The Implementation of Student Success Coaches at Augusta Technical College to Foster the Development of Diverse and Competent Nurses

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Abstract

This project explores the implementation of Student Success Coaches at Augusta Technical College (Augusta Tech) and their potential impact on overall program completion rates and diverse student program completion. Framed within the GROW model and Sociocultural Learning Theory, the project aims to determine if coaching interventions address barriers to completion and foster a supportive learning environment. A mixed-methods exploratory approach was employed, combining quantitative measures such as retention rates and demographics with qualitative methods like surveys and focus groups. Anticipated results suggest an increase in overall completion rates and an increase in diverse student completion. However, limitations exist, including potential confounding variables and the subjective nature of qualitative data that may affect the validity and generalizability of the results. Still, the anticipated findings show that Student Success Coaches have the potential to advance health equity and workforce diversity, aligning with the national initiative of the Future of Nursing 2030 report. Thus, securing funding through the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act's federal grant could provide essential resources for sustaining coaching initiatives, ensuring their long-term impact on nursing education and practice.
Keywords: Student Success Coach, retention, coaching, diversity

Introduction

Student Success Coaches are faculty members dedicated to creating more equitable, personalized, and engaging learning environments (AmeriCorps, 2021). They offer mentoring services, emotional support, and aid in finding financial and academic resources. According to Carter et al. (2022), these adjunct faculty members contribute to **improved academic success, increased retention rates, and overall holistic student growth**. These are common issues identified at Augusta Technical College (2024) with student completion at 46.87% in 2021 and only a 13.6% completion rate for students of color that year. This initiative aligns with the goals outlined in the Future of Nursing 2030 report, emphasizing the removal of barriers, recognition of nurse contributions, preparation of nurses to advance equity, and the diversification of the workforce (NASEM, 2021). Therefore, this is a relevant proposal that is recognized nationally.

Hypothesis

The implementation of Student Success Coaches at Augusta Technical College will improve overall program completion rates and increase diverse (non-white) student program completion within one academic year.

Literature Review

The literature on Student Success Coaching in higher education highlights key themes, including successful initiatives like the Realizing Educational Attainment and Careers in Healthcare (REACH) project to address barriers for diverse students, leading to **higher graduation rates and increased workforce diversity** (Kruse et al., 2020). Similar programs stress holistic approaches to enhance nursing workforce diversity and resolve health inequities (Noone et al., 2020), while tailored support, such as academic coaching and scholarships, **assists disadvantaged nursing students** (Connelly et al., 2019). Coaching programs in community colleges show a significant relationship between coaching factors and student completion (Pechat & Slantcheva-Durst, 2019). Qualitative analysis emphasizes the critical role of coaches in **forming personal connections**, offering encouragement, and guiding academic and career goals (Valentine & Price, 2023).

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Gaps

- The need to explore **the long-term impacts** of coaching programs beyond graduation and to compare different coaching models and strategies in diverse contexts
- A call for **more quantitative analyses** to assess the scalability and generalizability of coaching interventions across institutions and student populations.

Methods

Theoretical Framework
- The **GROW model's** emphasis on goal setting, reality exploration, options generation, and commitment to action aligns with the coaching process implemented in the study (Whitmore, 2019). By beginning coaching sessions with a focus on clarifying goals and understanding the current reality of students, coaches can guide them toward identifying options and committing to actionable steps that align with their talents and preferences. This structured approach ensures that coaching interventions are tailored to the individual needs and circumstances of each student, facilitating progress toward academic and personal goals.
- The **Sociocultural Learning Theory** values the importance of providing students with the necessary support and coaching to navigate challenges and develop independence (Billings & Halstead, 2020, p. 254).

By incorporating these theories into the study design, researchers can assess the impact of coaching on student outcomes while also considering the socio-cultural context in which learning occurs.

