist (see Table 2 and Appendix D). Table 2 shows a document analysis of program artifacts associated with this study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents Selected</th>
<th>Coded Themes</th>
<th>Data Analyzed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019-2020 Welcome Letter</td>
<td>Communication, Academic Assistance, &amp; First-Generation Student Support</td>
<td>Tone Setting Information for the 2019-2020 Academic Year from the UB Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Flyers</td>
<td>Academic Assistance, First-Generation Student Support, Exposure Higher</td>
<td>Resources Available to Strengthen the College-Going Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education Institutions, &amp; Financial Literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Preparation Checklist &amp;</td>
<td>Freshman - Senior Year Action Steps</td>
<td>Prompts Through High School That Will Assist in Entering College Successfully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Timeline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Calendar</td>
<td>Academic Assistance, First-Generation Student Support, Exposure to Higher</td>
<td>A List of Events Communicated to Families at the Beginning of the School Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education Institutions, &amp; Financial Literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPHS Course Selection &amp;</td>
<td>Course Selection Information, AP Class Information, &amp; Duplicate HPHS</td>
<td>Information on HPHS Course Selection &amp; AP Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP Class Information</td>
<td>Communication Geared Toward First-Generation Families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding My Way: A Practical</td>
<td>Techniques and Strategies for First-Generation Students</td>
<td>An Important Tool for First Generation Students as They Prepare for Postsecondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide to College Success-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>Organization, Preparation, Educational</td>
<td>An Important Tool for First-Generation and Low-income Families as They Prepare for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following the initial round of interviews, I followed up with participants about the family support resources currently being provided by the program, how it is advertised to participants, and their understanding of the resources. These documents are important to the study because these are specific program resources that have been created, prepared, discovered, and scheduled to assist participants in the college-going process.

The documents were evaluated by coding content into themes similar to how the interview transcripts were analyzed (see Table 2). Using these techniques assures that trustworthiness was achieved and maintained.

**Positionality**

Case studies are often bounded by time and activity, allowing researchers to collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures (Yin, 2014). Using a case study approach, I was able to assure a particular context and activity - the UB program at Danielsville Community College. Analyzing the program as a case study allowed me to gain insight within the low-income and first-generation families being served by UB and to ultimately improve support services for DCC UB families.

Since I am a TRIO UB alumna within another program, was raised in a single-parent household, and struggled with navigating the college-going process, I made sure to be concrete about my position within the research before data collection began. I was cautious not to form any preconceived notions about participant experiences and was well prepared to actively listen as different experiences were described. I was able to relate with many of the participants but was careful to maintain a healthy distance from the research and was conscious enough to not look for specific themes that emulated my personal experiences. My background has been
focused on student support services for almost ten years and now I am the director of the TRIO UB program at DCC. As a hands-on administrator, I am able to advise and support low-income and/or first-generation students daily in the college-going process. Using my direct experience, I was able to effectively frame the study. This study allowed me to understand and analyze the everyday struggles of the families the program serves.

**Limitations**

Through this study, I identified availability, time, and transportation as limitations. Since the participants in the DCC UB program are low income and/or first generation many, family members work overnight, have multiple children to care for, and do not have personal transportation. Due to many parent(s)/legal guardian(s) having opposite work schedules, I made myself available during early morning hours, nights, and weekends. There was also a reasonable amount of parent(s)/legal guardian(s) who needed to reschedule their interviews due to life’s circumstances and time management. There are many families within the program that have multiple small children. During interviews, to provide a welcoming family environment, I communicated ahead of time and made coloring books available to minimize the distractions and create more buy-in from the families. To ensure all of these services are executed positively, professionally, and ethically, I covered the costs for the study from my personal monetary funds.

Focus groups and individual interviews were offered to all participants. All participants declined the focus groups and were more interested in individual interviews. As the researcher, I believe additional data may have been available in a focus group. More themes may have been added or themes may have been enhanced through focus groups, but the individual interviews were able to generate significant comprehensive information for the study. Table 3 shows the emerging themes, the codes that were incorporated by each theme, and the definition of each theme.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Trauma</td>
<td>Abuse: Alcohol, Drug, Physical, Sexual, &amp;</td>
<td>Generational occurrences that have personally impacted students and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) as they form their identities. These traumas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Verbal. Mental Health &amp; Parental Absences</td>
<td>heavily impact their everyday lives as they pursue postsecondary education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety Concerns</td>
<td>Gun Violence &amp; Racial Tension</td>
<td>Living with everyday fear of the possibility of losing one’s life due to the actions of others, as well as making life-altering mistakes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision-Making Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students having the ability to make proper decisions when they are away at college (alcohol, drugs, and relationships).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Hardships</td>
<td>Poverty, Low Income, &amp; Unemployment</td>
<td>Financial burdens and housing conditions that impact students and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) on an everyday basis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Size</td>
<td></td>
<td>Households consisting of three or more individuals that include immediate and extended family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Codes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Support/Motivation</td>
<td>Lack of Support/Motivation</td>
<td>An emptiness due to prominent student’s family members passing away before they enter higher education.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) not knowing what type of support to give their students.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) giving the “wrong” type of support as students prepare for the college-going process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>College Resources/Information</td>
<td>Navigating the College-Going Process</td>
<td>Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and students gaining knowledge to assist with the college-going process.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) being able to connect to their students/the program on a deeper level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Skills</td>
<td>Financial Literacy, Household Chores, Workforce Readiness, Decision Making, Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Communication, Relationship Building, Self-Confidence, &amp; Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Parent(s)/legal guardian(s)’ concerns of properly preparing their students to navigate situations as they become adults.</td>
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Table 3 (continued)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Support from TRIO Upward Bound</td>
<td>Exposure: College Visits, Cultural Enrichment Trips, &amp; Resources</td>
<td>The DCC UB program provides services to students that allow them to explore the college decision-making process.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Preparation</td>
<td>The UB program provides after-school tutoring four days a week during the academic year in addition to a six-week summer component with a focus on academics three times a week.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Connectedness/Sense of Belonging</td>
<td>The atmosphere the UB program has created within HPHS has allowed students to find a safe haven and friend group with whom to connect.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relatable, Caring, Loving, &amp; Mentorship</td>
<td>Participants of the DCC UB program share that program staff truly care, love, relate and focus on the betterment of students and their families.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It Takes a Village to Raise a Child”</td>
<td>Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and students feeling that DCC UB staff members go above and beyond to personally support and service each family. The staff members have been identified as being a part of families’ villages that play an essential role in the development of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support/Motivation After High School</td>
<td>The DCC UB staff members stay connected with families that have graduated from the program in order to support, motivate and provide resources during the postsecondary experience.</td>
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Findings

From the 15 interview transcripts, there were 37 codes individually identified. Of these 37 codes, seven main themes emerged that characterized the earlier codes and the collected data. The themes identified included family trauma, safety concerns, financial hardships, family support/motivation, college resources/information, life skills, and support from TRIO Upward Bound.

The seven themes are broken down into the following three categories based on the research questions of this study: barriers, benefits, and recognition and recommendations from the DCC TRIO UB families.

Barriers

The identified barriers consist of roadblocks that the participants are dealing or have dealt with throughout their lifetime. These barriers make the college-going process difficult for participants.

Family Trauma

The first theme, “family trauma,” focused on participants’ family structures from the early stages of life through the present day. The emotional and physical baggage that many of the participants carry is embedded into their current everyday lives. For many of the participants, they were raised in single-mother households. Seven in 10 children living with a single mother are poor or low income, compared with less than a third of children living in other types of families (Mather, 2010). Terry, who is the mother of a UB student, shared:

My mother forced me to start working at nine years old. When I turned 13, school was not important in my household. If I could pick up a shift at work during the day, I could skip school with no problem and that’s what we did. There was nowhere else to turn, my
father left us and moved to West Virginia. As soon as I turned 18, I left that house and never looked back.

The absence of a father figure created a dynamic that left many participants extremely emotionally dependent on the mother and created a closeness that bonded the family together or created a level of disdain that in turn distanced the children from the mother. Five of 11 participants eventually transitioned into two-parent households due to their mothers getting married.

Several participants dealt with alcohol, drug, physical, sexual, and verbal abuse throughout their childhoods. Monica, who is the mother of a UB graduate, shared her experience on this subject by stating, “I was raised by a single mother until I was 13. When my mother married my stepfather, we went through some abusive stuff because my stepfather was drinking all the time and stuff like that.” Erika, who is the mother of a UB student, shared, “My mom and I fought constantly during my junior and senior year of high school. When I got a 19 on the ACT test, my mom called me all types of names.” There were also experiences of sexual abuse shared by participants. Faith, who is a UB alumna, shared, “My older cousin did things to me for years; when my mother found out, she did nothing and we never spoke about it again.” Mental health also impacted many of the participants. Elizabeth, who is the mother of a UB graduate, shared:

My ex-husband has schizophrenia and that put a lot of weight on me. Because of his illness he could never keep a job. For 20 years I was the only one with a job keeping our family alive. I had to keep on keeping on just to survive and make it happen for my sons. I remember when we first got married at the age of 19, my ex-husband joined the Army and was later kicked out. I know now because he wasn’t treating his illness. We hide this secret from both of our families. There was so much doubt in our relationship from the start since we come from two different backgrounds and cultures.

Karen, who is the mother of two UB students, shared how mental health affected her family:
Growing up, I didn’t know my older sister was bipolar. She confessed this when my husband was diagnosed with bipolar and was committed to a hospital. My daughter has severe depression and anxiety, and my son has ADHD. Mental health has impacted my family a great deal.

All of the participants have dealt with some form of family trauma that has shaped them into the people they are today. For many participants, these physical and emotional scars have turned into trauma. This has ultimately created barriers surrounding distrusting individuals outside of their home, mental health problems that go undiagnosed/untreated, and physical and emotional scars. This heaviness can sometimes outshine the necessities needed for individuals pursuing higher education.

**Safety Concerns**

The second theme, “safety concerns,” focused on participants not always feeling safe due to external factors around them. All of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) spoke to the daily worry of their child’s safety outside of the home. Gun violence was a topic that also came up. Since many of the participants live in low-income communities within Hinley Park, issues of violence are more prevalent in comparison to the wealthier communities in Hinley Park. Glenn, who is a UB alumnus, shared that he was at a party in a town neighboring Hinley Park with his family from Chicago and someone put a gun to their heads and attempted to rob them. Glenn elaborated:

I can’t believe I got held up at gunpoint, out here at that! I didn’t know if the gun was real so I just tried to chill. I was so mad that I was even in that situation. I didn’t even tell anybody about that night.

Calamur (2018) added 80 to 90% of the time a gun is handled or fired there is no call to 911, so there is no police response, which means that gun violence becomes normalized in impoverished communities.
Several parent(s)/legal guardian(s) narrowed in on the racial tension in today’s society.

