

ACADEMIC WELLNESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS: STUDENT
EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE STUDENT
SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM AT CALIFORNIA
STATE UNIVERSITY, STANISLAUS

A Dissertation Proposal Presented to the Faculty
of
California State University, Stanislaus

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

By
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April 2014

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, brother, and son. I had and continue to have their support and guidance; they help to motivate me. Their support, encouragement, and constant love have sustained me throughout my life and educational career.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Riggs, who is both inspiring to students, and dedicated to student success. You are amazing! In particular, I greatly appreciate your guidance, support, and commitment to help me excel. During the development and planning of this research project you generously gave up your time, and maintained a positive outlook.

Also, I want to thank my other committee members, Dr. Sayers and Dr. Powell, who were always eager to help and offer their expert advice. I also would like to acknowledge the Ed.D. faculty and guest lecturers of Cohort Four; you rock! A special thank you to my Cohort Four buddies as well; we did it! Assistance from Institutional Research staff and the Student Support Services program staff was a great help with data collection; I appreciate your assistance. Finally, I wish to recognize the love and support from my dad, son, brother, close friends, church family, and the almighty God. The last three years were challenging, rewarding, and enlightening, all at the same time. My appreciation of my recent educational achievement is summed up with an excerpt of a poem:

Education

You want to be in a gang
And shoot up everything with a bang
You say they'll have your back
But education is what you lack
Education is the key to life
And not getting stabbed with a knife
Education will lead you to great heights

And not to everyday fights
Education will help you excel
Not lead you to a county jail
You won't find yourself doing ten
In any county pen
Or being charged with first degree murder
In a court of order
And as your family wail
You're getting life without bail
Be in a gang and stay there for keeps
You'll find yourself underground six feet deep
So instead of being laid to rest
Get an education and be the best.

Norena M. Jones

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the Student Support Services (SSS) program college students' perceptions of services, identify the wellness components associated with the services, and determine their relationship to student success. Two conceptual frameworks guided this study. The first was Hettler's *Six Dimensions of Wellness*; these include social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical, and occupational dimensions. The other conceptual framework, *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model*, was created by this researcher by bearing in mind the social, emotional, and intellectual wellness components as part of academic support services that may influence student success. The results of this study exposed the importance of providing students with quality academic support that lend itself to some wellness components. Particularly, intellectual wellness seems to be embedded within all SSS services, and is thought to contribute to a positive college experience for SSS students. The top SSS services that students tended to use were academic advising, the computer lab, and workshops. The study also supported the general need for additional research, including conducting the same study to the campus population with similar demographics to determine GPA, retention, and years to graduate. Engagement opportunities were also noted as contributing to student success. Overall, academic wellness may help students reach their academic goals because it may help them to be more comfortable with their academic responsibilities and goals.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Academic wellness may be an indicator of student achievement in higher education. For instance, students who are good managers of stress are more likely to do well in college (Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005). Stress includes factors such as academic preparedness, the lack of social support, and low self-esteem (Negga, Applewhite, & Livingston, 2007). Other factors that may lead to stress include adjusting to college, financial challenges, and anxiety (Ratanasiripong, Sverduk, Hayashino & Prince, 2010). Students who do not demonstrate the ability to cope with stress may not do well in college and their academic well-being is jeopardized. Therefore, it is essential that colleges and universities provide services support for the academic wellness of their students.

Academic wellness may lend itself to academic success. Without it college students may find difficulty in overcoming issues that affect their academic performance. Some concerns that many college students face include (1) uncertainty about what to expect from college and its rewards; (2) transition and adjustment problems; (3) financial difficulties; and (4) academic under-preparedness (Kalsner, 1991). Students who attend colleges and universities may also estimate their academic success by their perceptions of their first-semester experiences. Goal setting, academic advising, stress, and institutional fit may be early indicators of

student success, and student perception should be assessed regularly (Thompson, Orr, Thompson, & Grover, 2007).

As mentioned, adjustment is a challenge for college and university students, and is a stress factor that may negatively influence academic wellness and student success. Forbus, Newbold, and Mehta (2011) investigated nontraditional students with regard to demographics, attitudes, behaviors and outcomes, including grade point average (GPA), stress levels, and coping strategies. Nontraditional students are characterized by several factors that may interfere with their academic success. Factors include delaying college enrollment after high school graduation, working more than thirty-five hours per week, having children or family members to take care of, or single parent challenges (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Forbus et al. recognized that nontraditional students experience different levels of motivation, campus involvement, and participation in social activities than their traditional student counterparts, which related to time management concerns. Their findings identified different levels of stress and coping methods between the groups of nontraditional and traditional students.

Academic wellness is supported by a myriad of services to assist students with academic goals, including study skills, test-taking strategies, academic advising, peer mentoring, and tutoring. Academic wellness may also be connected to student circumstances. After considering nontraditional characteristics, one may conclude that time management and disposition may be stress factors for nontraditional

students. It seems that special challenges and barriers experienced by nontraditional students could very well interfere with student success.

Though time management and disposition may impact student success, a student's socioeconomic status may also influence his or her well-being. Rural and farming areas tend to have more poverty stricken areas compared to urban communities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Socioeconomic status can be used to describe one's social standing, and is signified by income, level of education, and profession (American Psychological Association, 2013). The social transition in a 4-year university setting can be overwhelming for students. For example, students who live in a household where neither parent possesses a 4-year degree may not know or understand university requirements and faculty expectations. These first-generation college students may need services to help them along the academic pathway.

Academic success, including retention and graduation, is affected by many variables. Social skills, academic preparedness, self-esteem, college adjustment, financial stability, and apprehension are some considerations for colleges and universities to address (Astin, 1977). Wellness services and programs are ideal for assisting students with concerns that may interfere with their academic goals (Kauffman & Creamer, 1991).

Problem Statement

Coping with or adjusting to college can be a real challenge, not only for underserved students but also for educators who are trying to serve this population. A better understanding of academic challenges as college students perceive them is

deserved. This researcher was interested in connecting academic wellness and student success. The current research project examined how a public, 4-year institution, California State University (CSU), Stanislaus, attempts to address student success with academic wellness programs that are offered through the federally funded Student Support Service (SSS) program. The Student Support Services program provides academic assistance to qualified students with a goal of increasing the number of students who stay in school and graduate. More discussion of the Student Support Services program will be found in the background section of this chapter. Chapter II will provide an in- depth explanation of SSS services and the academic wellness influences on student success.

Many 4-year public universities also face constant challenges that could affect graduation rates: tuition increases, reduced faculty, and less course offerings are a few concerns. For students, such measures may also have negative consequences regarding their academic goals that finally lead to them “stopping out” or dropping out of college. Stopping out and dropping out are similar, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. However, stopping out is more widely used in higher education and usually thought to be temporary as opposed to dropping out, which is considered a permanent departure (Phinney & Hass, 2003).

Departure is the academic term for stopping or dropping out. Tinto was recognized for his theory of three sources of student departure described by Brunsten and his associates (Brunsten, Davies, & Bracken 2000): (1) academic difficulties; (2) the inability of an individual to resolve his or her educational and occupational goals;

and (3) failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life of the institution. Other educational experts define departure as a process of disengagement from school and learning that occurs over many years (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). Christenson and Thurlow state that it is an indicator to measure student success in and out of the classroom. The impact is the same no matter which definition is used: students are dismissing their higher educational goals.

A 2009 self-study, performance-based report found that CSU Stanislaus effectively had higher graduation rates for students attending undergraduate institutions who utilize the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). The CLA is a university-wide performance assessment designed to test the quality of institutional programs and to recommend necessary improvements. The higher graduation rates included underserved minorities. The university had a 4-year graduation rate of 72% and a 6-year graduation rate of 96% for cohorts 2007-08 and 2006-07, respectively (California State University, Stanislaus, 2009). Furthermore, the report suggested that engaging students in campus life and guiding them to attentively work on meeting graduation requirements are key benefits and significantly increase retention. Highlights from the report indicated that students, who have this kind of support, tend to perform better than students who do not. In particular underserved students, or students who have academic, financial, or social concerns, benefit more.

Reduced likelihood of student departure may be attributed to academic wellness. It is possible that underserved students can be helped more by offering services that target college adjustment or coping concerns recognized by students.

Underserved students are those students who may have academic, financial, or social concerns that could interfere with academic success. Colleges and universities can utilize academic wellness to promote student success. Perhaps establishing a campus-wide academic wellness environment for students will further support the commitment, expectations, and learning behaviors at institutions. To start the process of academic wellness, a better understanding of the following questions should be considered: (1) Which support services tend to attract students? (2) How often do students utilize services? (3) What do students think about using the services? (4) How do the services benefit them? and (5) What are the wellness components of the services?

This researcher hoped to gain more understanding of these questions from student feedback. Surveys, interviews, and composite data of underserved SSS students were used to pinpoint critical ideas that could lead to connections between academic awareness and student success. Two-hundred and fifty SSS students would be invited to take a survey that included the above questions. Students who were freshmen, transfer students, or soon to be graduates would be invited to complete the survey via Qualtrics Online Software. Four selected SSS survey participants would be interviewed. While a good representation of SSS students were expected to complete the survey, interviews would be conducted to provide more insight to the benefits of SSS services.

Background of the Research Project

The California State University System and Student Affairs

The California State University system is the most diverse system in the United States, providing higher education to 437,000 students (California State University, 2013). The 23-campus California State University system admits about one third of California high school graduates (California State University - Student Academic Support, 2013). Part of the CSU system's mission is to provide academic support to contribute to student success and the quality of students' experiences. To support the CSU mission of retention and graduation, the Student Affairs division was developed to manage these types of programs at CSU campuses. The Student Affairs division creates initiatives that promote the well-being of students, including academic success, collegiality, and the promotion of a diverse student population (California State University, 2013). The Student Affairs division goals are to embrace student learning, development, and academic achievement.

California State University Stanislaus

CSU Stanislaus was established in 1960, and is one of the 23 CSU campuses. The University serves six counties: Mariposa, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Merced, San Joaquin and Stanislaus, and is located in an agriculturally rich, rural area. The Northern San Joaquin Valley (NSJV) is comprised of Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties. Most students who attend CSU Stanislaus come from the three named counties. Many NSJV residents hold seasonal, low-paying agricultural, service, and merchandizing jobs, and are encouraging their children to earn a

baccalaureate degree so they will be prepared for better paying jobs. Residents who face challenges that include career, educational, and financial concerns, may be at a disadvantage because of their need of assistance to offset their challenges.

Underserved populations are the majority in the NSJV counties: 65% in Merced, 54.50% in San Joaquin, and 53% in Stanislaus (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). For Fall 2010, CSU Stanislaus' full time equivalent students (FTES) enrollment was 6,726.53 compared to 6,607.7 FTES in 2009 (California State University, Stanislaus, 2013). Likewise, 40.8% of students enrolled at CSU Stanislaus in 2010 were identified as underserved, compared to 35.98% in 2009. Clearly the data show a growing number of enrolled students at CSU Stanislaus are underserved. The conclusion is that more people want to earn a 4-year degree, and more of these students are underserved. The target population may have social concerns that may interfere with their academic wellness and student success.

The Student Support Services program (SSS) includes a number of wellness components that promote student success. It is likely the wellness characteristics and services from SSS can assist students with challenging course requirements, including math based and high unit majors. The wellness components are derived from Hettler's *Six Dimensions of Wellness*. The dimensions are identified as intellectual, occupational, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual (National Wellness Institute, 2013), and were used as one of two conceptual frameworks for the research project.

TRiO

As a result of the Higher Education Act of 1965, federal money was given to institutions to strengthen educational resources and financially assist students (Federal Policy, 2013). Similarly, the Higher Education Act of 1965 also funded TRiO and other academic support programs to encourage students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds to pursue higher education (U.S. Department of Education, 2013a). Originally TRiO was comprised of three federally funded grants to assist students with student success. TRiO currently has eight student services programs: Educational Opportunity Centers, Ronald McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement, Talent Search, Training Program for Federal TRiO Programs Staff, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, Veterans Upward Bound, and Student Support Services (U.S. Department of Education - TRiO, 2013b).

Student Support Services Program

SSS is a Title IV project (Student Support Services, 2013a) and must follow federal guidelines written by the United States Department of Education. Students must qualify for SSS to take advantage of the academic services. Students must be enrolled in or admitted to a TRiO funded college or university; be low income who are first generation in higher education; or have a disability for consideration to the program.

The Student Support Services program offers a number of enrichment services to help students with their academic goals. These include assistance with graduation requirements, academic development, and life skills strategies (Student Support

Services, 2013a). Tutoring, first-year experience courses, personalized academic advising, peer mentoring, financial literacy, and assistance with federal and other higher education funding programs are some services available to SSS students.