(Whitmore, 2019)
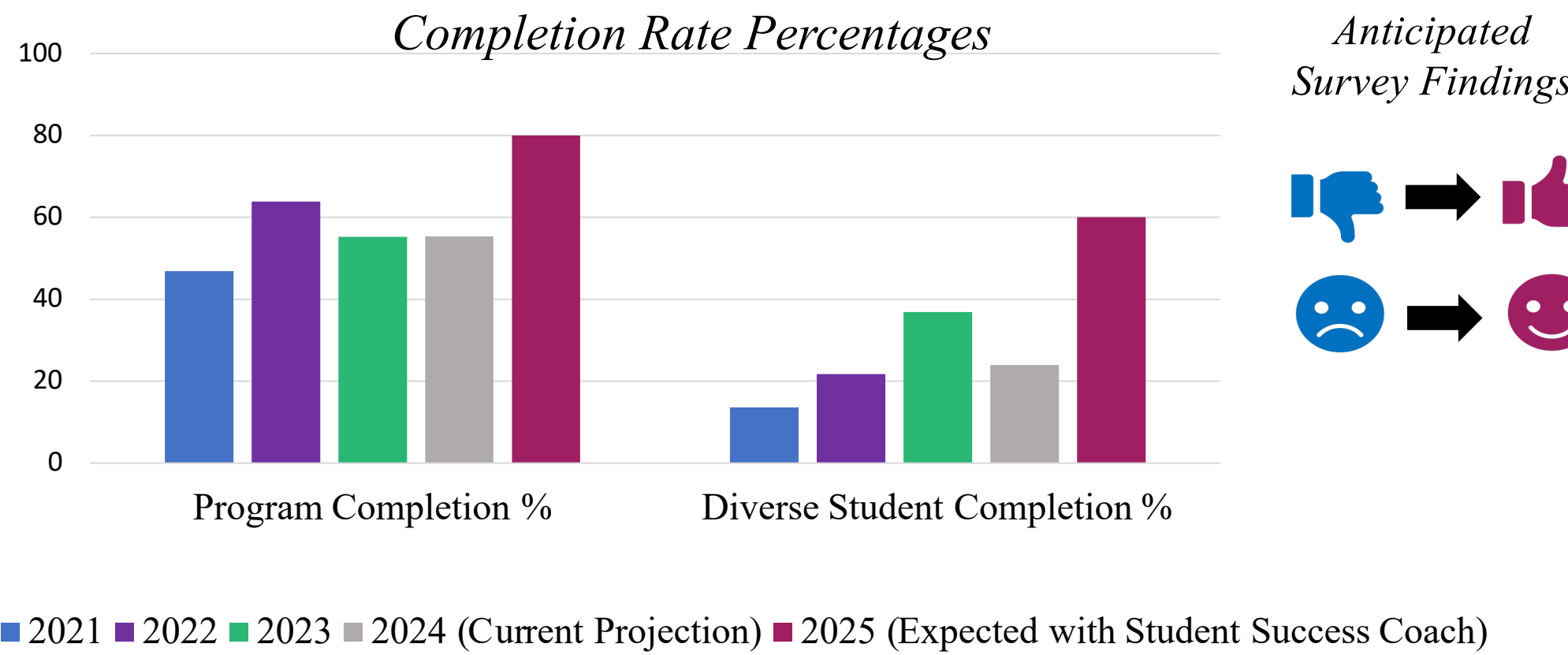
Design: A Mixed-Methods Exploratory Approach
- **Quantitative measures**, such as tracking student retention rates, demographics, academic performance, and graduation rates, can provide objective indicators of success.
- **Qualitative methods**, such as surveys or focus groups, can gather feedback from students about their experiences with coaching and the perceived impact on their academic and personal development.

Ethical Considerations: IRB approval from Fort Hays State University and Augusta Tech will be obtained before implementation and any data collection/sharing will adhere to guidelines set by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Anticipated Results

The average completion rate at Augusta Technical College in the past three years was 55.34% ($M = 55.34$, $SD = 4.91$) with only a 24.05% completion rate for students of color ($M = 24.05$, $SD = 6.82$).