Erika shared:

As a mother of a Black boy, I am deathly afraid of him getting pulled over by the cops. I am scared of what situations he will be in when he is not around me. I am scared of the type of people he will come across when he’s away at college. I try to prepare him but you just never know.

Monica shared:

I am scared of you know a lot of the stuff going on in the colleges, Black kids were getting beat up, jumped on by the White people and it was just a lot of crazy stuff I was seeing on the news. It bothers me in everyday life for him, being a Black man growing up trying to be successful and you got racist people out there. It sometimes it could also be your own people.

Other participants spoke to the systematic oppression that has been placed upon them as they navigate secondary and postsecondary education. Natalie, who is a UB alumna, stated, “I have never had a teacher that looks like me at HPHS. There is a lot of disadvantages that come with that. I have to work twice as hard as the White kids.” Many participants spoke to the racial tension within the school district and across the Hinley Park community as a whole. Elizabeth stated:

A lot of the White kids got all kinds of, hey, come here. Let me show you this. Let me explain this, let me get you in the right direction for your future. And many of our Black/Brown kids don’t even know who their guidance counselors are. That's how often they talked to them. It does not seem fair. We don’t know where to look or what to look for without the UB program.

Lastly, a few parent(s)/legal guardian(s) participants spoke to how uncomfortable they are with the decisions their children can be faced with while in college. Marcia, who is the mother of a UB graduate, stated, “I know I raised my kids right, but it is no telling what they will get into with the pressures of college. It scares me.” Karen shared, “I have fears that the social aspect will override their education and they will not be able to recover from some of their
mistakes.” Terry and Monica shared similar thoughts, such as, “Partying scares me because it's his first time being away from home. Something tragic can happen, just the fear of something bad or something totally just accidentally happening to him you know, this is the mother intuition.”

This theme focused on parent(s)/legal guardian(s) barriers as they explored their comfort levels of “letting their children pursue college and letting them eventually leave the family home.” Families can benefit from UB as the program offers mentorship to help students combat racial tension and develop strong decision-making skills.

Financial Hardships

The third theme, “financial hardships,” focused on the financial situation of all of the participants. The study revealed that financial circumstances are a major barrier for all participants. All of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) shared that they all grew up in some form of poverty due to family size, job opportunities, family structures, and lack of education. Many reminisced about being a part of SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps. Currently, many of the participants live in subsidized and low-income housing. Their residence address defines what elementary and middle school the students in the family attend. Each specific school in the district has certain racial and economic “reputations” within the community. Such reputations have been communicated as “the Black schools,” “the Brown school,” “the dumb school,” “the rich school,” and “the rowdy school.” Due to the financial circumstances, a number of the participants partake in the free/or reduced lunch program at HPHS.

I asked all of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) participants, “How much money have you saved for your student’s college fund?” Two out of 11 parent(s)/legal guardian(s) (Erika and
Terry) shared that due to being divorced or being remarried, financial agreements are put into place to help their student financially with college. Terry shared:

> We have a savings account for my son. I mean, there’s not a whole lot in there… but there’s little a college fund savings that my in-laws started as soon as my husband and I got engaged. We’ve been married for nine years so it’s a little cushion in there. They really treat him like their own. And then his dad's side of the family has college funds for him also. I am not sure how much, but they have something.

Erika shared:

> Yes, I have a little something, it’s difficult with the position I found myself in… But yes, he will have money that will go to school with him. My son has a bank account. He gets child support deposits every week to that account.

The major points that came out of this section were the two families in particular that talked about how hard it has been for their family financially due to cancer treatments and mental health breakdowns. Multiple single mothers also stressed how financially taxing it is daily to provide for their children with the bare necessities needed for survival. Saving for college is just not realistic for many low-income and/or first-generation families. Another popular topic that kept surfacing was family size. It seems as if for families that have two or more children in the household, it becomes more difficult to stretch finances. Once again, monies set aside for higher education are not feasible in nine out of 11 households that were interviewed. When asked, “Are you able to save money for your student’s college fund?” Dameris, who is the legal guardian of a UB graduate, shared, “No, that wasn't really a thing. I don't know if it was just our family or what, but we live paycheck to paycheck.” Marcia shared, “Oh, wee no. Being a single parent is hard. You know you try to make it day by day. It is survival. I wasn’t able to save, I am dependent on financial aid and student loans.” Stephanie, who is the mother of a UB student,
shared, “No, I can’t.” Angie, who is the mother of a UB student, shared, “No, I wish.” Monica stated:

I've been out of work for treatment for like, almost like two years. Then I went back off and on and I'm still not back at work so money got really really tight. Thank God my husband got a raise and he picked up another job.

Elizabeth stated:

No, not even for my oldest boy that is 32 years old. What I've always done for us to live is to pull from my 401k and maxing out my credit cards when I needed to or trying to get things to survive. It got so bad I eventually had to file bankruptcy. So this year [2019], I finally called a debt consolidation company because I have $20,000 in credit card debt that I can't afford anymore. Especially now my youngest in college, I mean it's killing me. I am up against the wall in debt.

Whitney, who is the mother of a UB student, stated:

No, not yet. And I know the time is coming soon since my daughter is a sophomore. I just can’t afford it being a single mother, it always takes a village. I always tell you it takes a village to raise one child, and you are helping me raise my child. I mean I'm not the one to judge but I just don't know how people can have six, seven, and eight kids. It takes a village to raise one, and I am struggling with my two kids.

Loreal, who is the mother of two UB students, stated:

Well, I took out extra education loans for my family to live and help my oldest son with college. That kind of helped out a little bit but also with being like low income it makes it challenging, but I just decided, to be honest, like let me go back to school because it's easier. And then I took the loan money and paid for my son's college. In the meantime, he's getting his college paid for, and I'm getting prepared for a new career as well.

Karen stated:

No, I am not in the position to be able to say to my two kids, hey, don't worry about your school funding, it is covered. We got you, we did great planning, but I can help you on the backside so that you have a chance to get financially stable after college. I expect my kids to come home after college and stay until they are 25 or get married. I would have them pay rent which will then be saved so they can put a down payment on a house. Three hundred bucks a month so they can learn to budget.
Financial hardships emerged as a barrier for every participant. Living in poverty, working low-wage jobs, being unemployed, and/or family size all play vital roles in participants not being able to navigate the college-going process. For some families, this creates an upset because it is a continuous cycle of generational misfortune. This causes a constant reminder for participants of what they do/do not have and what they can/cannot provide financially towards college. Participants can benefit from all of the resources that the DCC UB program provides. For instance, tutoring and SAT prep can improve GPAs and test scores, which can ultimately lead to scholarships. This, in turn, helps the family unit dismantle the financial burden that is constantly hanging over their heads. All services are geared towards helping UB students successfully enter college and propel themselves into a better situation.

**Life Skills**

The fourth theme, “life skills,” focused on skills parent(s)/legal guardian(s) feel that their students need before they enter “the real world.” Multiple parent(s)/legal guardian(s), including Whitney, noted, “I don’t feel like my child is ready to go away to school, luckily we have another year or two.” Erika, Dameris, and Stephanie shared that no matter how hard they try to implement things like chores and opening up bank accounts, the lessons are not sticking. Angie noted that her two daughters don’t have good critical-thinking skills, problem-solving skills, or decision-making skills. “They sometimes forget to take their medicine that helps them function and I have to remind them. If they don’t have it together by the time college starts, I will not be comfortable with them going away.” Angie and Erika shared: “I still have to wake my kids up for high school in the morning.” “My kids seem lazy. It is a constant struggle to get them to learn to cook and clean up after themselves.”
Several parent(s)/legal guardian(s) shared they would not be comfortable with their student(s) going away to college due to the absent life skills. Many of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) gave program recommendations on this topic in hopes of getting extra support in preparing their student(s) with life skills. Each UB student has the opportunity to benefit from the life skill workshops that are offered during the academic and summer components. The UB staff introduces and reiterates dozens of life skills to help UB students put their best foot forward when it comes to preparing for college life outside of the classroom.

Benefits of Support and Resources

The identified benefits positively assist the participants in their journey on the college-going process.

Family Support/Motivation

The fifth theme, “family support/motivation,” focused on the lack of as well as the endless support/motivational factors parent(s)/legal guardian(s) give to their students in the college-going process. All of the DCC UB students/alumni have received some type of support or lack thereof.

Faith, in particular, did not receive an ounce of support or motivation from her parents. However, Faith’s legal guardian, Dameris - someone in Faith’s extended family - took on the role throughout high school. Faith described how lonely she felt growing up, how religion was the only tradition practiced in her childhood home, how her mother lived check to check, how the family never had enough food, and how often the family went to food kitchens. Faith also mentioned that there were no expectations instilled about education/college from her single mother and incarcerated father. When asked, “What life lessons do you think your mom should
have given you before high school?” Faith answered, “I wish she would have taught me to be focused, not to be worried about what people think, try not to always fit in. Just be yourself and not be like everyone else.” When asked, “What were you most excited about when it came to going to college this past fall?” Faith answered, “Getting away from family.” When asked, “How has your legal guardian supported you with the college-going process?” Faith stated, “She helped me a lot, constantly gave me talks, reassurance, support, and resources. I wish I would have listened but I felt like I knew it all.”

Glenn shared his family experience:

I grew up in a family-oriented home with my single mom and three siblings. My extended family plays a huge role in my life (grandmother, grandfather, uncles, and cousins). My father has always been pretty much distant and out of the picture and very unsupportive. My mom instilled respect, manners, responsibility, and independence into her kids. Education was not an option for me - “school comes first.” My mom, she was so strict on school, at home she would sit next to me, press me until I get the right answers. Even though we are low income, my mom got her bachelor's degree and she went through a lot to get her bachelor’s. Since she pursued higher education, she always took education seriously. Growing up I didn’t know anything about college, my mom didn’t talk about it. So I had to figure things out on my own and UB helped me so much. I just wish my mom was a little bit more involved with my education career but at the same time, you know, I'm happy she wasn't in the sense because it taught me how to do it for myself. Even though all of that, my mom is very supportive and encouraging. Driving me across states to visit colleges and all.

When asked, “What do you feel was missing with your preparation for college?” Glenn shared, “My grandfather, he was one of my biggest supporters. When he passed away my first year of high school, I was devastated.”

All of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) shared how proud they are of their students for even being interested in a college preparation program and pursuing college. Many parent(s)/legal guardian(s) recounted how they spend countless hours supporting their student through the college-going process. A few parent(s)/legal guardian(s) shared that they try to be supportive but
feel like they could be doing more, but they are unsure where to start and the thought is overwhelming.