Several California State University campuses, including Humboldt State University, CSU San Marcos, and CSU Stanislaus offer Student Support Services programs.

Some Characteristics of SSS Students and SSS Assistance

Many SSS students seek assistance in several academic areas, including note-taking tips, time management, oral communication, math skills, English, reading and writing skills, exam preparations, and career guidance. Students may find themselves at a loss in higher education. For this reason, motivation and skill enhancement are keys to overcoming academic challenges. Student Support Services helps by changing the student's attitude toward learning, encouraging academic development, and addressing educational challenges students face.

An example of how SSS helps to change the mindset of students is by providing opportunities for students to learn ways to cope with obligations and expectations in higher education. Academic advisors and peer mentors engage with SSS students by cultivating trusting relationships. Engagement opportunities are important because they empower students to get involved in their own education, enabling students to become motivated about their learning process. As students continue to participate in SSS, they realize their academic potential can develop in and out of the classroom. Engagement sets a new bar for learning.

Stress is a concern for students of the SSS program. Stress includes factors such as academic preparedness, lack of social support, and low self-esteem (Wilks, 2008). Other factors leading to stress include college adjustment, financial challenges, and anxiety (Ratanasiripong, Sverduk, Hayashino & Prince, 2010). Students who do not demonstrate the ability to cope with stress may not do well in college. Therefore, it is essential for students to feel they can be successful, and to believe they can get past their challenges. Otherwise, students will feel defeated, and barriers may get in the way of their academic goals. Student Support Services provides a number of life-skills workshops, including financial literacy and stress management, to empower students.

Nature of the Study

Limited research has been completed that studies wellness-related services and programs that may impact student success. One of the purposes of this research project was to determine SSS students' perceptions of wellness programs and student success. The research questions asked the following:

1. What SSS services do SSS students use?
2. How often are SSS services used?
3. What are the perceptions from SSS students regarding their usage of SSS?
4. What are the perceptions from SSS students regarding the benefits of SSS?
5. What are the wellness components of SSS services?

The data for this research project came from five different sources. First, archival data from CSU Stanislaus and the SSS program was collected and analyzed.

Program usage and demographics were investigated. Secondly, quantitative analysis was conducted using surveys to determine baseline data from SSS students. The resulting baseline data were used to get a better idea of popular SSS services that are useful to students, including how often students use the services. Data collected from health and wellness experts is the third data source to assign appropriate wellness dimensions to SSS services. Fourth, qualitative analysis was derived from interviewing a group of purposefully selected students who participated in the survey. The purpose of the interview was to gather testimonials of SSS students regarding SSS services and how SSS helped them to succeed in higher education. Finally, a composite analysis of archival, surveys, and interview data provided this researcher with a bigger picture of student views concerning the SSS program.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework of this research project included Hettler's *Six Components of Wellness* (intellectual, occupational, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual) as they relate to academic wellness or student success (National Wellness Institute, 2013). The perceptions of SSS students regarding student success were also explored. This researcher used these data to match wellness dimensions significant to the SSS services students often use.

Through the lens of wellness, *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model*, developed by this researcher, was used to determine factors that influence student success. This model suggests certain academic characteristics may be associated with how students value their educational experience. The model was used to compare

SSS student self-identified needs to wellness dimensions. A self-identified needs assessment, survey and interview with SSS participants revealed perceptions of students targeted in this research project.

The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model

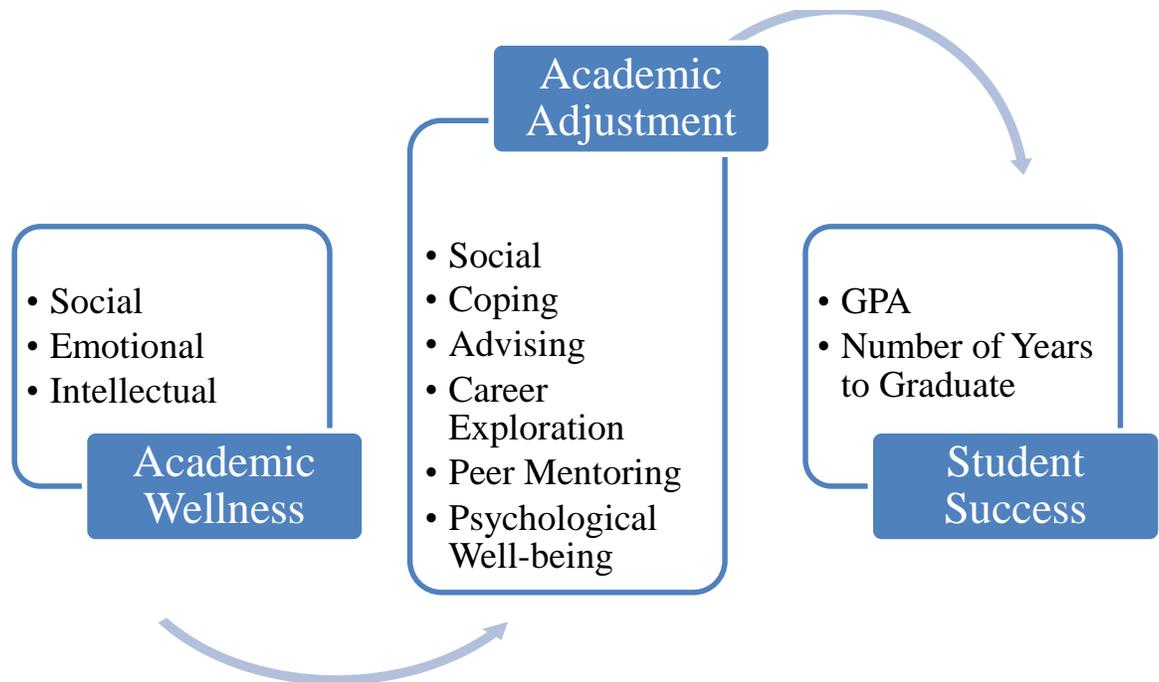


Figure 1.

The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model illustrates some characteristics of academic wellness services. The theory also categorizes some influences of academic wellness and academic adjustment that may lead to student success. The idea behind this connection is that academic wellness services are needed for students to be successful in their higher educational endeavors:

Academic Wellness → Academic Adjustment → Student Success

Student success is promoted by the above steps. Academic wellness includes the social, emotional, and intellectual components mentioned earlier in this chapter. Academic adjustment consists of the coping, advising, career exploration, and peer mentoring. As students experience academic adjustment in higher education, barriers may be reduced, and indicators of student success are likely to be more attainable, including the number of years to graduate and GPA. The steps are believed to influence student efficacy in their college experience and academic success (Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005).

The steps also involve a transformational process for SSS students. The transformational process breaks old habits of thinking and doing, and may also be important for adult learners. As a result, the holistic student can now be considered. The holistic student can be addressed in Student Support Services by helping students value their education. The sooner students take an interest in their education, the more likely they will invest in their own student success (Low, 2000).

This researcher hypothesized that social, emotional, and intellectual dimensions are the wellness components that SSS students use most. Consequently, this study was intended to provide a better understanding of wellness and student success from SSS student perceptions of their SSS program experiences.

Definition of Terms

Academic Wellness. A term used by the author to describe three wellness components SSS students tend to use most. The hypothesized wellness components are intellectual, social, and emotional. Academic wellness includes a myriad of

services to assist students with their academic goals, including study skills, test taking strategies, academic advising, peer mentoring, and tutoring. In this study, the researcher uses the terms academic wellness and wellness components interchangeably.

Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model. A three-stage model developed by this researcher that links academic characteristics to academic wellness support. The stages are academic wellness, academic adjustment, and student success, and are believed to be linked to student motivation.

Adult Learners. Nontraditional students who are over 24 years of age whose learning is based on personal responsibility, experience, and behavior transformation.

Barriers. Challenges higher educational students face that may interfere with graduation. Challenges may include economic, psychological, societal, and organizational. The author will use the terms barriers and anxieties interchangeably in this paper.

California State University. A public, 4-year university system that encompasses 23 campuses throughout California. Campuses are located from Arcata, in the far northern region of California to San Diego, the southernmost region. The CSU's mission is to provide open access to students and assist them with their success in their academic careers.

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). A university-wide performance assessment designed to test the quality of university programs and to recommend necessary improvements.

Departure. V. Tinto's term describing deciding factors for students to leave their higher educational endeavors. Academic difficulties, the inability of individuals to resolve their educational and occupational goals, and failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life of the institution are three sources of student departure identified by Tinto.

First Generation. A student from a family in which neither parent (whether natural or adoptive) received a baccalaureate degree or a student who, prior to the age of 18, regularly resided with and received support from only one natural or adoptive parent and whose supporting parent did not receive a baccalaureate degree.

First Year Experience (FYE). A term used to describe the academic and nonacademic experience of a student's first year in higher education. FYE is thought to influence the foundation, commitment, and community of learning.

Holistic. A model, described by Gieck and Olsen that refers to a means for college students to develop a lifestyle approach to living healthier. Also thought to describe educating the whole student, including the development of critical thinking skills and wellness components that emphasizes life-long learning.

Nontraditional Students. Students characterized by several factors that may interfere with their success. Factors include delaying college enrollment after high school graduation, students over the age of 24, having children or family members to take care of, single parent challenges, working more than 35 hours per week, on-campus residency, and family background (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013a).

Self-Efficacy. A person's confidence in achieving a goal; believing in oneself.

Six Dimensions of Wellness. The full integration of intellectual, spiritual, physical, emotional, occupational, and social well-being (National Wellness Institute, 2013).

Socioeconomic Status. The social standing of individuals or groups, often measured by income, level of education, and profession.

Student Affairs. A California State University system division that provides academic resources and support to students to enable student success. The resources and departments include First Year Program and Advising, Counseling Services, Health Center, Testing Services, Disability Resource Services, Faculty Mentor Program, Tutoring Center, and Student Support Services.

Student Learning Model. A representation the author uses to describe components necessary for academic wellness. The model is comprised of faculty, staff, student services, campus mission, administration, and higher education expectations.

Student Success. A holistic definition that includes retention, educational attainment, and academic achievement of students in higher education.

Student Support Services (SSS). A TRiO program that provides academic support to qualified and admitted participants. Services include academic advising, grant aid, and peer mentoring. SSS is a U.S. Department of Education-funded program that initially involved three programs: Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Special Services for Disadvantaged Students (now named Student Support Services).

Underserved Population. A group of students who have academic, financial, or social concerns that may interfere with their academic success. The terms underserved populations underserved students will be used interchangeably.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

This study relied on students' perceptions of academic wellness, how the University assists them with their academic goals, and their perception of relevance of the Student Support Services program. It was assumed that participants in this study would be honest about their experience and knowledge with SSS services. Other assumptions were that the identified wellness components were relevant; survey and interview findings would represent the larger SSS campus population; researcher bias would be controlled; the coding process was reliable and trustworthy; the sample size was sufficient; the conceptual framework is an accurate reflection of SSS services; and the results will be meaningful and useful.

A limitation of this study includes specific trends with students at a 4-year public institution located in central California, and may not be generalized to other institutions. However, this researcher acknowledges that some Student Support Services participants in this study may be similar to those at other institutions. Another limitation is the SSS population may not necessarily reflect all students at the university. Also, time was a limitation. One semester is merely a snapshot of the Student Support Services program and students.

The study was delimited to students at CSU Stanislaus who participated in the SSS program. This population included students who began their study at CSU

Stanislaus or entered as transfer students from another 2-year or 4-year institution. The participants in this study might not have been in Student Support Services during their entire time as a CSU Stanislaus student. The results of this study could be universal for educators who are (a) professionals in higher education institutions, (b) interested in student success, (c) advocates for adult learners, and (d) forward thinkers in an ever-changing society and educational system.

It should also be noted that this researcher is the Director of Student Support Services at CSU Stanislaus. Several steps were taken to protect the integrity of the study, and to avoid researcher bias, including regular meetings with the dissertation chair, maintaining a journal, peer debriefing, and member checking. These steps are outlined in Chapter III.

Significance of Study

The Goals of the Research Project

A number of focal inquiries exist for this research project: (1) Which student support services are SSS students using? (2) How often are SSS services used by students? (3) What are the purposes for which students indicate they are using SSS services? (4) What are the perceived benefits for SSS students using the services to help with student success? (5) What wellness components are associated with SSS services?

Identifying concerns that higher education should address may help inform how to improve student success. This researcher also would like to shed more light on the benefits of academic support programs. Several outcomes from this study are

significant for educators and administrators of education that suit current and future practice, research, and policy. It is also important to this researcher to identify methods that may shed light on student success from the students' point of view.