- Based on current research, successful implementation should **increase overall completion rates to 80-90%** (Noone et al., 2020; Kruse et al., 2020; Connelly et al., 2019).
- Research also shows that Student Success Coaches should help limit health inequity and **improve diversity in the workforce by 60-88%** (Noone et al., 2020; Connelly et al., 2019).
- Similarly, qualitative survey results should show **enhanced student engagement and satisfaction** (Valentine & Price, 2023).

Completion Rate Percentages

Anticipated Survey Findings

- 2021
- 2022
- 2023
- 2024 (Current Projection)
- 2025 (Expected with Student Success Coach)

Conclusion

The implementation of Student Success Coaches at Augusta Technical College holds significant promise for **improving overall program completion rates** and **increasing diverse student program completion**, aligning with national initiatives outlined in the Future of Nursing 2030 report. However, this study is not without limitations. The reliability and validity of the study may be affected by potential **confounding variables** and the **subjective nature** of qualitative data. Furthermore, although the anticipated results are based on current research, they may not fully account for unforeseen factors that could influence the project's outcomes. Still, the nursing implications are substantial. By addressing barriers to completion and fostering a supportive learning environment, Student Success Coaching can not only **improve academic success** but also **contribute to the diversification of the nursing workforce and the advancement of health equity**.

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Securing funding through the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act's federal grant could provide vital resources for the development and implementation of these coaching programs, ensuring sustainability and scalability of the project. The primary use of **Perkins funds** are to develop, coordinate, implement, or improve career and technical education programs (Georgia DOE, 2021). By investing in initiatives that prioritize student success and workforce diversity, Augusta Technical College can play an essential role in **shaping the future of nursing education and practice**.
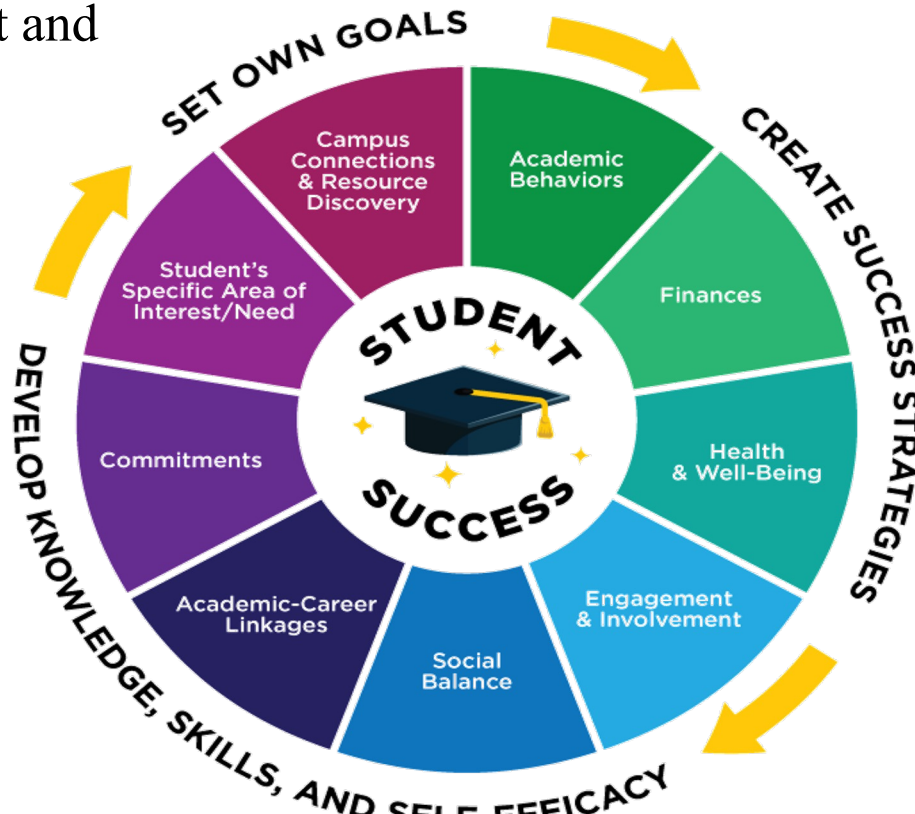
(Valentine & Price, 2023)

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