Family support and motivation appeared as either a barrier and/or benefit for many of the participants. For the students who have a void due to family members passing away or not being able to connect with their immediate family to get support for college, they found a safe space within the DCC UB program. All of the participants feel a high level of comfort and trust in the program. All of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) discussed how they want to be involved with the program in more ways. Several parent(s)/legal guardian(s) shared that the program has created meaningful conversation starters within their household.

**College Resources/Information**

The sixth theme, “college resources/information,” focused on parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and students gaining knowledge to assist with the college-going process. All of the participants are/were very eager to have knowledge and resources about the college-going process. Through the document analysis, it was found that families are utilizing the college preparation resources being shared with them through the UB program. The tone and verbiage makes a big difference in how families receive communication from UB. Due to participant language preferences, all documents, flyers, communication, etc. are shared in English and Spanish. The document analysis also found that UB documents provide resources to strengthen families’ knowledge in the college-going process. UB documents also provide the opportunity for students and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) the chance to connect and dialogue over their shared goal of reaching higher education. Resources and information shared by HPHS often goes overlooked due to DCC UB families not understanding the terminology and presentation. Monica shared, “There is
so much information that we should know about this whole process. We have been lost until the UB came along.” Erika shared, “I am able to connect with my child about colleges and ask more specific questions based on what UB is emailing and mailing home about colleges, AP classes, and timelines.” Terry shared, “You don't even know where to begin and you almost feel stupid asking people because education was the expectation in most family homes in our town.”

Ronald, who is a UB student and son of Terry, shared:

Can we get a round table or something? The UB staff can open up communication, like, what are your fears as students? What are the parents’ fears? And how do we support the students? How do we address these things at home in the expansion of the UB program to like, moving forward?

Terry also shared:

So I guess my question to my student, as a parent who is preparing, junior and senior year, what can I do to help? What would you want your parents to know to help with? Like, would you want us to keep you on track? Would you want us to do the reminders?

Glenn, Faith, and Natalie noted that they feel like not much support is given about the college-going process by HPHS staff. They also stressed that they get extensive and personal academic support from the UB staff compared to their teachers and counselors. Natalie shared, “I learned more from UB in one year than I did my entire time at HPHS.” All of the participants stated in some form that they have benefited from UB and hope to continue to learn about the college-going process. Numerous parent(s)/legal guardian(s) shared that they look forward to getting college preparation information from their student(s) and the program. A few parent(s)/legal guardian(s) communicated they want to know what more they can do to help their family through the college-going process. This turned into many of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) giving program recommendations in hopes of gaining more education on this topic.
Many parent(s)/legal guardian(s) shared that without UB they would be completely lost and truly do benefit from UB services.

**Recognition and Recommendations from Participants**

The identified recognition and recommendations from participants align with the mission of the program to serve and educate the DCC TRIO UB families in the college-going process.

**Impact of the DCC TRIO Upward Bound Program**

The seventh and most prominent theme, “support from TRIO Upward Bound,” focused on the participants expressing their positive experience with the UB program at DCC.

**Upward Bound alumni.** The UB alumni were extremely grateful for the services and support they have received. Natalie asked if she could give the following advice for the DCC UB program: “Find kids that actually want to go to college or put them into wanting to go to college. If they just join to go on the trips and have fun, they not learning nothing.” During an interview, Glenn gave the following advice for students thinking about joining the DCC UB program:

Take the program seriously. If you’re not, then don't do it. These are sources for you to make you a better, teach you responsibility, make you a better student and a better person. So if you're not ready to prosper and if you’re not ready to really dedicate your time and effort and to being a better you then, don't do it.

All of the participants in this study expressed gratitude about the college visits and cultural enrichment trips. Glenn said:

The program was a big opportunity for me to get into college. I didn't know how to do scholarships, how to fill out applications. Through the college-going process, I get acceptance letters from five different schools. And all because of TRIO, without them, I wouldn't even have known/thought about Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). I would have never really even thought about going away to college if they didn't give me that experience.
Faith noted:

The program helped a lot because they have tutoring services, take you on college trips, I was able to see what colleges I was interested in. The staff is just kind of like family you know. They truly are here just to support.

Faith, the alumna who shared earlier in the results that she did not receive any support/motivation through the college-going process from her parents, really glued herself to the program. Faith used her resources and soaked up a lot of knowledge about the college-going process.

Lastly, Natalie, who is a UB alumna, noted:

I love you all. You are my family forever. You have supported me like no other. Pushed me to be my best. The program helped me a lot with studying, getting organized for classes and stuff like that. You know, it just teaches you a lot of responsibility. And not only is it hard work but it is play in there too.

The UB alumni in the study were juniors when the DCC UB program started. The first two years of the program were trial and error. The three UB alumni in the study really “worked” the program and emerged themselves into what the DCC TRIO UB program had to offer at that time.

**Parent(s)/legal guardian(s).** Conversations with parent(s)/legal guardian(s) on this subject were very similar. Karen shared:

The extra tools that UB provides is wonderful. It’s no way I can help my kids better understand their homework every day, give them SAT preparation, and it’s no way my kids would have been able to step foot on any of the college campuses you all have visited.

Terry added:

Without the UB program, we wouldn't know what direction to go in and what GPA my kids should strive for. We now know what colleges to look at, to factor in the housing, food plans, and all of these other expenses we’re learning about. Everybody knows the classes and the books, but that’s it. UB really is teaching me the way. Sending my kid to college actually seems reachable with the grants and scholarships available. This was a
whole entire subject and world that I did not know anything about. So it’s funny because my kid is actually coming home teaching me about it, which is really cool.

Monica added, “The UB staff is really great with the students, they relate well to all the kids and show such a genuine love for my child. They have really turned into family.” Marcia shared, “My kid found trustworthy mentors within the UB staff members.” Erika shared:

My goal for my son was to show him there's opportunities out there, like, don't make those same mistakes that I did by missing those opportunities. And so I think, as a parent, I would not be, we would not be having the conversations we're having without Upward Bound.

Many parent(s)/legal guardian(s) expressed their joy and satisfaction for the program. Marcia explained, “I love the UB program. At first I didn’t think my child would want to pursue a higher education but I think with this program you all influenced her tremendously.” Karen stated, “I love this program. Thank you for what you have done for us.” Stephanie noted, “I think you're doing great. I mean honestly, I would not change anything about this program.” Terry shared:

I brag about the UB program all the time. I don't care what anybody says, I am your biggest cheerleader…I will not stop. And I've even had parents come to me and say, hey, how do I get my kid involved in that?

Whitney shared, “This program has been good to us. I just feel like if you guys just continue to have it the way it is, like, I don't think you can go wrong.” Loreal proudly shared, “I promote the program like I work for you guys. I love how you organize going to see different schools. Many kids don't have this opportunity and parents don't even have the money to take them to two schools.” Erika stated, “This program has been amazing. The college visits, the SAT prep, the tutoring, the workshops, the Summer Academy and more has made my son a better rounded person.”
Dameris shared:

This program has helped us in more ways than I can even a count. The people that she has met has really been a huge thing. In introducing her to the college process and really getting her excited because she hears it, she heard it at home from me, but to actually experience those things like going on college visits, having those interviewing skills, making sure people check in on her and make sure her grades are good, having the tutoring services is more than I could have ever asked for. Thank you so much.

Several parent(s)/legal guardian(s) mentioned how they wish the DCC TRIO UB program came to HPHS years ago for their other children. Loreal shared, “It’s key that they join the program young. They will build these college prep skills over time and it will prepare them way better in life. Sometimes waiting until junior/senior to join is too late!” All 11 parent(s)/legal guardian(s) discussed their satisfaction for the DCC UB program.

**Connectedness/sense of belonging.** Multiple parent(s)/legal guardian(s) brought up connectedness/sense of belonging. Stephanie shared, “You all have helped us tremendously. The access to tutoring, the college visits, the summer program, and then you guys also try to make it fun with activities. My son has been able to build friendships.” Angie shared, “My daughter has a tough time making friends but she has a few people in the program that she really enjoys being around.” Terry shared:

Honestly, we would not be where we are without the UB staff, opening him up, helping him adjust to the high school as a freshman, that was huge for him. He had an awful middle school experience, he tried to hurt himself. Coming into high school he dealt with social media bullying and suicide attempts. You all didn’t know it but your program helped him find his way, meet new friends and feel safe with staff.

Several parent(s)/legal guardian(s) noted that the program has made their student’s high school career more enjoyable.
It takes a village to raise a child. Quite a few parent(s)/legal guardian(s) discussed the phrase “It takes a village to raise a child,” in regards to the UB staff being a “second family” to the participants. Whitney shared:

I will never forget the UB staff helped my family with a personal problem. My daughter’s freshman year was rough, she changed into a different person and I didn’t understand where it came from. I did not know where to turn and I called you. You took time out of your evening to meet with my family. You made my daughter feel comfortable enough to open up and we were able to get to the root of the problem. My husband is in prison, you are a part of my village. Thank you for helping me raise my daughters.

All three of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) (Dameris, Monica, and Marcia) of the UB alumni expressed thankfulness in regards to the support and motivation the UB program continues to give students after high school. They all share similar thoughts, including Monica, who stated, “Even though my son is in college, you are still doing a terrific job really filling in the gaps that the high school did not do. You genuinely care about these kids.” Marcia shared:

I know I do my part, but that program helped and influenced my baby a lot. That's a good thing that you all have an impact on these children even after high school when they have graduated from the program, gone on to college or whatever, they know that your door is always open. You are always there and that's good. That's a wonderful thing. I appreciate all of you for that. I really do.

Monica shared:

If you leave, DCC has to find someone to follow in your footsteps. They gotta be similar to you because you genuinely care about these kids. A lot of these kids fall short because people don't care. They just push them along, you know, and that's not going to help them when they get in the real world. The kids are gonna be lost. New staff gotta be able to fill your shoes and navigate all that you have and have the heart and everything like you.

The DCC UB staff and the participants share a close professional relationship due to the startup of the program. A few parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have opened their home lives to the DCC UB staff in order to build a trusting rapport.
**Recommendations**

The theme “support from TRIO UB” really brought the program objectives full circle. Many of the participants’ experiences mirrored one another. All of the participants’ recommendations included for UB staff to keep supporting and providing higher education exposure to the students. The exposure to different college campuses and cultural enrichment trips with the DCC UB program can benefit parent(s)/legal guardian(s) with time and monetary funds that they are unable to provide their student(s). The after-school tutoring and college entrance exam preparation can benefit students in the journey of college readiness. The positive feeling of a sense of belonging can benefit UB students by giving them a safe space within HPHS. UB students can also be provided the opportunity to connect with other UB students and form friend groups with people whom they would not normally interact with. UB alumni can benefit from having lifelong mentors and support systems beyond high school. Through all of the barriers that the participants face, the DCC UB program has been all-around beneficial for the participants. Each of the seven themes created concrete answers to the three research questions for this study.