Current and Future Practice

Professionals in higher education could take advantage of this study to help improve student achievement rates. Information regarding academic wellness and its link to student success may be used to add or improve resources available to students. Furthermore, the findings could be used to apply to future funding opportunities.

Another group which may benefit from this study are the stakeholders of higher education. Perceived benefits of academic wellness services by students could be valuable to administrators. This student value suggests that academic wellness programs and services may affect the ability of college students to meet their academic goals.

Finally, this research project is useful to students in higher education. The wellness components and their relationship to academic success may be used as a tool to influence performance, increase motivation, and enhance the educational experience. This research will also benefit SSS students because it will provide insight on SSS experiences from their peers.

Future Research

More research is needed. One of the limitations of this study is that it will be completed at a medium-sized, rural, 4-year university located in central California. Similar research involving several higher educational institutions could shed more

light on the value of academic wellness services and programs. Student Support Services program students were used in this research. However, expanding the study to include non-SSS students would be ideal to discover how students value wellness programs and services over time.

Policy

Policy makers in higher education could use information from this research. Relevant information from SSS students may reveal meaningful ways for students to continue higher education as they overcome their barriers. A Ross, Niebling, and Heckert article (1999) identified some health and wellness concerns of college students as stress, anxiety, sleep problems, and depression. This research could aid policy makers with developing strategies to better meet student needs.

Conclusion

Student success may be attributed to academic wellness. The Student Support Services program is designed to guide and transform students toward becoming independent achievers. Engagement opportunities, academic counseling and advising, and streamlined and personalized services are examples of committed efforts toward student success. Students attending universities in rural areas can benefit from academic services since they have been linked to higher academic achievement as SSS students.

This dissertation is presented in five parts beginning with Chapter I, which introduces the study, states the problem to be explored as well as the purpose of the study; provides the theoretical framework for the study, and describes factors that

may influence student perceptions of academic wellness programs and services as it related to student success. Chapter II provides an overview of relevant literature associated with wellness elements and students in higher education that may influence student success. Chapter III details the research design and methods including surveys and student interviews. Chapter IV describes the findings that resulted from discovering academic wellness and student perception from seniors who participate in Student Support Services and plan to graduate within one year. Lastly, Chapter V provides an analysis of the findings and recommendations for action and future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A link between academic wellness and student success may exist. This study examines the possibility of this link by reviewing SSS student perceptions of the SSS program. For a better understanding of factors that influence student success, a review of literature is needed, including a focus on wellness related themes and students in higher education. It is also important to note academic support programs that offer wellness services to students. The Student Support Services program will be summarized with emphasis on student-valued services that seem to influence student achievement and students' well-being. Institutional support is also significant to student success, and some discussion of the California State University (CSU) mission will be shared.

Important Aspects of Academic Wellness

Many may believe that health and wellness are important, but until more campus resources are utilized to keep students informed about their health, educators could be missing out on another opportunity that may lead to student success. Exposing students to information involving health and wellness is one of the interests of SSS students. Other college students share the same notion. D'Zurilla, and Sheedy (1991) identified some health and wellness concerns of college students as stress, engaging in risky behaviors, eating disorders, inability to concentrate, anxiety, sleep problems, and depression.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012) provided health and wellness tips for college students and ways to offset stressful lifestyles typical of college students. The advice included regular check-ups, vaccinations, getting plenty of sleep, exercise, eating right, maintaining mental health, avoiding substance abuse, campus safety, education on sexually transmitted infections, and healthy relationships.

Aside from the CDC recommendations, health and wellness include the academics. The importance of universities providing adequate wellness services was discussed by Kupchella (2009). Social wellness was emphasized by Kupchella as a means of bringing about social progress in America, and higher education has been significant in making this happen. Luo and Rosenthal (2012) discussed common health and wellness concerns related to college students. Their findings included relationship problems and roommate issues. Luo and Rosenthal also recommend that colleges and universities rely on student peers to increase student awareness regarding wellness.

Concerning self-efficacy of college goals, Gieck and Olsen (2007) investigated a wellness holistic model with college students. The holistic model, described by Gieck and Olsen, was a means for college students to develop a lifestyle approach to living healthier. Their model was derived from Hettler's *Six Dimensions of Wellness*: social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, occupational, and physical. Students who completed a holistic model of intervention experienced an increased self-efficacy of their higher educational goals. Though Gieck and Olsen's primary

focus was the physical dimension of wellness, their findings indicate that self-efficacy and knowledge may help to involve wellness concepts as part of students' lifestyles.

Student Support Services, a TRiO program at California State University, Stanislaus, provides academic wellness services. Wellness services are resources designed to assist students with their academic achievement. Wellness services include personalized and focused attention to students, academic advising, academic and life skills workshops, a first-year experience course, engaging events, stress and time management, a wellness zone, and peer mentoring. All of these services are designed with the students' best interest in mind: timely graduation and an enriched university experience. As a result of SSS, students' academic wellness may be impacted in positive ways.

The Student Support Services program at CSU Stanislaus provides academic tutoring in various subjects as well as study skills, assistance in college course selection, and assistance with the financial aid application (California State University, Stanislaus Stanislaus Student Support Services, 2013). Additional support for SSS students includes advising to help with economic literacy and assistance with admission requirements for graduate programs. Federal funds are awarded to CSU Stanislaus and other higher educational institutions to assist with academic development and to motivate students to complete their degrees and participate in postsecondary education (Student Support Services, 2013a). The primary goal of SSS is to increase retention and graduation rates and to graduate students in a timely manner.

Part of encouraging students is to provide relevant workshops catering to student needs. The health and wellness component of SSS is essential to student success because healthy students could lead to healthy outcomes including graduation. Therefore, the main objective of the health and wellness workshops is to inform students—and their families—of economical ways to incorporate health into their busy schedules. Transformative learning is modeled during workshops and other presentations.

How colleges and universities operate, define their priorities, and create positive environments to work and learn in are essential to student success. The previously mentioned may also benefit society, the economy, and the workforce that depend on graduates who possess the ability to think critically. Consequently, this author is concerned about how institutional processes affect students. Underserved students, including students who are disproportionately represented in college due to a number of factors affecting academic performance, are of great concern. Some factors that may affect underrepresented students include academic readiness, demographics, academic support, degree program, ethnicity, and or socioeconomic background.

Mullin, who wrote *Rebalancing The Mission: The Community College Completion Challenge* says, “The belief in democratizing education by maintaining opportunity is paramount to the continuance of an educated citizenry” (2010, p. 5).

Underrepresented students will likely be affected, unless decision makers and stakeholders keep education as a focus for all: it should afford opportunity for everyone.

The aforementioned reveals the need to help students along the academic pathway to success. CSU Stanislaus recognizes this concern. A goal of CSU Stanislaus is to provide services that will positively impact a student's university experience (California State University, Stanislaus, 2013). Programs created to improve retention and timely graduation rates employ student-friendly ways to do so.

Students are influenced by many things that allow for a good university experience including (1) satisfaction of semester grades; (2) building relationships with staff and faculty; (3) understanding degree and program requirements; (4) taking advantage of resources to better understand and complete assignments and to score well on exams; (5) participating in student activities; (6) participating in self-development workshops; (7) having social support; (8) staying committed and motivated; and (9) finding a balance between personal, social, and academic obligations (Tinto, 1987; Stolar, 1991; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). All of these contribute to wellness. Interestingly, some dynamics that influence a good university experience for students have similarities to *The Six Dimensions of Wellness*, and are one of the frameworks of this study:

- Spiritual –The search for meaning and existence
- Physical –The need for regular physical activity, including diet, nutrition and exercise.
- Occupational – Personal satisfaction and enrichment in life through work, including attitude and skills that are personally meaningful
- Social – Contribution to the environment and community by emphasizing the interdependence between others and nature
- Intellectual – Mental activities that are stimulated by creativity, including increasing knowledge and talents, and sharing it with others
- Emotional – Awareness and acceptance of one's feelings, including feeling positive about one's life (National Wellness Center, 2013)

The author of this research adapted Hettler's model and formed *The Six Components of Wellness*. Appendix A, *The Six Components of Wellness*, describes each component. The six components are discussed more fully in Chapters I and III.

In addition to wellness, some authors studied student identity and created a clustered-analytic identity status model composed of four identity statuses: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement (Schwartz et al., 2010). The researchers also shared identity formations among young, diverse college students. The outcome of the study revealed important information on support needed for the identity status model and risk possibilities associated with psychological ramifications. Therefore, the importance of promoting the well-being of self-discovery may also point to student success.

Likewise, brain-based learning may be credited to wellness. The brain has two sections, known as hemispheres, which function separately. The left hemisphere is responsible for academics, and the right hemisphere is responsible for creativity (Weiss, 2000). Evidence also shows that the brain needs food, water, and oxygen as illustrated by Gazzaniga in 1967. These findings represent some aspects of wellness in regards to the intellectual wellness dimension. Brain based learning is representative of wellness because ideal learning may be attributed to brain health. Therefore, it may be assumed that cognitive factors could be improved with wellness, which may ultimately lead to student success.

Intentions of Student Success

Students' academic wellness may influence their coping skills in higher education. This researcher believes academic wellness is related to a student's attitude and motivation toward student success. Figure 1, *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model* is also discussed in this chapter and Chapter III, and is one of this researcher's considerations for this research. The author also identifies the phenomenon of student success as the balance of college experiences which incorporates social, emotional, and intellectual wellness dimensions as the foundation for meeting academic goals.

Academic wellness begins prior to higher education. To help with college readiness, K-12 schools and colleges and universities should work together (Krist & Venezia, 2004). Student success may not be without some barriers. Development of knowledge and skills needed in college can come from both systems collaborating. Expectations identified and learned sooner by students may encourage appropriate academic wellness development that aid in college adjustment and student success.

Furthermore, student success is complicated by cognitive factors that include academic wellness. Zajacova, Lych, and Espenshade (2005) also suggest good academic standing and retention are factors that seem to be connected academic adjustment. Self-efficacy, defined as believing in oneself, has the strongest influence on academic outcomes. The attitude toward being successful in higher education is regarded as the positive or negative feelings about academic performance. Student

learning and learning styles are additional considerations to help students (see Appendix B).

Understanding Today's College Students and Their Experiences

Chapin (2009) shared creative ways to engage students in their learning process. Though her concepts were designed for K-12 students, they may also be used for college students. Instructional strategies, diversity in the classroom, and assessment of learner progress are some of Chapin's tenets. Her strategies imply that instructors may want to consider different learning styles. Student engagement is a means of addressing some diversity concerns in the classroom. Likewise, it is important for wellness programs and services to be mindful of Chapin's view.

Aspects of California higher education classrooms were discussed in *Higher Ed's Bermuda Triangle* (Esch, 2009). Esch pointed out that educators should consider the needs of today's students, particularly students needing to take remedial courses. Eighty-five percent of students who enter community colleges need to take remedial courses. Professors have to transform their expectations. It was said in the article that America is losing its edge in higher education because other countries are producing graduates, while America is not: the concern is that many students may leave college without finishing with a degree. Another challenge is that even experts like Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), who wrote a book on college influence on students, do not know if college expectations are too much for students who need remediation. The frustration is that colleges are experiencing difficulties with identifying areas of weaknesses in remedial courses.

In addition to remedial concerns in higher education, a social transition in a 4-year university setting can be overwhelming for students. For example, students who live in a household where neither parent possesses a 4-year degree are considered first generation, and they may not know or understand university requirements and faculty expectations. However, getting admitted to a 4-year institution is only one challenge of first-generation students. They also face university expectations and can be underprepared. Underprepared students will need to take placement exams to determine their English and mathematics readiness. Krist and Venezia noted that about one half of U.S. college students are not ready for college level courses (2004). Hence, it may take longer to complete a 4-year degree because of remedial requirements dictated by placement exams. A worthy consideration to better understand today's college student is Mezirow's (2009) theory of the transformative process. *Changing the Mindset of Traditional Learning* (Appendix C) identifies some important factors of transformative learning.

Nontraditional Students

Nontraditional students deal with their anxieties differently compared to traditional students. Their learning goals are associated with increased use of task-oriented coping; and nontraditional students sometimes have less experience with time management due to work schedules, commuting, or other time limitations (Forbus, Newbold, & Mehta, 2011). As mentioned previously, nontraditional students are characterized by a number of factors. These factors may include working more than 35 hours per week, having children or family members to take care of, single

parent challenges, or role modeling was nonexistent as neither household parent earned a 4-year degree. In 2008, over one third of undergraduates were over 25 years of age and one quarter of them had children (Buckley, 2011).