**Discussion**

A couple of findings of this study, such as financial hardships, college resources/information, life skills, and support from TRIO Upward Bound, are consistent with previous findings from LeGree’s (2019) four themes, including academic preparation, college knowledge, relationship building, and financial literacy. The LeGree (2019) study found that UB students need the skill of financial literacy in order to complete the FAFSA and to understand the process of loans, grants, and scholarships similar to this study. This also aligns with Yosso’s
discussion around resistance capital that focuses on communities of color’s knowledge and skills that are adopted through the inequality experiences. This population constantly has to seek out knowledge and skills to help catch them up to society’s standards. The LeGree (2019) study found that UB students do not/did not feel properly prepared for college by their high schools similar to this study. This supports Yosso’s discussion around aspirational capital which narrates the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite real and perceived barriers. Many participants in this study expressed their frustration in not receiving proper college preparation assistance before their involvement in UB. This population has to constantly rise above the injustices they face due to their overall goals of becoming successful.

Findings are consistent that both UB programs are giving/have given students the tools/resources necessary for the college-going process. This finding corresponds with Yosso’s discussion of linguistic capital. Within this study linguistic capital focuses on skills learned through language such as memorization. Participants in the DCC TRIO UB program are constantly given college preparation resources in the hopes of familiarity and memorization becoming customary. Both studies found that family backgrounds and family support play a major role in UB students’ college-going success. This also aligns with Yosso’s discussion around familial capital that focuses on knowledge and experiences that are nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. Participants in both studies mentioned the family-like atmosphere created at UB and how impactful it is. Findings from both studies revealed that UB students have made meaningful connections with their peers and UB staff. This finding aligns with Yosso’s discussion of navigational capital as UB students build their networks around the UB program in order to persist through barriers they face at HPHS. Participants from both studies could not always find
the words to describe the gratefulness they have toward the program. The outpouring of gratitude and satisfaction with the UB programs from participants was consistent in both studies. The findings from LeGree (2019) aid in the validity of this study. This is parallel with Yosso’s discussion related to social capital. UB students and their families have found a network of people that provides community and college preparation resources to help them navigate through social institutions.

First-generation and/or low-income students have been known to struggle through the college-going process (Carr, 2013). Their success has been predetermined by the generational baggage that is embedded within their households. This supports Yosso’s discussion around aspirational capital which relates to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite real and perceived barriers. The results of this study found that family trauma has a long-lasting impact on individuals, which is consistent with the findings from Cox, Dean, and Kowalski, (2015) and Pat-Horenczyk, Brom, and Vogel (2014). Similar findings state inconsolable students reported “long-term” effects within the academic, social, and physical/psychological scopes of their lives. Due to the participants constantly “fighting” to survive and the lack of generational wealth that has been given to them, they are often stuck in the same reoccurring cycle. Despite the trauma the UB students have endured, Yosso’s discussion surrounding aspirational capital shines brightly through their tenacity to make their dreams come true. The results of this study found that financial barriers exist for all participants, which is consistent with the findings from the Barriers to College: Empowering Low-Income Communities, Schools, and Families for College Opportunity and Student Financial Aid study (La Rosa, Luna, & Tierney, 2006). Again, this finding supports Yosso’s discussion around
aspirational capital. Having more in life and obtaining more in life for first-generation and/or low-income families has not been a priority due to home life circumstances. This study found that the participants are constantly in survival mode and some common life skills are missing, which is consistent with Buckner, Mezzacappa, and Beardslee (2009). Again, Yosso’s discussion of aspirational capital is connected to this finding. Through this study, it was discovered that various participants living within low-income communities have safety concerns, which is consistent with findings from Gaylord-Harden, Cunningham, and Zelencik (2011). This finding is linked to Yosso’s discussion of aspirational capital. First-generation and/or low-income families tend to face racial tension and violence often.

Traditions of stopping education at the high school level and living in poverty continue to set first-generation and/or low-income families back. However, there is a select group of first-generation and/or low-income families living in a rural Illinois town that is determined to break these cycles and have begun to seek out opportunities to propel their families forward. Through this study, it was evident that family motivation and support are necessary for success, which is consistent with findings from Fiebig, Braid, Ross, Tom, and Prinzo (2010) and Sy, Fong, Carter, Boehme, and Alpert (2011). This correlates with Yosso’s discussion of aspirational capital that discusses one’s ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite real and perceived barriers. Support services are extremely important when it comes to supporting this at-risk population in the college-going process. Many first-generation and/or low-income families welcome college resources and information, which is consistent with findings from Perna (2015). This is interconnected with Yosso’s discussion of linguistic and social capitals, as UB families begin to memorize college preparation resources and work with their network. This study
revealed that the DCC UB program is a welcoming and positive safe haven for UB students at HPHS. This finding connects to Yosso’s discussion of navigational and social capital due to UB students finding the resilience to form personal social networks while navigating through institutional barriers. The environment that has been built has caused a sense of belonging for many UB students, which is consistent with findings from Stebleton, Soria, and Huesman (2014) and Strayhorn (2018). Through this study, it was apparent that participants value the DCC TRIO UB program and staff. The program has assisted participating families not only with the college-going process but emotionally as well, hence the phrase used consistently throughout interviews: “it takes a village to raise a child.” The study revealed the importance of first-generation and/or low-income families’ need and desire for additional support with unfamiliar practices. This result is consistent with findings from Berkel, Murry, Hurt, Chen, Brody, Simons, and Gibbons (2009) and Mikuck and Rizzi (2016). Through this study, the DCC UB college preparation program has been able to redirect their support efforts and enhance their services for the participating students. Again, these findings are associated with Yosso’s discussion concerning social and navigational capitals, which allows UB staff to assist UB families with college preparation resources as they navigate through educational and social barriers.

The theoretical framework of the community cultural wealth model by Yosso (2005) allowed me to come to important findings for this study. Using this framework makes perfect sense for the findings of this study. Findings from the document analysis and interviews reinforced all six forms of capital within the community cultural wealth model. The following are examples of how the findings from the document analysis connect to the theoretical framework:
Aspirational and familial capital is reinforced within the Family Support/Motivation theme. The college preparation timelines, program calendar, academic welcome letter, the college success book, and the college application checklist assist in DCC UB families’ ability to maintain hopes and dreams for their future as they prepare for college despite the hardships they face daily (aspirational capital). This also includes the sense of pride, community history, and cultural intuition that families hold as they interrupt documents provided by DCC TRIO UB (familial capital).

Linguistic capital is reinforced within the College Resources/Information theme. The HPHS course selection and AP class information, program flyers, and the program calendar bring the Linguistic capital into play. UB families receive repetitive materials for the college-going process in hopes of memorization.

Social capital is reinforced within the Connectedness/Sense of Belonging theme. The program calendar, academic welcome letter, program flyers, college success book, college application checklist, and college preparation timelines help connect students and their families to networks of people and community resources.

Navigational capital is reinforced within the College Resources/Information and Connectedness/Sense of Belonging themes. The program calendar, academic welcome letter, and program flyers help UB students build and strengthen their comprehensive social network within HPHS. These documents assist UB students in their development and aid in their persistence through institutional barriers.

Resistant capital is reinforced within the College Resources/Information theme. UB documents such as the college application checklist, college success book, and college
preparation timelines help UB families build up their knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality.

The model gave a clear lens of the background experiences and/or current lives of all the participants represented through the findings. Throughout the results, low-income and/or first-generation college families discussed being shelved by the community when starting the college-going process. Even though the participants in the study have cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities, it still does not come out equal to the families with higher education experience. I was able to approach the study with an open mind and a basic understanding of the population being researched. Being that in my lifetime I have identified with the marginalized group in this study, things became clear and relatable very quickly. This study proves that low-income and/or first-generation families face a great deal of adversity. Despite the bloodline and circumstances each participant was born into, they still choose to pursue their dreams with the assistance of community resources. With the results of this study, the DCC UB staff will be able to effectively give families the support needed to navigate the college-going process.

**Practical Implications**

As this study exposed a more in-depth look into low-income and/or first-generation families, it is key to build upon this for future families that will have similar dynamics. The following are the top three practical implications for UB practitioners at community colleges.

*Sharing resources* is necessary for low-income and/or first-generation families. This population needs as many resources as they can get. Most of the time, this population “does not know what they do not know.” So many things are missed and questions go unasked. The smallest detail of the college-going process such as application deadlines should be mentioned to this population. This is more than likely a completely new and uncomfortable journey for these
families. Find a system to send out resources throughout the year. It is never too early to send certain resources (scholarships, SAT materials, etc.). Putting together college resources binders also can be very helpful to families. This will allow families the opportunity to have a designated space to keep all college preparation materials organized.

*Healthy partnerships internally and externally* will allow you to serve your participants properly. Establishing and maintaining a positive rapport with your target school(s) is essential to establishing work relationships with the principal, counselors, teachers, and support staff. Target schools already have a set culture. Program staff must find ways to support the target school and collaborate if the opportunity presents itself. TRIO Upward Bound’s job cannot successfully be done without an established mutual respect, understanding of the school culture, and school resources, for instance, important dates, class periods, school schedules, school transcripts, office space, programming space, etc. Partnering with free external agencies such as the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), which is a trusted free source of college planning information for Illinois students and their parents, provides information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable. There is an initiative similar to this in many states. Second, Junior Achievement is the nation's largest organization dedicated to giving young people the knowledge and skills they need to own their economic success, plan for their futures, and make smart academic and economic choices. Junior Achievement provides free kindergarten-Grade 12 programs that foster work readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy skills while using experiential learning to inspire students to dream big and reach their potential. Lastly, OnTrack is a postsecondary education free online e-learning college and career readiness program for high-school-age students, school counselors, community organizations,
parents, and mentors to understand the process of achieving postsecondary education. OnTrack is committed to the belief that every student deserves to attend college with funding in hand; they strive to equip all students with the knowledge and resources to help them reach their full potential.

*Connect with the TRIO community* to build your network. Every September the Council for Opportunity in Education has a national TRIO conference. The conference is for college access professionals, students, and retirees. Attending the national conference is an investment in professional development that will provide more impactful practices for programs and participants. The conference features discussions on new trends in college access and retention and connects college leaders to proven best practices. There are thousands of TRIO professionals, conferences focused on low-income and/or first-generation students, social media groups focused on low-income and/or first-generation students, email list serves, etc., that can support you in your efforts of supporting your UB families. Signing up for TRIO-related trainings and webinars is another way to become immersed within the TRIO community.