Underserved minorities are vulnerable to discontinuing their education, and those who stay may not perform as well as other students (Saint John, Cabrera, Nora, & Asker, 2000). Social skills and lack of information are examples of why academic support programs may be essential to performance and graduation (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Academic wellness may very well be a model for universities to follow to improve student success. Many students pursuing higher education may not be academically or socially prepared for the rigors of post-secondary study.

Student Efficacy

Improving student outcomes can come from self-efficacy (Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005). Students' determination motivates them to be successful academically and socially. When they are confident about their academic success, they are more likely to manage the effort it takes to overcome collegiate challenges. Therefore, self-efficacy or self-confidence is necessary to academic wellness and is a means to transforming students to lifelong learning.

Student achievement for adults may be determined by a developmental and individualized process through mentoring (Flumerfelt, Ingram, Brockberg, & Smith, 2007). Another author describes transformative education as the opportunity to provide learning experiences that involve student engagement in life changing behaviors impacting knowledge and performance (Moore, 2005). The underlining

point of transformative education is the mentoring component that aids in learning. Hence, the quality of learning is better for students because of relationships developed and maintained during their learning experiences; their well-being is enriched.

Some authors, such as Myers, Romero, Anzaldua, and Trinidad (2008), have provided research to support other wellness dimensions presented by Hettler's *Six Dimensions of Wellness*. Myers et al. studied the physical wellness dimension, and noted students who felt better about themselves were more motivated. Therefore, it is implied that students who take an interest in their well-being are more invested in own success. Self-reflection has a part in being more informed when making decisions. However, this researcher is interested in only the first three of six wellness dimensions for inclusion in this study: social, emotional, and intellectual. These dimensions are labeled as academic wellness and are thought to help with student efficacy.

Unique Services of the CSU Student Support Services Program

Of the 23 campuses in the California State University system, five are considered medium-size based on enrollment of approximately 7,600 to 10,300 students. These five are CSU San Marcos, CSU Stanislaus, CSU Bakersfield, Humboldt State University, and Sonoma State University (CSU Mentor, 2013). Of the five campuses, three provide the Student Support Services program to their students: Humboldt State University, CSU San Marcos, and CSU Stanislaus. In

addition to general SSS services, each provides additional services to make their programs distinctive.

The 8,000-student populated Humboldt State University (HSU) has a beautiful campus in northern California. Humboldt State University collaborates with the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), a California state funded program that offers similar services as SSS and has admission privileges. In addition to general SSS services, it also provides an honors ceremony and a class for first-semester transfer students (Humboldt State University, 2013). California State University, San Marcos has about 10,300 students, and is located in southern California. The Student Support Services program at CSU San Marcos includes fall and spring newsletters, cultural enrichment activities, and priority registration (California State University, San Marcos, 2013). Located in central California, CSU Stanislaus has about 8,900 students. Its unique SSS program includes a wellness zone, first-year experience course, a writing specialist, grant aid, and the CSU-sponsored Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education (California State University, Stanislaus Student Support Services, 2013).

Considerations to Warrant Student Achievement

Rather than attempting to fix student problems, educators should guide students toward the resources necessary for students to solve their own problems. The care academic advisors have for students is their greatest asset and should be maintained, but they also should be focused on empowering students and creating lifelong learners. Fixing student problems for the sake of convenience negatively

affects the well-being of students. Secondly, educators must remain knowledgeable regarding their craft, continue seeking professional development, and remain cognizant of the importance of their role in successful student outcomes (Greenleaf, 1991; Tinto, 1993; Myers & Sweeney, 2004).

Counseling and advising are essential to creating the social and academic integration vital to student learning. A counselor is typically the first and most impactful contact a student makes upon enrollment in higher education. As such, this contact is indispensable in shaping the way in which the student will perceive and interact with the institution during his or her time as a student. Furthermore, the counselor must not only be able to help the student identify an appropriate educational path, but also help the student to navigate the system, as well as the various other responsibilities and distractions which consistently compete for the student's limited time. The academic advisor's responsibilities are numerous and the attributes required to be effective are plentiful, yet the advisor's role is irreplaceable and crucial to students' academic wellness contributing to student success.

Kalsner (1991) studied the performance of the freshman college students and identified issues that affect success: (1) uncertainty about what to expect from college and its rewards, (2) transition/adjustment problems, (3) financial difficulties, and (4) academic under-preparedness. The purpose of the study was to identify trends regarding college student drop-out rates. African Americans and other underserved students have problems fitting into a school environment that is predominantly White (Kalsner, 1991). The Fit Theory (Holland, 1985) involving a student's personality

type, including realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional, may be linked to the college environment and major. The other consideration for academic achievement is Tinto's Path Analysis Model (Tinto, 1987), which involves students' background characteristics. Both the Fit Theory and Path Analysis Model are useful in pinpointing factors that may affect retention, and highlighted the importance of social interaction.

More recent work exists to further support the importance of academic wellness services. Engstrom and Tinto (2008) found that learning communities promoted intellectual and social engagement opportunities for students. Interestingly, when students involved in learning communities were compared to students who were not, persistence to the next academic year was more likely to occur when students were included in learning communities. Hence, students had a comfortable place to learn, and their knowledge increased. A key finding in the Engstrom and Tinto research was that "Students reported that their commitment and motivation to pursue their studies increased because of the validation they received through the mastery of key skills" (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, p. 48).

Because students often choose to attend colleges and universities without proper consideration, they may be uncertain as to what to expect, may experience financial difficulties, and may not be prepared, once on campus. Pressure from family and friends; hopes of gaining employment skills; changing majors and career choices; adjusting to an academic environment with higher expectations; student faculty interaction; getting involved with college life; feeling isolated (particularly for

African-American and Asian-American students); and older adults returning to school (because some insecurities may exist due to their age) are some uncertainties that were outlined in the Kalsner (1991) study.

Financial concerns are the fourth most common issue identified on student retention surveys from the Kalsner study. Low income students may decide to drop out if there is not enough financial support. The data indicated that African-American students in particular may not be able to continue their education because of the unavailability of financial aid and tuition increases. The Kalsner study also revealed students often underestimate the demands of college. Furthermore, the following personal circumstances may be deciding factors for students choosing to leave college: (1) adult students are not confident with returning to school; (2) women tend to leave college with poor grades compared to men; (3) underserved students (African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans) drop out of school more often than Whites or Asians; (4) students who score higher on standardized tests (SAT or ACT) are less likely to drop out, and test scores may not be accurate in determining high-risk students (Kalsner, 1991). The Kalsner research concluded that students did not always drop out because they were academically disqualified. Personal circumstances may be deciding factors.

Diaz (2006) investigated how stress of adjustment to a different academic environment may affect the GPAs of students. The purpose of the study was to compare the achievement of transfer students from the junior college, the state college, and the 4-year private liberal arts college. After one semester, the author

compared GPAs of transfer students from the community college and the private 4-year liberal arts institution to the state university without considering the achievement of native students. A significance difference was found in the following categories: (1) private institutions with state college transfers, (2) private institutions with junior college transfers, and (3) state college with junior college transfers. Though there were no significant differences, results suggested that state college transfer students make a slightly better adjustment to academic expectations than others, and junior college transfer students tend to have more academic difficulty than the other two groups.

Grier-Reed, Madyun, and Buckley (2008) examined why low retention rates exist among African-American students in a predominately White institution. Their research identified that social networks were needed to improve African-American retention rates. The research was completed at a large Midwestern public research institution, where African Americans made up 4.7% of the undergraduate population.

The African American Student Network, also known as AFAM (which signifies “A Family” by students), is a social network developed by faculty who believe social support is extremely important to counter stressors that African Americans face. Some stressors that were identified were (1) lack of knowledge about the college process; (2) institutional racism; (3) poor health and energy; (4) social isolation; and (5) family and economic problems. Psychological well-being is a focus of AFAM so that students understand and improve their relationship of self, others and community. Therefore, the primary goal of AFAM is to encourage African-

American students to take care of their minds, bodies, and spirits (Grier-Reed et al., 2008).

Seven themes were identified from the study that impacted African-American retention and graduation rates:

1. A safe space so that students can relax and can freely express themselves
2. Connectedness to build relationships and to talk about anything
3. Validation of culture and respect as African Americans
4. Resilience and being comfortable with asking and getting advice on things that matter to them
5. Intellectual stimulation to share various perspectives on whatever concerns come to mind
6. Empowerment to speak their mind and connect with other African American peers
7. The need of a home base that is like a safe haven from challenges faced on campus

In conclusion, social networks may be linked to the social and intellectual components of wellness, and benefit colleges and universities because they encourage engagement among peers, staff, and faculty.

Assessment and Evaluation of Academic Wellness Effectiveness

Determining the effectiveness of wellness programs and services is important. Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2012) provided insight on accountability issues by sharing approaches to evaluation techniques. The purpose of evaluation, current

trends, political and ethical issues, alternatives, approaches to evaluation, responsibilities, guidelines, planning evaluations, and the future of evaluation were summarized by the authors.

Sanders and Sullins (2006) produced an evaluation guide for educators. Strategies to understand approaches, purpose, all of the players, costs, sacrifices, short and long-term goals, and other interests were provided. The authors also stressed that communication is very important to the success of an evaluation. Listening, responding, sharing information, discussing intentions, being clear, clarifying expectations, and keeping an open evaluation process are just as important as the evaluation itself. Assistance with planning and developing evaluations so that they are more comfortable with the evaluation process was included. The authors endorsed five tasks adapted from Stufflebeam (1969): evaluation focus, collecting information, organizing and analyzing the information, reporting, and administering the evaluation process.

While Student Support Services is a resource for students, evaluation and assessment is essential to determine its effectiveness. CSU Stanislaus has been the home for SSS since 1975 (California State University, Stanislaus – Student Support Services, 2013). As stated, SSS aims to assist students with graduating earlier and preparing them for endeavors after their undergraduate experience (graduate school or a career). The program has three goals with the United States Department of Education: (1) 75% of all participants served by SSS will persist from one academic year to the beginning of the next academic year or graduate; (2) 75% of all enrolled

SSS participants will meet performance level requirements to stay in good academic standing at CSU Stanislaus; and (3) 40% of new participants served each year will graduate within 6 years (U.S. Department of Education, Student Support Services, 2013). Continued efforts to meet and exceed DOE goals are consistently monitored by strict record keeping, discussions with students, and surveys. These assessments are necessary to ensure that students' needs are being met, and the objectives are not being compromised. This is crucial because student needs are personally identified rather than from hearsay or from a textbook.

Student Support Services must complete an Annual Performance Report (APR) to the U.S. Department of Education. The APR requires data that support the project goals and objectives including the types of services, the number of student participants, and referrals to services external to SSS. The author believes that as fiscal resources generate a further strain on higher education, reporting of this type may become universal for all campuses receiving funding from local, state, and federal governments. Other accountability measures may include internal and or external evaluations to ensure program goals are met. Program assessments may also be useful to define areas of improvement.

A realistic list of resources needed for the evaluation includes (1) a facility; (2) at least two other experts to perform the evaluation; (3) copies of the SSS proposal and program evaluations; (4) existing SSS data; and (5) comp time of personnel during the evaluation process. In addition., the cost should be very low because the formative evaluation will be done internally (Sanders & Sullins, 2006).

The evaluation questions come directly from the objectives, and are (1) Have 75% of all SSS participants persisted from one academic year to the next or did they graduate? (2) Have 75% of all enrolled SSS participants met performance level requirements to stay in good academic standing? (3) Have 40% of new SSS participants served each year graduated within 6 years? (4) Are the students' needs met that have been identified by the program? The Evaluation Worksheet of Student Support Services (Appendix D) is a sample evaluation developed by the author.

Clearly, failing to address intrapersonal and interpersonal concerns of students who attend a university without proper support is a recipe for failure. CSU Stanislaus is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), a designation used to identify colleges and universities that serve at a Hispanic population of 25% or more. Most Hispanic college students attend a public college or university, and only about half will graduate within 6 years, compared to 59% of White students. However, with academic support programs in place, CSU Stanislaus is committed to graduating all students. Hispanics and other underserved students are academically successful because of supporting staff, faculty, and resources that encourage student efficacy. Institutions across the United States tend to have similar accomplishments when its leaders are dedicated to the success of each student (Lynch & Engle, 2010).

It is equally important to have the institution support wellness services. Part of the CSU Stanislaus mission statement reads, "The faculty, staff, administration, and students of CSU Stanislaus are committed to creating a learning environment that encourages all members of the campus community to expand their intellectual,

creative, and social horizons (CSU Stanislaus, 2013). It is notable that intellectual and social mentioning are wellness related, and are included in the university's mission.

Conclusion

Some factors that may influence student success include wellness components. A review of literature and wellness themes that share the concerns of college students was conducted, comprising social support, assisting the holistic student, and self-efficacy to academic achievement. An explanation of the Student Support Services program, TRiO, the California State University system, and California State University, Stanislaus was provided to identify shared goals that contribute to the base of this study.

The research design and methodology will be discussed in Chapter III. Data analysis included using Hettler's *Six Dimensions of Wellness* and this researcher's own *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model* as frameworks. Two surveys were created: one for use with SSS students to identify their usage of SSS services; and a health and wellness expert survey to identify wellness dimensions associated with SSS services. This researcher also adhered to Vogt's suggestions for ensuring accurate survey findings as well as his recommendations regarding data reduction when determining codes and themes of the interview data.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Some wellness characteristics may be responsible for student success. For example, poor coping strategies may lead to stress that could ultimately lead to undesirable student outcomes (Ratanasiripong, Sverduk, Hayashino & Prince, 2010). The lack of academic preparedness, a low sense of worth, and little social support are some factors related to stress (Negga, Applewhite, & Livingston, 2007). These factors are also some reasons why the well-being of students may be at risk, and why academic support services are needed.

This chapter reviews the methodology used in this research. Information from institutional and program archived data, student surveys, and interviews with Student Support Services participants. A sequential mixed methods explanatory research design (Creswell & Clark, 2011), involving quantitative and qualitative inquiries was used for this study. This particular research design involved following steps or phases in a certain sequence to determine how the qualitative data may help to explain the quantitative data. Archival data is best for this study because the data is easily accessible by this researcher and includes demographic information of SSS participants.

Approximately 250 SSS students were invited to participate in a survey regarding SSS services: which services are used; how often they use the services; the purpose for using SSS services; and the benefits of using SSS services. All current

SSS participants would be given the opportunity to take the survey. It was anticipated that the sample would include a representation of all class levels, including first time freshmen, transfer students, and those who plan to graduate within one year.

Qualitative data collection involved interviews with four to six selected SSS participants. However, upon review of the survey responses and recognition of obvious themes, this researcher decided that 4 interviewees would suffice.

Interviewees were selected from the participants who have completed the surveys.

More SSS respondents would be interviewed if themes from the interviews were very different from the responses. The purpose of the interviews was to further explore student perceptions of the benefits of Student Support Services program. Interviews will be coded and then analyzed for similarities or patterns among interviewees.

Restatement of Purpose of the Study

Little research has been done which examines how and to what extent campus-based wellness services influence student success. The purpose of this study is to better understand possible connections between wellness related programs and services, and student success among SSS students. This researcher is also interested in better understanding SSS students' perceptions of the benefits of the SSS wellness program they participate in.

It is a commonly held assumption that wellness services and programs are ideal for assisting students with their concerns that may interfere with their academic goals (Kauffman & Creamer, 1991). Academic support services are available to

students in the SSS program. This researcher will be assessing how students perceive these services as aiding in their success.

Research Questions

The Student Support Services program was designed to encourage and support students in completing their postsecondary education (Student Support Services, 2013b). One of the program's roles at California State University, Stanislaus is to assist students with college adjustment that ultimately may lead to student success. Participants in the SSS program are offered a myriad of services to help them succeed, including academic advising, tutoring, financial literacy, and peer mentoring. The following research questions will guide this study:

RQ 1: Which Student Support Services are SSS students using?

RQ 2: How often are SSS services used by students?

RQ 3: What are the purposes for which students indicate they are using SSS services?

RQ 4: What are the perceived benefits for SSS students using the services to help with student success? Related questions are:

RQ 4A: What do SSS college students perceive as SSS factors that assist with retention?

RQ 4B: What do SSS college students perceive as SSS factors that assist with GPA?

RQ 4C: What do SSS college students perceive as SSS factors that assist with the number of years to graduate?

RQ 5: What wellness components are part of SSS services?

Guiding Framework

The *Six Dimensions of Wellness* and the *Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model*, developed by this researcher, are the frameworks that will be used in this *research*. Some considerations that may influence a good university experience for students have similarities to *The Six Dimensions of Wellness*: spiritual, occupational, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social (National Wellness Center, 2013), particularly the latter three. The survey instrument will help to determine the wellness dimensions of services that SSS students utilized the most. Students who participate in this research may identify wellness as part of the Student Support Services program. It may ultimately lead to social, emotional, and intellectual components of wellness to better understand the relationship between wellness and some aspects of empathy for college students (Granello, 1999). Because *The Six Dimensions of Wellness* can be generalized as a useful tool in higher education, it will be used to assist this researcher with wellness areas associated with SSS services.

The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model will guide this researcher by integrating how students value components of the Student Support Services program and how these may relate to student success. Three steps to student success are introduced, and involve a transformational process for students. Three of the six wellness dimensions have been recognized as service types by this researcher: social, emotional, and intellectual. All 230 active Student Support Services students were surveyed. The Student Support Services program participants are mostly first

generation, come from low income households, or may have a disability. Six to nine SSS students will be selected for interviews.

Outline of the Study and Research Design

Three of the six wellness dimensions—social, intellectual, and emotional—were used in this study. These components also comprise what this researcher identifies as academic wellness. Student Support Services aims to assist participants with graduating within 6 years and with the postgraduate process.

This research was conducted in five phases using a sequential mixed methods explanatory research design (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The sequential mixed methods explanatory research design used quantitative and qualitative methods while following a sequence to determine research findings; see Figure 2. Phase one involved collecting and analyzing the archival data. Data for this phase of the research came from the institution and the Student Support Services program. Student demographics, program usage, and academic needs assessment completed by SSS students are some data that were deemed useful to this researcher. Phase two was to create the survey and administer it to SSS students. The survey would provide data for use by this researcher to determine the frequency of use of the SSS program, the purposes of using the SSS program, and the benefits of using the SSS program. After the analysis has been completed, this researcher will correlate the survey responses with GPA and number of years to graduate of SSS students. Phase three involved the survey of health and wellness experts to add to the validity of this research and to better control insider bias. During Phase four, SSS participants were interviewed.

This step involved interviewing SSS students to better understand how wellness dimensions may potentially effect academic adjustment, and ultimately affect student success. Phase five was the composite analysis of the archival data, survey data, and interview data. Figure 2, Sequential Mixed Method Explanatory Research Phases, outlines the overall design of this study.

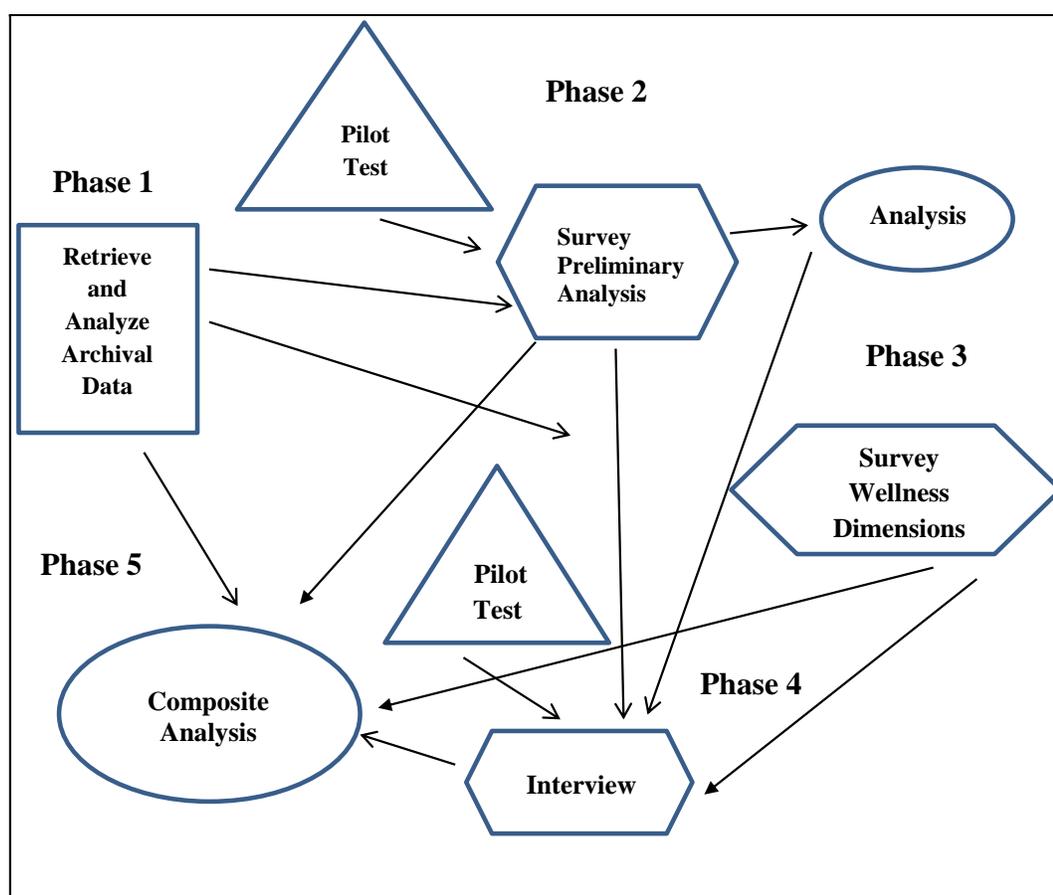


Figure 2, Sequential Mixed Methods Explanatory Research Phases

The archival data will be used to collect demographic information of SSS students. The survey will use Likert scale-based questions and open-ended questions. Survey data will be examined to determine (1) what SSS program services are used,

(2) how often SSS students use the program, (3) the purposes survey respondents identify for using SSS program services, and (4) the perceived benefits of using the SSS program.

The survey provided opportunities for other data collection and additional statistical analysis. Information collected from the survey will be used to help develop questions for the interview phase. Also, health and wellness experts will confirm wellness dimensions associated with the Student Support Services program via survey in phase three of this study (see Appendix E, Health and Wellness Expert Review of SSS Services). In phase four, this researcher determined codes, categories, and themes from the interviews. Action codes will be generated and reviewed by comparing participants' various points of views, situations, accounts, and experiences. The fifth and final phase is the composite phase, which involved analyzing both the quantitative and qualitative data to possibly generate an explanation of how the Student Support Services program helps with student success.

Timeline of the Study

June 2013 to December 2013 – Monthly meetings held with dissertation chair to discuss this researcher's interests and strategies for the study

December 2013 – Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) developed and signed by this researcher and participating university as the site for this study (Appendix F)

December 2013 – Research proposal presented to the dissertation committee for approval.

December 2013 – Upon approval by the dissertation committee, proposal submitted to University Institutional Review Board

December 2013 – The institutional and SSS program archival data was collected:

Phase One

January 2014 – Content review and finalization of survey questions (Appendix H)

January to February 2014 – Survey Student Support Services program participants:

Phase Two

February 2014 – Health and wellness dimensions content review by health and wellness experts (Appendix E): Phase Three

February 2014 – Content review and finalization of interview questions (Appendix J)

March 2014 – Conduct interviews with Student Support Services participants: Phase Four

March to April 2014 – Review, code, analyze, and summarize data: Phase Five

April 2014 – Results of study prepared; Chapters IV and V of the dissertation finalized

Overall, the research phases were carried out during a four-month period followed by analyzing and summarizing the data.

Site and Program Selection

University Setting

The California State University (CSU) is a public university system that has about 437,000 students, and is the most diverse system in the United States (California State University, 2013). The CSU admits about one third of each

California high school graduating class (California State University, 2013). The setting for all phases of this study will be CSU Stanislaus, a medium-size, rural public university and part of the CSU system. CSU Stanislaus serves six counties: Mariposa, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Merced, San Joaquin and Stanislaus in Central California, and is located in an agriculturally rich area. The Northern San Joaquin Valley (NSJV) is comprised of the latter three counties and generates the most students for the University. Economically disadvantaged populations are the majority in the NSJV counties: 65% in Merced, 54.50 in San Joaquin, and 53% in Stanislaus (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

CSU Stanislaus is located in Stanislaus County, which lies within the San Joaquin Valley of California and has a population of 514,452 (U.S. Census, 2013). CSU Stanislaus has a park-like campus atmosphere, and is located in the small city of Turlock. Students tend to choose majors from areas of business, social sciences, liberal studies, and nursing (California State University, Stanislaus Stat Report, 2013). Eighty-three percent of CSU Stanislaus students receive some form of financial aid (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013b).