As professionals, we should do everything we can to make sure our students’ college applications stick out from non-pre-college program participants. As TRIO professionals, it is our mission to assist and serve students in need. Learning about new practices and applying them to individual UB programs can be a game changer.
CHAPTER 3
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Countless families within the Hinley Park community are not sure how to navigate the college-going process. Many times, parent(s)/legal guardian(s)’ education stops at the high school level. Families have expressed how much of an embarrassment this is as they “live in a college town and feel they should know how to cross this path.” Not many staff at HPHS and within the community have taken the time to ask this population, “What are your everyday struggles?” “What do you need to help prepare your family for college?” Many of their financial circumstances classify them as “low income” and this hinders them from climbing out of poverty. Countless low-income and/or first-generation students and their families want to pursue higher education, they just are not sure how to go about it.

In 2017, several families at HPHS jumped at the opportunity to be a part of the DCC UB program that was designed to help them prepare their students for college. Through the program, students have been exposed to universities in Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, Texas, Alabama, and Georgia; these institutions include Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Historically Black Colleges Universities (HBCUs). All of the participants in the study communicated that these opportunities would never have been awarded to their families if it were not for the DCC UB program. The program has brought to light the information families need to be aware of and consider as they persist towards postsecondary education. The program has also introduced
topics that are necessary for these students to navigate this process, such as financial literacy, resume building, email etiquette, and interview preparation.

The study was formed around a qualitative case study approach intended to explore the needs of UB students and their families as they persist through the college-going process. The participants consisted of the following: one man student who currently attends HPHS, one man UB alumnus who currently attends DCC, two women UB alumnae who currently attends DCC, and 11 women parent(s)/legal guardian(s). There were 11 households represented in the sample and all four students/alumni reside in a home shared with four of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) within the sample. All participants range in age from 18 to 52, all of whom have been affiliated with the program since its inception in the 2017-2018 academic school year.

The results of the study revealed seven themes geared toward DCC UB program students and their families related to persisting through the college-going process. The seven themes became apparent within the participants in the following ways: 1) *Family trauma* focused on generational occurrences that have personally impacted students and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) as they form their identities. 2) *Safety concerns* concentrated on participants living with everyday fear of the possibility of losing one’s life due to the actions of others (e.g., gun violence and racial tension). 3) *Financial hardships* fixated on the financial burdens and housing conditions that impact students and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) on an everyday basis due to being below the poverty line, living in low-income housing, and being unemployed. 4) *Family support/motivation* focused on the lack of support/motivation due to an emptiness caused by students’ prominent family members passing away before they enter higher education. 5) *College resources/information* concentrated on parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and students gaining
knowledge to assist with the college-going process. Through navigating the college-going process, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have been able to connect to their students and to the DCC UB program on a deeper level. 6) Life skills focused on parent(s)/legal guardian(s)’ concerns of properly preparing their students to navigate situations as they become adults. 7) Support from UB concentrated on the exposure the program provides through college visits, cultural enrichment trips, and resources which allow students to explore the college decision-making process. The results of the study reinforce the direction in which the DCC UB program is heading.

I did not expect some of the barriers that the participants of this study revealed. Research on how to support low-income and/or first-generation families with their trauma, safety concerns, and financial hardships as they persist through the college-going process is limited. Research on the benefits of low-income and/or first-generation families receiving extra college resources from pre-college programs is narrow. There is also a lack of research on UB students feeling a sense of belonging once they are connected with a UB program. Research on the positive relationship between pre-college programs and families is also limited. Seeing that there is infrequent literature and research to address these barriers and benefits, a comprehensive implementation plan has been put into place in order to address the needs of DCC TRIO UB program participants.

**Recommendations**

This study is the guide to help strengthen the UB program at DCC. Based on the findings and current literature, I have assembled recommendations to move the DCC UB program onward and upward. After the interviews and data analysis were conducted, I formed a solid foundation to better serve the DCC UB families. Due to the barriers of the population being served,
initiatives will be put into place to help accommodate the following: lack of transportation, lack of positive male guidance, imposter syndrome, self-efficacy, academic injustice, family unit educational rawness, organizational skills, research skills, and time management skills. Because I am the director of the UB program, the new procedures, new resources, and new services below will be implemented into the DCC TRIO UB program. New program implementations and detailed explanations on each recommendation/implementation will be given below.

**Procedures**

- Separate Workshop Levels: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced
- AP & Honor Student Recruitment
- Rising Ninth-Grade Recruitment
- General Program Recruitment
- Grade Communication Incentives
- Find Additional Supplemental Funds
- Manatory Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) Meetings
- Grade Improvement Recognition
- Quarterly Meetings with HPHS Counselors
- Increased Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) Engagement
- Interaction with HPHS Staff Once a Week
- Integrate DCC UB Program within HPHS Communication

Procedures are defined as new techniques, processes, actions, events, and practices that will be put into place within the DCC UB Department. For example, workshops with separate levels (i.e., Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced) will be provided to UB students during the academic year and summer component. This will give each student entering the program the opportunity to gain skills and resources that have been offered in previous years. This will also give students continuing in the program an opportunity to build upon skills they have been exposed to and to progress through the college-going process at that skill and knowledge level. During the academic year, all workshops will be held at HPHS in order to meet the transportation restrictions of participants. During the summer component, all workshops will be
held at DCC during Summer Academy hours. Transportation will be provided to DCC for all participants.

The UB staff will heavily recruit AP and Honors Students to help strengthen the representation of the college-bound program. No student below a 2.5 GPA will be admitted into the program. This new process will help eliminate students who are not taking their academics seriously. The UB staff will develop a more comprehensive procedure to recruit current eighth graders in order to be ready to start serving them in the summer heading into their ninth-grade year. The UB staff will also work with principal administration at the two middle schools within District 617 to invite the honors students to apply for the DCC UB program. One community evening application night will be held at both middle schools in order to extend the presence of UB and to establish ground rules of the program. The UB staff will develop a plan to alter general program recruitment in order to identify potential students that truly want to be college bound.

Currently, UB students are required to submit grade checks to UB staff on the 15th of every month through email, in person, text message, etc. There is always the same one to five students who complete this task. The UB staff will start giving random “acts of kindness” to the first student who turns in their grade check. Announcements of the student’s diligence will be promoted through the remind.com text message system and UB social media pages. This can turn up the competitive notch with the UB student group as well as increase the academic focus the program is striving for. UB staff will form a plan to get parent(s)/legal guardian(s) on board with the importance of grade checks. The UB staff will start recognizing students who are actively improving their grades on tests, homework assignments, completing extra credit, etc.
Announcements of the student’s persistence will be promoted through the remind.com text message system and UB social media pages. The UB staff will host mandatory parent(s)/legal guardian(s) meetings for the following events: fall semester, spring break trip, and Summer Academy. This will give the families a chance to fully understand program expectations, program culture, calendar of events, and travel agreements. The UB staff will increase parent(s)/legal guardian(s) engagement by offering more workshops, meetings, resources, and alternate ways of communication to strengthen the DCC UB program.

In order to strengthen the partnership with the HPHS Counselors, the UB staff will request quarterly meetings. This will allow the UB staff and the HPHS counselors to collaborate on future events and maintain similar communication. To continue strengthening relationships with HPHS staff, the UB staff will make an effort to interact with HPHS staff at least once a week. This will be done by simply going to the following administrators to say hello/check in: office associate for the Administrative Office, office associate for the Student Service Office, counselors, front desk staff, police liaisons, custodial staff, library staff, deans, assistant principals, and principal. To strengthen the program’s representation and presence within the HPHS community, UB staff will integrate the DCC UB program within HPHS communication such as the school website, the handbook, and other various student services communications. The UB staff will also look into finding supplemental funds to benefit the UB students in their college-going process.

Resources

New resources that will be implemented are defined as extra support efforts and tools to help DCC UB families, including:
• Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) College Preparation Workshop for Entire Program
• College Application Checklist
• Life Skills Workshops
• High School Course Selection
• Community Service Learning Opportunities

• Junior & Senior Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) Support Workshop
• Knowledge of High School Curriculum & Resources
• College Resource Binders
• Community Mentorship Opportunities
• Scholarship Packet

The **Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) College Preparation Workshop** for the entire program will consist of the UB staff inviting all participants and their families to a workshop. Such topics will include student loans, scholarships, college preparation timelines, community service, the importance of AP classes and dual credit, high school steps, college steps, high school course selection, etc.

The **Junior and Senior Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) Support Workshop** will be tailored to junior and senior UB students and their families. This will be a more intensive workshop that focuses on SAT preparation importance, college application checklists, junior/senior timelines, college applications, college essays, college requirements, etc. To-do lists and timelines will be given to students and families.

The **College Application Checklist** will help UB students and families keep track of each college/university in which they are interested. The checklist will draw attention to items and subjects UB students and families should be keeping in mind as they research and apply to schools (see Appendix E). The UB staff will increase partnership with the assistant principal for curriculum and instruction at HPHS to give UB tutors as much curriculum support resources as possible. The UB staff will strengthen partnership with the HPHS counselors and assistant
principal for curriculum and instruction to have knowledge of the course selection process. This will allow UB staff to better inform UB students and their families.

Currently, I have built a scholarship document with over 40 digital search engines and scholarship resources that are being sent to UB seniors and their families. The UB staff will start sending out scholarship resources to all students every year that they are in the program, as many UB students and their families are inquiring about scholarships. The UB staff will create “college resource binders” for each UB family. This will include the college application checklist, college preparation timelines, scholarship resources, ACT/SAT information, etc. This will allow families to be organized, stay informed of the college-going process, and assist with keeping track of all of the college/university materials being mailed home and collected during campus visits.

The UB staff will strive to build community mentorship opportunities for UB students. This will be done by reaching out to community-based businesses and organizations to inquire what leaders would be interested in serving as mentors with the DCC UB program. The UB staff will strive to create community service learning opportunities for UB students. Following through with increasing parent(s)/legal guardian(s) engagement, the UB staff will reach out to all parent(s)/legal guardian(s) about the new community service learning initiative. Staff will inquire if parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have preferred community service sites for their children, for example, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) places of employment.

Services

- Practice Filling Out College Applications
- Open House/Application Night
- Remind.com- Text Message System for Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s)
- Practice Filling Out College Admission Essays
- Mock Interviews
- Strong Male Professional Leaders
New services that will be implemented are defined as hands-on activities, events, personnel, and extra support efforts and tools to help DCC UB families. The UB staff will offer assistance to UB students and families as they get a jump start on getting comfortable filling out practice college applications. This will take place within the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) College Preparation Workshops. The UB staff will build-in time during tutoring and the Summer Academy to provide college admission essay writing prompts to help students get comfortable filling out college admission essays. Throughout the interviews, parent(s) and legal guardian(s) requested additional life skills workshops to include “adulating,” money management (e.g., balancing a checkbook, credit card management), etc. The UB staff will work with outside agencies to provide these services (banks, Junior Achievement, resources from the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, etc.). During the 2019 Summer Academy, the UB staff implemented mock interviews for the UB students. DCC staff volunteered to give face-to-face mock interviews to all students involved in the summer program. Staff were able to partner with the Community Goodwill - Attire for Hire Program. Through feedback from the mock interviews, the UB staff will be implementing Skype and phone interviews to further the student workforce readiness.

The UB staff will host an Open House/Application Night during the fall and spring semesters. This will increase the presence of the DCC UB program within the community, allow staff to answer questions about the program, and offer assistance with filling out the DCC UB application thoroughly. The UB staff will start promoting the remind.com text message system to
all of the UB parent(s)/legal guardian(s). Currently, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) receive emails, mailings, and on occasional phone calls.

The UB staff will strive to find opportunities for strong male professional leaders to be incorporated into the DCC UB program. The director and case manager of the program are both African American women. The current dynamic is great, but the possibility of a man leader joining can be very valuable.

The UB staff did a test run of bringing a Summer Academy career service counselor to the team during the summer of 2019. It was well received and took the program to another level. During interviews, I received great feedback about this position. This is something that the UB staff will strive to make permanent every summer. UB staff have been extensively communicating with UB families about the importance of taking AP classes for college-bound students. During the 2018-2019 academic school year, the UB staff noticed many UB students taking AP classes who were not confident prepared to take the test that gives them college credit. The UB staff will strive to work with HPHS staff to get practice materials to prepare the UB students for AP tests more effectively.

The UB staff will strive to incorporate a UB alumni retreat each year to allow current UB students the opportunity to engage in breakout discussions with college students who share at-risk characteristics such as low income and/or first generation in college status. Upward Bound alumni will discuss their strategies for overcoming secondary obstacles and transitioning successfully to college. The UB staff will strive to implement an end of the summer celebration at the end of the Summer Academy. This will allow the career service counselor, summer instructors, and mentors an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the students on their summer
achievements. The UB staff will also aim to include parent(s)/legal guardian(s) in the celebrations as well. This will allow parent(s)/legal guardian(s) the opportunity to further connect with their student, the program, and learn what their student accomplished during the six-week Summer Academy.

During the interviews, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) kept reiterating that as DCC UB staff transition out of the program, new staff must have a passion for the work they do for UB students. The UB staff will strive to hire with the following characteristics in mind: relatable to the population being served, resourceful, welcoming, responsible, organized, caring, and empathetic.

With the UB program at DCC being in its third year of operation, there is always room for improvement. By conducting this study and letting the voices of the UB students, UB alumni, and the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of the program be heard, there is a more in-depth understanding of the lives that are impacted by this program. The initiatives previously discussed will allow the UB staff to take the UB program at DCC to another level. This in sequence will have a greater impact on current and future students by bridging the gap for first-generation and/or low-income families as they work through the college-going process. In conclusion, the DCC UB program has laid a solid foundation within the first three years of operation. Since the program is funded through a competitive five-year grant, there is still room for growth to best serve families and keep the program standing strong for years to come.

Through the extensive research, I am confident that the DCC TRIO UB program will continue to positively flourish with the new implementation practices on the horizon. With each interview, the DCC UB culture was reinforced and valuable information was discovered. Through this dissertation of practice, not only am I able to stay on the path that serves the DCC
UB community, but now more intentional services will be created. New procedures, new resources, and new services will surely enhance the college-going experience of the DCC TRIO UB participants.

**Reflection**

As I of this study, I have the opportunity to bridge the gap between the K-12 school system, the DCC TRIO UB program, the low-income and/or first-generation community in Hinley Park, and the college-going process. I started the UB Department/program at DCC fall 2017 with the two other required employees, and it was not easy. As the director of the DCC TRIO UB program, I withstood the dismissive nature community members had toward the DCC UB program. I heard the complaints of educational injustice spewing from several families in the community. I received feedback from the administration that the application process was too lengthy and intense. With very little support, I pressed forth to ensure the families that were interested and willing to join the program were effectively served. The journey I have had with the DCC administration, the HPHS administration, the HPHS student body, the Hinley Park community, and the UB participants impacted my determination to design and implement this study. I have watched the disappointment on UB students’ and their families’ faces when they did not know a step in the college-going process. My childhood background emulates many of the UB families that I serve. Having a lifetime of experiences of learning how to navigate the college-going process and not always having the knowledge to get it right on the first try impacts me to this day. These personal and professional experiences enabled me to design and implement this study.
During this journey, I learned that the term “family” can be used toward people who share your bloodline, look like you, birthed you, and who share your last name. Participants of this study taught me that people can grow into family overnight. Learning that people’s home lives to which they were born not have to be their “know all and be all” was very impactful. Through this study, I learned that the UB population wants to achieve higher education but navigating the process can be overwhelming. The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) in this study told and showed me how much they love, care, and root for their student(s). This experience showed me that everyone’s voice is important, no matter the tone, dialect, accent, educational level, etc. I learned that sometimes I may need to exercise my voice for other voices to be heard. This study taught me to exercise patience when working on logistics. Also, I learned that no matter how much education someone earns, there will always be people needing the information that you have to overcome their circumstances.

Seeing that I am a UB alumna and was raised in a single-parent household, my viewpoint gives me a lens to interpret the findings in the way that the participants explained their individual stories. I had presumptions that more men were involved in the participants’ lives. I was wrong after interviewing 11 parent(s)/legal guardian(s) who/were heads of their households at any point. Since many of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) whom I serve have busy schedules, I had a presumption that personal contact would be difficult and that the importance might not be visible to all potential participants. Luckily, I was wrong again. All of the participants were delighted to participate in the study. I interpret these findings to mean that not everyone is given the opportunity to succeed from birth. The majority of people who identify as low income and/or first generation have experienced some form of trauma, no matter the age. It seems as though learning and understanding how to manage finances are truly taboo within the low-income
and/or first-generation community. I believe the media has a connection with how people may feel about themselves, feel about others, feel about their community, dreams, goals, etc. I also interpret the findings as the evidence what generational curses have imprinted into many households. The UB participants are in desperate need of internal/external support, financial resources, and college preparation resources in order to dismantle the negative teachings on education, employment, credit, careers, finances, property, and so on.

Lastly, I interpret the findings to mean that the participants are so focused on survival that basic life skills are being missed within many households. The findings suggest that the low-income and/or first-generation community can be very stuck in their ways, but they are open to supporting this new generation with wanting more and not repeating the cycle.

Family trauma was the finding that surprised me the most. Never could I have imagined that all 15 participants would have gone through some form of trauma that has heavily shaped and impacted their lives. The findings of this study are now a staple in my career. My goals of supporting, teaching, and evolving pre-college-age students became deepened. If I had the opportunity to conduct this study differently, I would seek out men participants only. This would bring out the voice of fathers, step-fathers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins, and so on faced with the college-going process in their family units.

**Conclusion**

The study exposed that family trauma can be deeply rooted into households without even being acknowledged regularly. Nearly, half of the participants experienced some form of abuse within their lifetime: alcohol, drug, physical, sexual, and verbal. Despite this harsh reality for many first-generation and/or low-income families, the students can find support through family
members, mentors, and programs to help them reach their educational goals. This study also revealed the mistrust that many low-income and/or first-generation parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have toward society and their students’ ability to manage within society. There is a direct correlation with the value system of the participants and the survival mode that they are in. Nearly all of the participants value family and education. They have been taught to love, honor, and protect “family,” either due to having a healthy/loving experience growing up or the complete opposite, and wanting to have their “own healthy family unit.”

Results from the study revealed how challenging life is/has been for the ten single-mother participants. Saving money for college is only a reality for two of the participants. Many of the participants survive off of subsidized housing, government assistance, low-wage jobs, and monetary loans. Finances are the primary stress, worry, and burden for this subgroup. Even the three parent(s)/legal guardian(s) who are single mothers and have higher education credentials have not been able to get ahead of the poverty line. No matter what goals and plans that this subgroup have set, they have not been able to obtain “the better life” they’ve hoped for. The financial circumstances for all of the low-income participants have made maintaining the bare necessities exhausting and the opportunity to have a savings account impossible. However, the hopes and dreams these mothers have for their children are impeccable. Some in a sense acknowledge their own lives are not/will not be where they intended, but they have greater hopes for their children to rise above what has been handed to them.

With many of the participants of color, the study revealed the injustice happening within the community through the school system. Participants expressed genuine support with navigating the college-going process did not become achievable until the DCC UB program was
put in place. All of the administrators at HPHS are Caucasian, there is one counselor who is of Latin descent, and the rest of the counseling/social work staff are Caucasian. Many of the participants of color articulated the need for patience and resources when it comes to servicing low-income and/or first-generation families, as this process is generally new for them.

The community cultural wealth model by Yosso is, in essence, the structure of the low-income and/or first-generation participants' lives in this study. Even with various forms of support, guidance, and structure, many low-income and/or first-generation students still fall victim to classism, covert racism, sexism, and academic deficiencies. It is these specific forms of oppression that lead “to self-doubt, survivor’s guilt, and impostor syndrome” (Yosso, 2006, p. 156). Even though the participants are intelligent, hardworking, strong in more ways than one, and have skills and abilities that keep food on their tables and clothes on their backs, they cannot seem to get ahead in life. In the Hinley Park community, having a great work ethic and positive attributes is still not enough; this population is still seen as less than by certain individuals in town who come from families that have degrees on their walls and thousands of dollars in their bank accounts. Even against the odds of the participants not being acknowledged, recognized, or celebrated, they still strive for more education.

This is the first study done on the Upward Bound program at Danielsville Community College; hopefully, it will not be the last. This study is significant because it gives a voice to staff, students, and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) who are normally overlooked. With this study, the participants’ voices have been heard loud and clear. They need help navigating the college-going process, their lives are not picture-perfect, but these are families are dedicated to each other. The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are also dedicated to supporting their students in making better
choices and having more options than they did. With the results of this study, the DCC UB staff will be able to effectively give families the support needed to navigate the college-going process. UB staff will provide families with a more narrowed focus when it comes to the college-going process with the procedures, services, and resources that will be implemented in our office.