In the fall semester of 2011, the University had a student body of 9,246 that included 7,921 undergraduates (California State University, Stanislaus, - 2009 Quick Facts, 2011). Of the 5,387 first time freshmen who applied, 4,128 were admitted in Fall 2011. The most popular bachelor degree programs were Business Administration (18%), Pre-Nursing and Nursing (11.6%), Psychology (9.7%), Biological Sciences (9.4%), Liberal Studies (9.0%), and Criminal Justice (7.6%) (California State

University, Stanislaus, 2011). Most of the identified programs have multiple math and science requirements, and require a high number of units for the major. Figure 3, Popular Majors, illustrates highly selected degree programs by students at CSU Stanislaus.

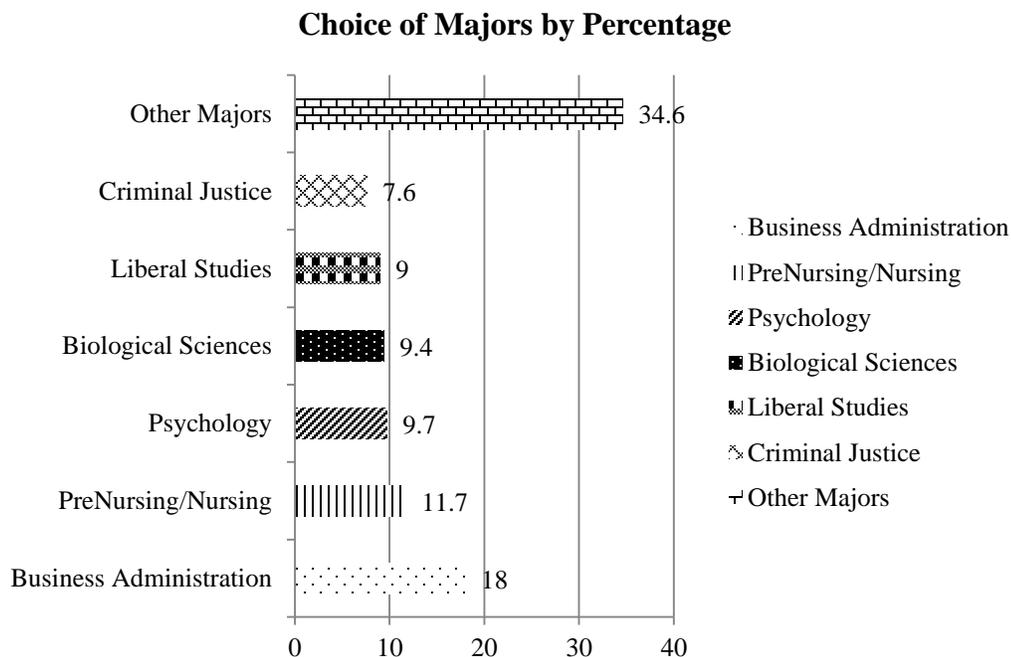


Figure 3. Popular Majors

CSU Stanislaus is a diverse campus. See Figure 4, Enrollment Percentages by Ethnicity, for a summary of the student population at CSU Stanislaus. There were 65.2% women and 34.8% men enrolled and a headcount of 8,882 during Fall 2012 (Institutional Research, 2013). For the Fall 2011 to Spring 2012 academic year, the largest racial group was Hispanic/Latino at 40.9 %, followed by Whites at 31.3%, and Asians at 10.3% (Institutional Research, 2013). In comparison, the overall California State University system's student body has a larger portion of Whites at

approximately 31% followed by Hispanic/Latino at about 24% (California State University, Stat Report, 2013).

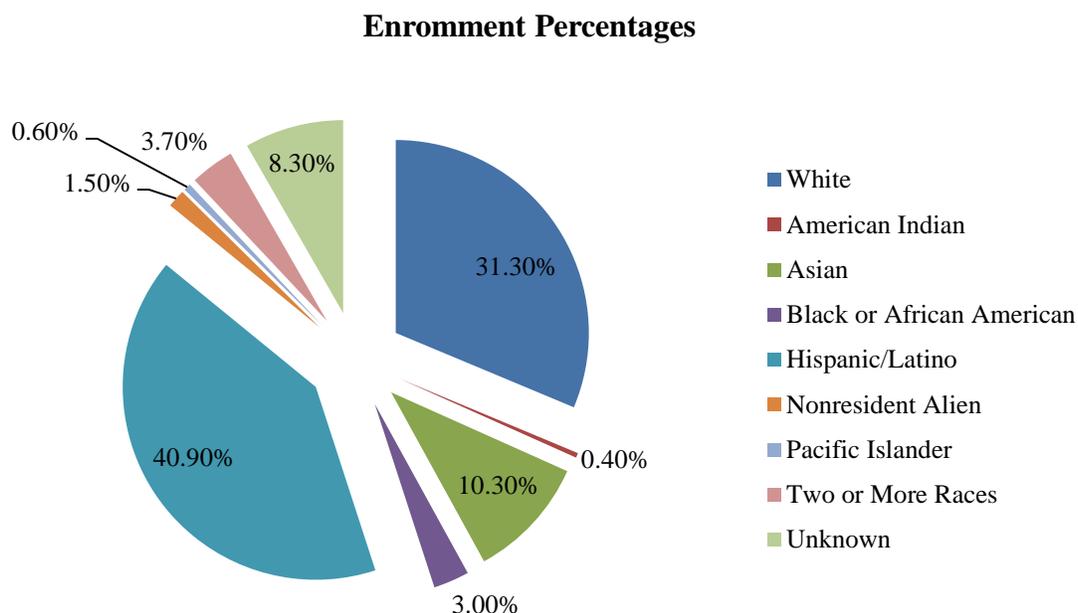


Figure 4. Enrollment Percentages by Race/Ethnicity at CSU Stanislaus (Adapted from CSU Stat report, 2013)

Student Support Services

Student Support Services is a Title IV project (Student Support Services, 2013b) that maintains a written agreement with the United States Department of Education for federal student assistance. The agreement allows the postsecondary institution to participate in Title IV federal student financial assistance programs (Federal Student Aid, 2012). The Student Support Services program provides academic support to qualified students that assists with academic development and college requirements, and provides services that encourage SSS students to complete

postsecondary education (Student Support Services, 2013b). Students are eligible to participate in SSS if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Is a citizen or national of U.S., or meets residency requirements to receive federal financial aid
- Is accepted or enrolled at the institution for the next academic term
- Has an academic need
- Is identified as low income
- Is identified as first-generation student
- Has a documented disability

Federal regulations mandate institutions to follow certain selection criteria for accepting students to the Student Support Services program. Two thirds of SSS students must be low income and first generation. A third of the SSS students must be low income only, and another third may be low income, first generation, or have a disability.

Table 1

Federal Student Selection Criteria

<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Low Income</u>	<u>First Gen and/or</u>	<u>Disability</u>
2/3 of SSS Participants (165) will be	X	X	
1/3 of Disabled will be	X		
1/3 of SSS Participants (85) can be either	X	X	X

Student Support Services has been available at the university since 1975 (California State University, Stanislaus Student Support Services, 2013). Its purpose

is to assist students with graduating on time as defined by the 6-year graduation rate, and preparing them for endeavors after their undergraduate experience including graduate school or a career. The program has three objectives established by the United States Department of Education: (1) 75% of all participants served by SSS will persist from one academic year to the beginning of the next academic year or graduate; (2) 75% of all enrolled SSS participants will meet performance level requirements to stay in good academic standing at CSU Stanislaus; and (3) 40% of new participants served each year will graduate within six years (U.S. Department of Education, Student Support Services, 2013). These objectives may translate to academic wellness services because they involve social, intellectual, and emotional wellness dimensions. This researcher hypothesized that SSS services relate to wellness dimensions as described below, whereby *S* = Social, *I* = Intellectual, and *E* = Emotional:

1. Academic advising - *I*
2. Peer-mentoring – *S, E*
3. Tutoring - *I*
4. Writing Specialist - *I*
5. Wellness Zone – *S, I, E*
6. Computer Lab - *I*
7. Educational and social events – *S, I*

Student Support Services is governed by rules and regulations outlined by the U.S. Department of Education. Guidelines to determine low income depend on the

number of people in the household and taxable income. First generation students are defined as those for whom neither parent has earned a 4-year degree from an institution of higher education. The disability criterion is met only when students have documentation from the university's Disability Resource Services or a licensed practitioner who is qualified to make that determination.

Student Support Services has a role to guide students toward becoming independent achievers. Engagement opportunities, academic counseling and advising, and personalized services are examples of committed efforts toward student success. SSS supports student learning, development, and success by getting students involved in their own learning.

Population, Sample, and Participant Selection

CSU Stanislaus was selected because the SSS population is accessible. Students participating in this study have access to similar academic support and the same educational environment. All 230 SSS students were eligible and received an invitation to participate in this study. Participation was strictly volunteered.

To select the interview participants, this researcher will use a purposeful participation process (Vogt, 2009) by identifying several categories, including SSS program services used, length of time in the SSS program, class level, frequency of use of program services, student perceptions of SSS program benefits, gender, and term planning to graduate.

Procedures

Method

This researcher used a sequential explanatory mixed method design which includes (1) collecting and analyzing archival data; (2) surveying students; (3) surveying health and wellness experts; (4) interviewing students; and (5) analyzing survey and interview data. All active Student Support Services students at the university were invited to participate in the study. The archival data came from the SSS database, and the university's Office of Institutional Research database. Student Support Services students were contacted via email, and the questionnaire were distributed using Qualtrics survey software. Each student received a consent form, survey directions, and the survey. A brief explanation of the study was provided to participants.

Phase 1 – Institutional and SSS program data collection. Demographic information that was collected included age, gender, ethnicity, classification, years in SSS, first generation status, GPA, the need for remediation at time of university admission, number of years in the SSS program, and planned graduation year. The use of archival was a helpful resource because it was available to this researcher, the data collection is ongoing at CSU Stanislaus and Student Support Services, and its storage was easily accessible to this researcher.

Phase 2 – Survey active SSS participants. The survey included questions about which SSS services are used; how often students use the services; the purpose of using SSS; and the perceived benefits of SSS. The questions were in the form of a

Likert scale and open-ended questions. After interview participants were selected, each was sent an invitation letter. The invitation letter explained the purpose of this study and methodology. This researcher also sent interviewees a copy of potential interview questions.

The survey questions and permission statement are provided in Appendix I. The survey questions were reviewed by educators who are familiar with the SSS program prior to distribution to the participants. Content review of survey questions is discussed later in this section. The goal of this researcher was to administer the survey distribution in mid- February 2014.

Phase 3 – Survey health and wellness experts. Wellness dimensions were identified by professionals in the field. Two to four health and wellness experts would review the services of the Student Support Services program to assign appropriate wellness dimensions. The purpose was to confirm whether academic wellness components identified by this researcher are correct. The academic wellness components are social, emotional, and intellectual, and are derived from the *Six Dimensions of Wellness*: social, emotional, intellectual, occupational, spiritual, and physical (National Wellness Institute, 2013).

Phase 4 - Interview participants. Information from the surveys was used to help to create more in-depth questions for the interviews. Selected participants were identified from their survey responses. The interview process included semistructured and open-ended questions. The purpose of using semistructured and open-ended questions was to create an environment that allows participants to freely discuss their

views about their SSS experience and to better understand their perception of SSS benefits. This researcher is also interested in understanding student perceptions on emotional, social, and intellectual wellness components as they relate to Student Support Services. Prepared interview questions are in Appendix L.

Six to nine students were to be interviewed. Each student would be asked to sign a consent form prior to answering questions, and asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. It was anticipated that the interviews would last 30 to 45 minutes each. The interviews would be recorded using more than one device to provide protection of the data.

All interviewees would be asked the same questions, and their responses would be compared to determine similar themes. All information will be reported by this researcher, including evidence that may be contrary to the study's hypothesis. The reason for the all-inclusive report is to include positive and negative experiences to show accuracy of the data collection. Prior to surveying and interviewing students, a content review would take place to assure questions were clear, understandable, and did not mislead. The content review of questions would involve educators who are familiar with the SSS program. This researcher followed Radhakrishna's (2007) recommendations in developing the review instrument. Radhakrishna's idea for instrument development includes five steps: (1) Background includes purpose and research questions; (2) Questionnaire/survey requires statements and questions for the questionnaire; (3) Data Analysis focuses on determining the measurement scale and

format; (4) Validity of Questionnaire determines how sound the survey design may be; and (5) Reliability refers to the accuracy of the measuring instrument.

The content review used three individuals to review the survey and interview questions. Participants for both types of content review of questions were knowledgeable about the university and the Student Support Services program. However, they did not participate in the study or the program.

Phase 5 – Analyze survey and interview data. The collection of data came from archival documents, and survey and interview responses. Gathering information from survey and interview data sources regarding the opinions of SSS students would help this researcher discover student perceptions of SSS services. Conclusions or interpretations of this study may be based on data comparisons, whereby two or more different sources are compared (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Validity and reliability techniques will also be used to safeguard data accuracy.

Data Analysis

This research project used Hettler's *Six Dimensions of Wellness* (National Wellness Institute, 2013) and *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model*, developed by this researcher as the frameworks for understanding wellness services provided by Student Support Services. As part of the archival data, information from a self-identified needs assessment completed by SSS students will be examined. The archival data would also identify (1) which Student Support Services are used; (2) the frequency usage of SSS; and (3) how SSS students plan to use SSS via the needs assessment. The self-identified needs assessment is not mandatory. It is part of the

SSS program application, and is used by the SSS program staff to help prioritize and personalize services to SSS students. Likewise, SSS students complete the assessment as part of the application process as a means to gain support for dealing with their academic challenges.

Survey Data

The survey used Likert scales and open-ended questions via Qualtrics Survey software. Descriptive statistics will be utilized to determine the frequency of Student Support Services usage, and to identify which SSS service were used. Vogt (2007) suggests that researchers should not make inferences from samples, but rather for the entire population so that generalization will be more representative. Therefore, this researcher attempted to survey the total SSS population of 250 students. The data collected from the survey would assist this researcher with developing interview questions for selected participants. Other statistical analysis could occur as a result of the survey data.

In addition to surveying SSS students, health and wellness professionals were also surveyed to assign health and wellness dimensions to the SSS program. Three experts were surveyed to select from six wellness dimensions. This important phase would help control researcher bias and offer more validity to this study.

Interview Data

Creswell and Clark (2011) identified a number of recommendations for skilled researchers conducting qualitative analysis: (1) Identify the core purpose of the study; (2) Develop meaningful research questions; (3) Have an understanding of collecting

and analyzing data; and (4) Be familiar with strategies to convince readers. This researcher followed standard procedures to determine coding and themes that may appear from interviews. More specifically, this researcher used data-reduction steps suggested by Strauss (1987). Step one, open coding, consisted of reviewing all journals, transcripts, and notes to identify general codes. Step two involved axial coding which allowed this researcher to search for themes that could occur from codes recognized from the open coding process. Step three will be the selective coding process. This final stage will require this researcher to look for the most important themes and subthemes that appear from the data.

Assigning wellness dimensions to SSS services would also be determined by wellness experts other than the author. Therefore, two or more raters would agree on a coding system for the Student Support Services program when assigning wellness dimensions. Their assessment allowed for consistency among the wellness professionals.

To ensure validity, this researcher used the triangulation approach by which themes are supported by similar evidence from several interviewees (Vogt, 2011). Triangulation is one of several approaches that will use by which two or more methods are used to confirm results. This researcher would build evidence from themes from more than one source (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Some additional steps, suggested by Krefting (1991) were used by this researcher to ensure reliability and trustworthiness during the coding process.

1. Triangulation: Make use of several different sources, methods to create themes to verify findings
2. Member checks: The interpretations, descriptions, and findings will be shared with interviewed participants to determine accuracy
3. Peer debriefing: Peers will be asked to audit this researcher's findings to determine collaborations with this researcher's interpretations

The Krefting recommendations were used to ensure accuracy of the findings.

Role of the Researcher

As the Director of Student Support Services, this researcher was an insider in this study and all phases of this study. The SSS Director is responsible for supervising staff, overseeing the budget, managing SSS project objectives, and making sure services offered to SSS students are available and meet student needs. Therefore, this researcher is vested in the success of the SSS program. This researcher's goal was to take appropriate quantitative and qualitative steps to reduce insider bias while conducting the analyses (Vogt, 2007). Professional development training in qualitative studies prepared this researcher to carefully examine the various ideas and perceptions during interviews while gathering and collecting data as an observer. This researcher's experience as SSS Director and professional development training makes way for understanding the complexities of data collection and analyzing.

To reduce insider bias, this researcher met often with the dissertation chair during each phase of the research. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the data collected and this researcher's impressions of the data. According to Coghlan

(2007), meetings such as these may assist with preserving a high level of objectivity and minimize bias. To further reduce insider bias, this researcher will maintain a journal so that reactions and opinions will be reflected throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Such efforts will help this researcher to identify and separate her thoughts from what students actually provide during the interview process. Contradictory ideas from students will also be noted by this researcher.

In addition, efforts were made by this researcher to ensure findings and interpretations were credible by including peer debriefing. Peer debriefing involves a peer to critically analyze the study, data, and results without any preconceived notions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Many discussions about the study and results would take place so that this researcher did not have a skewed judgment. Also, further verification would occur via member checking. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe this trustworthiness method as a process that involves review, clarification, and suggestions. Once changes were made by this researcher, the information was reviewed using the same process. This process continued until all data has been confirmed.

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality was strictly maintained. Precautions were taken to safeguard students and the identity of the University used in this study. To protect all data that was collected, reviewed, and analyzed, a coding system was used. Interview transcripts, notes, and surveys were put away in a locked drawer, and security measures, including password protection, were used to keep safe all electronic

information. Data used in this study will be destroyed one year after the study is completed.

Instructions, informed consent forms, and a copy of the survey instrument were provided to students invited to participate. The consent form (Appendix G) must be signed by all survey participants before completing the survey. Participation in this study was strictly voluntary, and quality of SSS services will not be influenced. Participants had to be at least 18 years old to participate. The survey questions and interview questionnaire were reviewed prior to initiation. This researcher also took steps to reduce insider bias, including meeting frequently with the dissertation chair, maintaining a journal, answering the interview questions, and peer member checking.

There were no known costs to the participants of this study. Furthermore, all notes and data, including the dissertation, would not identify any participant of this study. Pseudonyms will be given to the participants to ensure confidentiality. Consistent with University Institutional Review Board policy, all participants were provided with a consent form by this researcher (Appendix G and Appendix K). The purpose of the study, the anticipated length of time for participation, the intended purpose of the data, benefits and risks associated with participating, and the participant's confidentiality rights were explained on the form.

Conclusion

This researcher used an explanatory sequential mixed method approach to this study because she wished to “combine methods, philosophy, and research design orientation” (Cresswell & Clark, 2011, p. 5) by using quantitative and qualitative

methods and analyzing archival data. The explanatory sequential mixed methods of this study were utilized by this researcher to link social, intellectual, and emotional wellness factors to student success. *The Six Dimensions of Wellness* and *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model* were used as a framework. The university's SSS students were the target population. The study was conducted in five phases: (1) collect SSS program and institutional archival data; (2) create and distribute the survey instrument to 250 SSS students; (3) create and distribute survey instrument to two to four health and wellness experts, (4) interview a purposeful selected group of SSS students; and (5) analyze the survey and interview data. Little research has been completed on the connection between academic support programs and student success for SSS students. Furthermore, little is known about how such services may be attributed to wellness.

The data for this study are four-fold. Archival data analysis was used to identify SSS student characteristics. Quantitative analysis was conducted using surveys to determine baseline data from SSS students. Qualitative analysis was used via interviewing a group of students who have participated in the quantitative study. The purpose of the interview was to help this researcher to better understand students' perception of SSS services, and how such programs and services help them to succeed in higher education. Finally, a composite of all data would be used to better understand the "big picture" of student success with SSS students.

Understanding how the relationship of SSS services and wellness factors influence student success was the goal of this research project. Using social, coping,

support, advising, career exploration, peer mentoring, and psychological well-being from *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model*, this researcher sought to better understand student perspectives on how SSS services helped them with their academic goals. Likewise, this researcher hoped to link some aspects of wellness with student skills exemplified in Student Support Services.

The study's findings of the institution and program data of SSS students, the SSS student survey and interviews, and health and wellness expert review of SSS services will be presented in Chapter IV. The results will include SSS student characteristics, an understanding SSS student point-of-views of how SSS services help with student success, and the wellness dimensions assigned to SSS services.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Overview

To an extent, some wellness features may help with student success. Academic support services that include wellness services may be needed to reduce unfavorable student outcomes. The purpose of this chapter is to review the data analysis and findings of this research project: to determine SSS students' perception of the Student Support Services (SSS) program regarding academic wellness services and student success. A sequential mixed methods explanatory research design, involving archival data, surveys, and interviews was used for this study.

Chapter IV is organized into three sections. The first section introduces and describes the study and includes the research questions (RQs), as well as the reasons for selecting the Student Support Services program at California State University, Stanislaus as the site for this study. A summary of the timeline for each of the research activities follows and the participant sample explanation will be discussed. Any adjustments made to the original research proposal will also be shared in the background section of this chapter.

The second section describes the data collection and analysis, including content review, survey set-up, interview set-up, and record keeping. Participant selection and adjustments to the original proposal are discussed in this section, as well as the process for the data analysis and documents used in this study.

The third section presents the findings of all data sources and includes a composite review of archival, survey, and interview data. A discussion of the categories and themes that resulted will also be discussed, followed by a Chapter IV summary.

Introduction

Background of Research Study

This explanatory research project was conducted to better understand SSS student perceptions of SSS services with possible wellness connections at CSU Stanislaus. A general history of SSS programs, both overall and locally, was also described. This researcher points out that the focus was not to determine the success or failure of SSS at the university, but rather to concentrate on SSS student viewpoints of the Student Support Services program.

One-hundred and six SSS students began completing the survey, but 105 consented. Survey participants were not forced to answer all questions, and so the number of participants may vary from 104 to 105 when summarizing the data. The purpose of the survey questions was to better understand which SSS services are used; how often they use its services; the purpose of using SSS services; and the benefits of using SSS services. Currently, 230 SSS students are in the Student Support Services program, and all were given the opportunity to take the survey. The project researcher estimated that the sample would include a representation of all class levels, including first-time freshmen, transfer students, and those who plan to graduate within one year.

The qualitative data collection involved interviews with four selected survey participants. The purpose of the interviews was to gain an in-depth understanding of student perceptions of the Student Support Services program and perceived benefits that may help with student success. Interviews were coded and analyzed for similarities or patterns. A composite analysis of all three data sources was and then reviewed to determine themes that were later assigned to one or more wellness components with a brief explanation.

Research Questions

The Student Support Services program was designed to promote and support students in completing their undergraduate education (Student Support Services, 2013). One aspect of the program at CSU Stanislaus is to help students to have a more pleasant experience with college that eventually leads to student success. Participants in SSS are offered several services to help them succeed, including academic advising, tutoring, financial literacy, and peer mentoring. The following research questions led this study:

RQ 1: Which Student Support Services are SSS students using?

RQ 2: How often are SSS services used by students?

RQ 3: What are the purposes for which students indicate they are using SSS services?

RQ 4: What are the perceived benefits for SSS students using the services to help with student success? Related questions are:

RQ 4A: What do SSS college students perceive as SSS factors that assist with retention?

RQ 4B: What do SSS college students perceive as SSS factors that assist with GPA?

RQ 4C: What do SSS college students perceive as SSS factors that assist with the number of years to graduate?

RQ 5: What wellness components are part of SSS services?

There were five data collection points for this study: the archival phase, the survey phase, the survey of wellness dimensions phase, the interview phase, and the data summary phase. The purpose of the archival phase was to gather SSS student demographic information. This data came from the institution and the Student Support Services program office. The information collected about SSS students contained a good deal of data about the student population including, gender, age, classification, expected graduation date, whether students were required to take the English Proficiency Test (EPT or Entry Level Math (ELM) test, ethnicity, and whether students received the Pell grant.

Through the researcher's role as the Director of Student Support Services, institutional and SSS data were collected to better understand students who are active in SSS. As previously stated, the institution used in this study has a student population of about 9,000, and is located in a rural part of central California. The students of SSS were invited to participate in the survey because this researcher wanted to learn how they value the program's services. Another interest of this

researcher was to assess whether SSS services are linked to some wellness components. Additionally, the medium-sized institution selected in this study has been the home of the Student Support Services program since 1975.

The researcher used the institution and program's databases to contact potential survey participants. Students in the SSS program were emailed the survey via Qualtrics. An invitation to participate in the survey portion of this study was sent to 230 SSS students at CSU Stanislaus. Ultimately, 106 students completed the survey; one declined to continue, leaving 105 who began the survey and provided their consent.

The Student Support Services Program

SSS is a Title IV project that upholds a contract with the U.S. Department of Education (Student Support Services, 2013). Title IV is a result of the Higher Education Act (HEAS) of 1965 that is administratively maintained by the U.S. Department of Education (Federal Student Aid, 2012; CSU Stanislaus, SSS, 2013a) to provide federal financial assistance to students attending postsecondary institutions. The Student Support Services program provides several kinds of academic assistance to help students succeed including, tutoring in academic subjects; study skills; financial aid and literacy information sessions; and education counseling. Other SSS services may include career and personal counseling, mentoring, and assisting foster care youth (Student Support Services, 2013).