To enhance similar studies, future research could inquire about the siblings of UB participants who are not a part of a UB program. The study could explore what the siblings are learning about the college-going process when UB information comes home. Future studies could include the exploration of siblings, why one is in the UB program and the other not. Other studies could include a comparison of the newly funded UB programs compared to the UB programs that are on their minimum third grant cycle. Future studies could also benefit from focus groups.
REFERENCES


Perna, L. W. (2015). Improving college access and completion for low-income and/or first-generation students: The role of college access and success programs. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/301


APPENDIX A

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR FAMILY MEMBERS
Individual Interview Protocol for Family Members

Individual Interview for Family Members- Introduction and Background Interview

Part 1: Review Informed Consent Document

1. Provide each family with the informed consent document (via email, mail and/or in-person) prior to meeting

2. During the meeting, explain to each family that we will discuss and review the document

3. Review topics of the individual interview
   a. Experiences growing up
   b. Current day to day life experiences
   c. Contribution to the college-going process
   d. Experience with the TRIO UB program
   e. Recommendations for the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program

4. Ask each family if they have any questions before the interview starts

5. Sign the consent document and give a copy to each family

Part 2: Open-Ended Questions Themes and Representative Questions:

Parents/Legal Guardians’ Experiences Growing Up

1. Tell me about how you grew up as a child.

2. What traditions were focused on in your home?

3. What expectations were communicated about education?

4. What did you know about the college-going process?

5. What was taught to you about college in the home you grew up in?
6. What is something about your family dynamic that you would be uncomfortable to share in a group?

Parents/Legal Guardians’ Day to Day Life Experience

1. Tell me what a typical day looks like for you?
2. What worries do you have on a daily basis?

What everyday struggles does your family face? Parents/Legal Guardians’ Contribution to the College-Going Process

1. How much time in a day do you have to devote to helping your student get to college?
   a. What do you wish you could give your student when it comes to helping them get to college?
2. How much money have you saved for your student’s college fund?
3. What are your fears about your student going to college?
4. What are you most excited about when it comes to college?
5. If your student were going to college next week, what do you think is missing in their preparation?

Parents/Legal Guardians’ TRIO UB Experience

1. Tell me your experience with the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program
   a. How has the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program helped your family?
2. What additional things would you like to see from the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program?
3. How involved are you in the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program?
a. How involved would you like to be in the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program?

4. What can I do to make the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program better?

Participant Questions

1. Are there questions you wish I had asked you about your experience with the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program?

2. Do you have any questions for me?

Part 3: Demographic Information

1. Race and Ethnicity

2. Gender Identity

3. Age; Birthdate

4. Highest Level of Education Completed

5. Family Income

6. Family Size

7. Occupation

Closing Remarks

1. Thank students and families for their involvement in the study

2. Communicate that further contact might if I need further clarification about a response

3. Communicate that I might be in contact for a follow-up study
APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDENTS/UB ALUMNI
Individual Interview Protocol for Students/UB Alumni

Individual Interview for Students- Introduction and Background Interview

Part 1: Review Informed Consent Document

1. Provide each student with the informed consent document (via email, mail and/or in-person) prior to meeting

2. During the meeting, explain to each student that we will discuss and review the document

3. Review topics of the individual interview
   a. Experiences growing up
   b. Current day to day life experiences
   c. Contribution to the college-going process
   d. Experience with the TRIO UB program
   e. Recommendations for the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program

4. Ask each student if they have any questions before the interview starts

5. Sign the consent document and give a copy to each student

Part 2: Open-Ended Questions Themes and Representative Questions:

Students’ Experiences Growing Up

1. Tell me about how it feels to grow up in your home.

2. What traditions are focused on, in your home?

3. What expectations have been communicated about education in your family?

4. What do you know about the college-going process?

5. What is being taught to you about college in your home?

6. What life lessons do you wish your family gave you before going to high school?
7. How prepared do you feel for college compared to your peers?
8. What is something about your family dynamic that you would be uncomfortable to share in a group?

Students’ Day to Day Life

1. Tell me what a typical day looks like for you?
2. What worries do you have on a daily basis?
3. What everyday struggles does your family face?

Students’ Contribution to the College-Going Process

1. How much time in a day do you have to devote to making sure you get to college?
   a. What do you wish you would have been taught when it comes to getting into college?
   b. How prepared do you feel for college when it comes to academics?
2. What more could you be doing to ensure you get to the college of your choice?
3. What are your fears about going to college?
4. What are you most excited about when it comes to college?
5. If you were going to college next week, what do you think is missing in your preparation?

Students’ TRIO UB Experience

1. Tell me your experience with the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program
   a. How has the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program helped you?
2. What additional things would you like to see from the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program?
3. How involved are you in the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program?
   a. How involved would you like to be in the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program?

4. What can I do to make the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program better?

Participant Questions

1. Are there questions you wish I had asked you about your experience with the Kishwaukee College TRIO UB program?

2. Do you have any questions for me?

Part 3: Demographic Information

1. Race and Ethnicity

2. Gender Identity

3. Age; Birthdate

4. Highest Level of Education Completed

5. Family Income

6. Family Size

7. Occupation

Closing Remarks

1. Thank students and families for their involvement in the study

2. Communicate that further contact might if I need further clarification about a response

3. Communicate that I might be in contact for a follow-up study
APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS
Dear DCC TRIO UB Families,

Hello, my name is Tashena Briggs- the Danielsville College Upward Bound Director. Many of you might not know that I am pursuing my Doctoral degree in education at Northern Illinois University. I am on track to complete in 2020 and have recently started the research phase. I have chosen to study the needs that Hinley Park High School students and their families have in supporting their Upward Bound student.

You are receiving this letter because you are a part of the Danielsville College Upward Bound Program at Hinley Park High School. The study will be a 60-minute interview about your experiences in Upward Bound and the college going process for your family. The face-to-face interview will take place at Danielsville College. All information provided will be kept private and your identity will only be known by the researcher.

I am hoping that the research I conduct can help assist the Danielsville College Upward Bound program in new initiatives to support you all on a larger scale. If you are willing and able I am requesting that you participate in optional interview or focus group.

I have attached a consent form that includes detailed information about the purpose of the study and participant expectations. Please read the consent form and contact me at tbriggs@kish.edu with any questions you may have. If you decide to join the study, please email or call me to schedule an interview. The consent form is required to be signed before we start the interview.

Sincerely,

Tashena Briggs- Director of TRIO Upward Bound
APPENDIX D

DOCUMENTS FOR ANALYSIS
August 20, 2019

Greetings UB Students & Families,

We are excited about the 2019-2020 academic year and all the opportunities UB has planned for the UB students! As our UB students start their freshman, sophomore, junior and senior years we want to remind you that college is getting closer! We want to encourage all UB students to strive for higher GPAs, Dual Credit classes and AP Classes! The UB staff is thrilled to provide tutoring at HPHS in room K131 four days a week (Monday-Thursday 3-5pm), starting on **Monday, September 16th, 2019**. There will also be snacks served!

We will be offering 14 SAT Prep courses this school year starting on **Tuesday, September 10th, 2019** from 3:00-4:00pm at HPHS in room N238. There will be SAT prep courses in reading, writing and math, one-two times a month until April 2020. Tutoring will take place at the regular time for students that want it. Remember that the activity bus leaves at 4:10pm Monday-Thursday if you need transportation home. Tutoring and SAT Prep will not take place on “early release days”, “no school days” and any emergency weather days).

UB is encouraging ALL (Freshman-Senior) of our UB students to participate in these FREE SAT Prep courses. Research shows the earlier that students prepare for the SAT test, the better chance they have of getting a higher test score. Research also shows that the higher the SAT score is, the more scholarship opportunities come available to students and their families. Which typically means less student loan debt and less financial responsibility for students and their families. SAT Prep is such a wonderful opportunity and we are happy that we can provide you this at NO COST! We hope that your family will take advantage of this.

In this welcome packet you will find, a tentative calendar of UB events planned for this school year, program and spring break requirements, college preparation check lists, grade check forms and an information update form.

UB Students, we are eager to start/continue your high school journey with you, and work towards successful admission to your college preference. We appreciate your participation in our program and hope that we see and hear more from you and your family. If you have any questions or concerns feel free to email or call an UB staff. Thank you!

Sincerely,

**Tashena Briggs**- Director of TRIO UB
2019-2020
UPWARD BOUND
SAT PREP SESSIONS
HPHS-N238

SEPTEMBER 10th & 25th
OCTOBER 8th & 23rd
NOVEMBER 5th & 20th
DECEMBER 3rd
JANUARY 14th & 29th
FEBRUARY 4th & 19th
MARCH 3rd & 18th
APRIL 1st
Welcome to TRIO First Generation Celebration

First Generation Student Celebration Day!

November 14
10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Student Lounge C1130

Join TRIO Student Support Services & TRIO Upward Bound in celebrating the First Generation Student! Learn what it means to be a first generation college student & enjoy a student panel featuring UB Alumni & current TRIO Students.

Schedule of Events:
• 10:00 am - 11:30 am | First Generation Tabling
• 12:00 pm - 12:30 pm | TRIO SSS Student Panel
• 12:30 pm - 1:00 pm | Guest Speaker

Raphael Mathis
Guest Speaker

After experiencing poetry in an 8th grade language arts class, Mathis was inspired to put his thoughts on paper & express himself through spoken word. Throughout High School, he participated in Speech Team, Poetry Out Loud, & the Louder Than A Bomb Spoken Word competition in Chicago. Mathis continued to express his passion in college by creating the “Poets Igniting Change” club that committed to providing a space for students to write & perform. Using Spoken Word to convey a message, Raphael looks to explore new platforms & share his gift with the world. He’s determined to help others discover their passions through spoken word & realize their potential.

Visit [link] for more information throughout this semester!
Upward Bound Presents:
FAFSA Night

What: Get assistance with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid= FAFSA

Who: UB Seniors and their parents/families

When: Hinley Park High School in the Media Center

Please RSVP by September 23rd, 2019

Bring your income tax information from tax year -2018.

Student & Parent needs to make a FAFSA ID.
You're Invited School Day Field Trip!

The National Hispanic College Fair Elgin, IL

Tuesday, October 1st, 2019

9:30am-12:30pm!

Representatives from many colleges & universities will be there. Open to ALL students!
TRIO UPWARD BOUND

JOIN US: NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE & TREE LIGHTS
AT MORTON ARBORETUM

DECEMBER 20, 2019
10:30A.M. - 7:00P.M.

PLEASE DRESS WARM!
Food and Transportation will be Provided!!!
College Preparation Checklist

An overview of essential college prep activities to plan for college throughout high school.

Freshmen Year

✓ Take challenging core (English, math, science, social studies) academic courses and possibly foreign language.

✓ Research and identify career fields of interest.

✓ Create a yearly schedule for meeting graduation requirements, including advanced courses if possible.

✓ Start a list of accomplishments and awards for your resume.

✓ Talk to your family, friends, and teachers/counselors about your future goals.

✓ Get involved with 1-2 sports clubs that you are interested in.

✓ Volunteer at a place of interest.

Sophomore Year

✓ Job shadow professionals in your fields of interest.

✓ Explore career opportunities and earning potential.

✓ Research scholarships, grants, loans, other types of college funding.

✓ Find practice SAT material for college admission.

✓ Start browsing college websites.
✓ Stay involved in sports/clubs and consider taking a leadership role.

✓ Continue to volunteer and taking rigorous core courses.

**Junior Year**

✓ Continue taking rigorous courses.

✓ Talk to current college students about school.

✓ Attend college visits online or in person.

✓ Make a list of colleges you would like to attend and take college visits.

✓ Identify scholarship opportunities and application deadlines.

✓ Take the PSAT and register for the SAT.

✓ Junior year is often known as the most challenging year of high school. Make time to do things you enjoy and take care of your mental wellness.

✓ Consider summer school if possible to get graduation requirements out of the way (government, economics)

**Senior Year**

✓ Continue taking rigorous courses and courses related to your field of interest.

✓ Apply for Federal Student Aid PIN and FAFSA.

✓ Submit college and scholarship applications.

✓ Consider college acceptances and compare financial aid packages offered.
✓ Request transcripts to be sent to colleges.

✓ Ask for letters of recommendation, if needed, two weeks in advance. Provide thank you cards afterward.

✓ Choose college and financial aid options and inform all colleges of school choices.

**Getting organized your SENIOR YEAR!**

1. Keep separate folders for each internship/college/technical career you research.
2. Keep copies of test score reports, grades, applications, and essays for your records.
3. Read web sites carefully and thoroughly, paying attention to all details.
4. Know your GPA (Grade Point Average), SAT score, class rank, and graduation date.
5. Pay attention to college and scholarship deadlines.

**What are colleges looking for in applicants?**

- High achieving grades
- Rigor of curriculum: how tough were the courses you took
- Standardized test scores
- Application essays
- Class rank
- Extracurricular activities, athletics, and summer experiences
- Community service
- Work and entrepreneurial experiences
- Recommendations from teachers, counselors, support staff, etc.
- Interview skills
- Level of interest and potential fit
- Other factors such as: diversity, legacy, or ability to overcome obstacles

**How to Find Affordable College Options**

As of October 2011, all colleges have been mandated to include a "Net Price Calculator" on their websites. This calculator allows families to enter some of their financial information and will give a (hopefully) accurate estimate of what the net cost of attendance will be. This can be done
BEFORE a family even considers applying to the school and getting emotionally attached. Often, they might find that schools they would have thought were too expensive (sticker price) are actually very affordable (net price). Anyone can try out these calculators by visiting each of the college's website at any time.

Senior Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUGUST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Review your career plans and decide which type of school is right for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Visit many college campuses, ask questions, and research academic programs while on site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Narrow your college list to 4-6 schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Request catalogs and admissions information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Begin to gather the information needed for applications - including teacher recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Contact your high school counselor for registration materials and test dates for the SAT and/or ACT.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Continue to develop your resume for employment or educational experiences. Here is the chance for you to sell yourself - list your achievements, honors, activities, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Check the Internet, library scholarship books, and student services office for scholarships you may qualify for.</td>
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<th>SEPTEMBER</th>
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<tr>
<td>● Meet with admissions representatives who are visiting your school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Make a list of test names, dates, fees, registration deadlines, and deadlines for college admissions and financial aid applications.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Apply to colleges on-line and start sending your college applications.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Make copies of all applications and other materials sent to colleges for your files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Apply to several schools, including &quot;dream&quot; schools and &quot;safety&quot; schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Begin asking teachers, counselors, and employers for letters of recommendation to include with your admissions and/or scholarship applications if they are required. Give each person at least a month to write the recommendation; don't forget to write thank-you notes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Start gathering the information needed for applications - including teacher recommendations.
- Applications - don't wait until the final deadline - Make copies of all applications and other materials sent to colleges for your files. Apply Early.

### OCTOBER

- Submit your completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon after October 1 as possible.
- Applications - don't wait until the final deadline - Make copies of all applications and other materials sent to colleges for your files. Apply Early.
- Take the SAT or ACT exam again, if necessary and have your scores sent by Testing agency.
- Deadlines for colleges vary, be sure to make note of deadlines for each college you are applying to.
- Some college applications require an essay. Develop an outline and ask your English teacher for assistance.
- Visit your top school choices. Interview some students & faculty. (see Questions to ask during a college visit)
- Attend special programs such as college fairs and financial aid nights.
- Look and listen for announcements about scholarships in school bulletins (ask counselor where these are located to apply, Naviance, website, etc.), local newspapers and use scholarship databases available in the counseling office.
- Find out which financial aid applications your college choices require and when the forms are due.
- Some private universities may require that you register for CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE at this time. (This determines your qualification for private school aid.)

### NOVEMBER

- Complete your applications as soon as possible. Do not wait for test scores. NOTE DEADLINES
- Check with the colleges to find out when materials must be postmarked.

### DECEMBER
• Apply for outside funding or scholarships.

• File your last college applications. Make sure to also submit official high school transcripts and test scores

• Make sure your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is completed online if you have not already done so.

• Ask your parents to save their year-end payroll stub if it shows your earnings for the year. You may need it for financial aid eligibility reviews by schools.

JANUARY

• Don't fall prey to "Senioritis!" All college acceptances are provisional - contingent upon the maintenance of your present level of achievement plus successful completion of this semester's work.

• Make sure your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is completed online if you have not already done so.

• PARENTS: It’s helpful to get your income tax returns prepared early – schools may request them to prove eligibility for financial aid.

FEBRUARY

• Mans 18 years of age and over must register for the Selective Service in order to receive federal financial aid

• Check to see if your mid-year transcripts have been sent to the schools to which you have applied.

• Make sure your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is completed online if you have not already done so.

• Research taking Advanced Placement (AP) or College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams.

• Rank your finalized list of colleges

• KEEP COPIES OF ALL FORMS YOU SUBMIT.

MARCH

• Look for your Student Aid Report (SAR) in the mail. Your SAR contains federal financial aid information.
• Submit SAR and tax forms to the financial aid office if requested. Contact each office to make certain that your application is complete. Find out what else you need to do to establish and maintain your eligibility for financial aid.

• Look for Pell Grant program information in your Student Aid Report.

• Keep copies of all forms you submit to the financial aid office.

• If you have not received your Student Aid Report four weeks after sending in your FAFSA, contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center.

• Be on the lookout for scholarship award letters.

APRIL

• Closely review the SAR (Student Aid Report) that you received in the mail and make any necessary corrections.

• Watch the mail for college acceptance and financial aid award letters. Compare the financial aid awards you receive.

• Evaluate your options, make your final college selection and send in a deposit by the deadline.

• Check with the college you’ve chosen about the details of signing and returning financial aid award letters.

• Notify the other schools that you will not be attending.

• Watch for important deadlines at your chosen college (housing, financial aid, etc.).

MAY

• Make sure that you accept the financial aid award from the college you decide to attend. You should decline offers from the other schools so those funds can be made available to other students.

• Review your financial aid award letters. If you have any questions, call or write the financial aid office of the individual colleges.

• Watch for important deadlines at your college of choice (housing, financial aid, etc.).

• Clear all senior obligations with the guidance counselor.

• Notify your counselor of any awards or scholarships (academic, artistic, athletic, and dramatic, etc.) that you receive.

• Take Advanced Placement (AP) exams that are given in high schools nationwide.

• Don't forget to study for final exams; the grades you receive will still count.
**JUNE/JULY**

- **Graduation!!!**
- Finalize summer school or summer job plans.
- Write thank you notes for any scholarships you've received and for all graduation gifts.
- If needed, you should apply for a Stafford Loan.
- If needed, your parents should apply for a PLUS loan; find out your school's PLUS application deadlines and other requirements. This is not an ideal loan as it must start repayment after 60 days.
- Stafford borrowers may also complete their required entrance interview online.

**AUGUST**

- Buy the things you need for college gradually over the summer, avoid last-minute, expensive buying decisions.
- Meet your roommates
- Do not miss your freshman orientation dates. - You may not be able to register for class until you attend.
- Pack for college. Google for a “College Packing List”
- Research Professional organizations on camps that fit your major field of study. This is a great way to meet new people and professors on campus.
- Begin your first semester at college.
- Seek out all possible student services to help you with the transition into your first year.

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**Upward Bound - October 2019**

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|        |         | 1 National Hispanic College Fair
         | 9am-12:30pm | 2        | 3       | 4       | 5       |
| 6      | 7       | 8 SAT Prep 3-5pm N238 | 9 Financial Aid Night @HPHS- Media Center | 10 | 11 | 12 |
December 20, 2019

Greetings UB Students & Families,

There will be a Course Selection and AP course fair the weeks of January 13th and 20th, 2020 at HPHS during flex time. We highly recommended that you attend this fair & learn more about the AP courses that are being offered at HPHS.

For Parents/Guardians, there will be an evening presentation on Monday, January 13th, 202 beginning at 6:30 pm in the auditorium. There will be presentations on:

- Dual Credit Classes with DC
- Presentation for Freshmen (Class of 2023) will be in the Forum Room
- Presentations for Sophomores (2022) and Juniors (2021) will be in the auditorium
- There will be Spanish speakers and interpreters in both sessions.

AP courses provide a lot of BENEFITS and also look GREAT ON A COLLEGE APPLICATION!! Be sure to check your email account and the enclosed flyer for information detailing the many Pros of taking AP courses. Advanced Placement (AP) is a program in the United States and Canada created by the College Board which offers college-level curricula and examinations to high school students. American colleges and universities may grant placement and course credit to students who obtain high scores on the examinations.

At most colleges, you receive college class credit for AP Exam scores of 3, 4 or 5 (exams are scored from 1-5). This credit often goes towards introductory-level college courses in the same subject as the AP class.

If you take AP classes in high school and test well on the exams, you could save some substantial cash. In its most recent survey of college pricing, The College Board reports that a "moderate" college budget for an in-state public college for the 2013–2014 academic year averaged $22,826. A moderate budget at a private college averaged $44,750. If you get college credit for five AP classes, you can do the math. You will have the potential to graduate early from college and will save thousands of tuition dollars.

AP courses are for any student who is academically prepared and motivated to take college-level courses. You don’t have to be at the top of your class to take AP courses; however, you do need to be prepared. If you have a high interest in a particular subject matter and are also willing to put in the extra commitment, you can be successful in AP courses. Aligning with strong teacher and parental support for a greater impact on student success in AP courses. Please take advantage of this great opportunity. Let us know if you have any questions!

Sincerely,

Tashena Briggs- Director of TRIO UB
FINDING MY WAY
“A must have book for any incoming college student.”
- Lucas M. Davis
CEO at Campuspeak

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO COLLEGE SUCCESS
Proven techniques and strategies revealed

by Jahquan C. Hawkins
APPENDIX E

COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST
This is a guide to help you track what colleges/universities you are interested in. Tips:
- Check college/university websites to help with your college search
- Call admissions offices to get specific information you’re looking for
- Check college/university Facebook, Instagram & Snapchat accounts to see what student life is like

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