Students must meet the federal criteria to be considered for the program: (1) Is a citizen or national of U.S., or meets residency requirements to receive federal

financial aid; (2) Is accepted or enrolled at the institution for the next academic term; (3) Has an academic need; (4) Is identified as low income; (5) Is identified as first generation student; or (6) Has a documented disability. The Student Support Services program has been housed at California State University, Stanislaus since the mid-1970s (California State University, Stanislaus, SSS, 2013), and emphasis is on assisting students to graduate within 6 years and preparing them for endeavors after their undergraduate experience including graduate school or a career.

Participant Selection

All SSS students were invited to take the survey; however, only 105 consented and completed it. Of this sample, four students were selected to be interviewed. This technique is called purposeful sampling because the “sample is gathered deliberately, with a purpose in mind, but not randomly” (Vogt, 2009, p. 81). The focus of the interview phase was explanatory in nature, and consisted of conducting interviews with SSS students thought to represent the general population of SSS. Phase 3 of this research describes the interview process and how it was conducted. More discussion of the third phase is found in the next section.

Data Collection and Analysis

This section will discuss the data set collection process, timelines, and phases of this research. The data collection timeline was as follows:

Archival – Late November 2013

Surveys – Late February to early March 2014 (SSS Students and Health and Wellness Experts)

Interviews – Early March 2014

Composite – Mid March 2014

Data Collection

This research was conducted in four phases. Phase one included collecting and analyzing the archives. Data for this phase of the research came from CSU Stanislaus and the Student Support Services program. The researcher may refer to CSU Stanislaus as the institution or university throughout the rest of this chapter. Student demographics, program usage, and academic needs assessment completed by SSS students are some of the data that were useful to the researcher.

In Phase two, a survey was created and administered to SSS students. Students completed the survey between late February 2014 and early March 2014. Data for the research were collected to determine the frequency of use of the SSS program, the purposes of using the SSS program, and the benefits of using the SSS program. After the analysis has been completed, the researcher will correlate the survey responses with GPA and number of years to graduate of SSS students.

Phase three involved assigning wellness components to SSS services. This particular phase involved an analysis of SSS services by wellness experts, and will be discussed in Chapter V.

Selected SSS participants were interviewed in Phase four. Interviews occurred during mid-March 2014. This step involved interviewing SSS students to gain a better understanding of survey responses and a deeper understanding of how SSS services may help students succeed.

Composite analysis of the archival data, survey data, and interview data occurred in Phase five. The archival data provided the researcher with more information regarding SSS student characteristics. Survey data were gathered using Likert scale-based questions and open-ended questions. Survey data were examined to better understand reasons why SSS students use the Student Support Services program to help them with their academic goals. It was during this phase this researcher sought out experts to assign wellness components to SSS services.

Information collected from the survey was used to help develop follow-up questions for the interview phase. The researcher identified codes, categories, and themes from the interviews to determine meaningful benefits of participating in SSS. Action codes were generated and reviewed to further analyze the interview data, associating participants' opinions, situations, accounts, and experiences. The quantitative and qualitative data were examined in hopes of generating an explanation of how the Student Support Services program assist students with student success as well as better understanding the connection of wellness components rooted in the Student Support Services program.

Archives

The archival data in phase one of this study consisted of examining institutional and SSS databases. Similar information was found in both sources; however, the institutional data were compared to the program's data to ensure consistency. The purpose of reviewing archival data was to examine SSS student characteristics. Demographic information was derived from both sources, and

included similar categories found in the institutional and program's databases such as class level, age, gender, race and ethnicity, and enrollment status. It should be noted that the institutional and program's data were kept in separate locations and later utilized in this research. However, there are no known discrepancies. The Presentation of Findings section further discusses the demographic characteristics later in this chapter.

Surveys

The data collection in phase two of this study involved electronically surveying 230 SSS students using an online survey resource, Qualtrics. The online software was helpful with keeping the collected data secure while allowing for easy access. The survey was designed to capture SSS students' perception of the Student Support Services program. The 19-question survey was developed by the researcher, and consisted of an informed consent, university identification numbers, seven demographic questions, and 10 specific questions on SSS student perceptions regarding (1) the use of SSS services, (2) how SSS services helped, (3) benefits of SSS services, (4) student involvement with SSS, and (5) academic and or career goals. Two open-ended questions were also included as part of the student perception portion of the survey.

Once the survey was drafted, a second person practice (Coughlan, 2007) was applied requiring the researcher to work diligently with a faculty member, and to have three experienced student services professionals at the university take the survey as a pilot test while following formal procedures (see Appendix H, Pilot Test of Survey

Questions). After conferring with the faculty, minor revisions were made, and then uploaded to the web-based Qualtrics survey software. Electronic links were sent to 230 SSS students between late February 2014 and early March 2014 along with directions and requesting their consent.

Wellness Frameworks

Because this study is grounded in frameworks of *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model* and Hettner's *Six Dimensions of Wellness*, it was necessary to include the survey questions to what SSS students deem as important services effective for academic support. This is essential because wellness dimensions will be assigned to the SSS services that students find to be important. In addition to the Student Support Services program having its services matched with a one or more wellness dimensions by the researcher, three other health and wellness professionals familiar with Hettler's wellness dimensions and SSS did the same. Appendix E, Health & Wellness Expert Survey is the instrument health and wellness experts completed. Table 2 , Health and Wellness Expert Responses to SSS Services I and Table 3, Health and Wellness Expert Responses to SSS Services II, list health and wellness dimensions beside each SSS service.

To help control for researcher bias and validity, only wellness dimensions shared by the majority of health and wellness professionals were used to match with SSS services. For instance, if SSS students feel that academic advising is important to their success at the university, then intellectual wellness dimension would be assigned only if it was in common with two of the three experts who completed the instrument.

Note that the intellectual wellness dimension was consistent with all SSS services. The purpose of assigning wellness dimensions to SSS services is to help make the point that wellness dimensions are imbedded in SSS services.

The intellectual wellness component was the most-rated wellness dimension with 100% agreement among 34 SSS services. Social and emotional were the next most highly rated wellness dimensions at 47.05% and 20.59%, respectively.

Occupational and physical wellness components made up another 20.59%.

Spirituality wellness was rated by only one or less health and wellness expert per SSS service; therefore, it was not included in the overall rating of SSS services.

Table 2
Health and Wellness Expert Ratings of SSS Services I

<u>SSS Service</u>	<u>R - 1</u>	<u>R - 2</u>	<u>R - 3</u>
Computer Lab	I	I,S	I,P,O
Wellness Zone	E,S,I,Sp,P	I,E	P,E,I,S
Graduate Forum	I,S	I	I,E,P
Scholarship Award	I	I	I,E,P
Teacher Conference	E,S,I,O	I	E,I
CBEST Preparation	I,S	I	I,E
WPST Preparation	I,S	I	I,E
SSS Summer Orientation	I,S,E	I,S	S,I,E
First Year Experience Course	E,S,I	I,S	P,E,O,I
Year End Graduation	E,S,I	I,S	I,E,S,Sp,P
SSS Socials	I,S,E	S	E,S,P,I
Study Skill	I,S	I	I,S,P,E
Financial Literacy	I,S	I	I,O,P,E
Financial Aid	I,S	I	I,O,P,E
Academic Policy	I,S	I	P,E,I,O
Campus Resources	I,S	I,S	I,E,O,P,Sp
Learning Styles	I,S	I	E,Sp

Note: Health and Wellness Expert Responses – R. Wellness Component Initials: E – Emotional; S – Social; I – Intellectual; O – Occupational. Sp – Spiritual; P - Physical

Table 3

Health and Wellness Expert Ratings of SSS Services II

SSS Service	R - 1	R - 2	R - 3
Stress Management	I,S,E	I,E	E,Sp,P
Study Skills	I,S	I	I,S,P,E
Healthy Living	E,S,I,Sp,P	I	P,Sp,E,I,P
Job Hunting	I,S	I,O	E,S,I,O,P
Budgeting	I,S	I	I,O,P
Alcohol Abuse	I,S	I	E,P,S
Career Exploration	I,S,O	I,O	E,S,I,O,Sp,P
Banking	I,S	I	I,S,O,P
Public Speaking	I,S	I,S	E,I,S,Sp,P
Referrals	E,S,I,O,Sp,P	E,S,Sp,P	I,S,O,P
Personal Guidance	E,S,I,O,P	E,S,I	E,S,I,Sp,P
Graduate School Information	S,I	I	E,I,S,P
Academic Advising	E,S,I	I	I,O,S,P
Tutorial Assistance	S,I	I,S	I,S,O,P
Peer Mentoring	E,S,I	I,S	E,I,S,O,P
Writing Specialist	I	I,O	I,S,O,P
Academic Advising	E,S,I	I	I,O,S,P

Note. Health and Wellness Expert Responses – R. Wellness Component Initials: E – Emotional; S – Social; I – Intellectual; O – Occupational. Sp – Spiritual; P – Physical

In summary, the intellectual wellness dimension was most widely used by the health and wellness experts; it was assigned to all SSS services. It is likely that intellectual wellness encourages creativity and the desire to learn with SSS services. For example, concerning academic advising, intellectual wellness may help with students to engage in new ideas in regards to building their class schedule for the upcoming semester.

The first health and wellness expert has held her nursing license for over 45 years, and has been teaching health courses since 1971 at the university. The second health and wellness expert is a certified health educator at a nearby rural health

facility. The third health and wellness expert is a registered nurse, and has been in her profession for over 20 years within the 6-county service area of the university.

Interviews

The data collection in Phase four of this research consisted of four interviews. Four SSS students were purposefully selected as interviewees. Preferably, participants representing all class levels would have been used, and were selected with this intent in mind. However, one individual progressed to the next class level in the middle of the academic year. Another ideal goal for the selection process was to interview six to nine participants. However, because strong themes coincided with the survey data, four was thought to be just as noteworthy. Table 4 summarizes the features of students who were interviewed for this study. Additional interview data are available in the presentation of findings section of this chapter.

Table 4

Interviewee Characteristics

Interviewee	Classification	Plan Grad Term	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Major	Cum GPA Range
1	Freshman	Spr 2017	M	Hispanic/Latino	Pol Sci	2.0-2.5
2	Senior	Spr 2014	F	Hispanic/Latino	Bus Adm	3.0-3.5
3	Senior	Spr 2015	M	Hispanic/Latino	Biol Sci	2.0-2.5
4	Sophomore	Spr 2017	F	Blk/African Am	Psych	3.0-3.5

Note. Pol Sci – Political Science; Bus Adm – Business Administration; Biol Sci – Biological Sciences; Psych—Psychology

The interviewees had different program goals, and represented a spread of classification statuses as well as current grade point averages.

The purposefully selected students were interviewed based on certain characteristics selected for purposes of the research ideas (Plano & Creswell, 2008). Selection-based factors included their survey responses, classification at the university, gender, and planned graduation year. Other demographic information was collected, but was not part of the selection process. All participants had similar demographics and the goal of timely degree completion in mind. After the content review was completed, minor revisions were made to the instrument, and participants were invited to interview via a phone call. The interviews took place during the second week of March 2014, and were conducted face-to-face. Interview sessions were recorded, and the researcher took notes during each session. Field notes were also prepared following each interview to accurately record the researcher's thoughts and tone of all interviews. The recordings were transcribed into text, followed by listening to the recording while checking for accuracy.

Interviewee 1 is an active participant in SSS, and is a member of student government at the university. He is attending as a second-semester student who is taking a noncollege level math course and 9 units of other course work. His involvement with SSS includes completing the First Year Experience (FYE) course and advising on academics, career, financial literacy, personal counseling, and tutoring. He often visits the computer lab and the Wellness Zone to complete assignments and to relax. He applied to SSS to strengthen his areas of concern including, note taking strategies, improve time management skills, and for help with curriculum planning.

Interviewee 2 is also active in SSS, was admitted to the university as a junior in 2011 as an upper division transfer student, and is enrolled in 15 units. The student is also a peer mentor, and participated in SSS for one semester prior to becoming part of the SSS student staff. When applying to the program, the student assessment included academic advising and career planning as this student's interests. This researcher was particularly interested in hearing what this interviewee had to say because of her perceptions of "both worlds." She is an active participant who utilizes SSS services, and she helps to meet students' needs as a peer mentor. Therefore, she has the opportunity to be both the receiver and giver of SSS services. Her assessment needs when joining SSS included academic advising, tutorial assistance, improvement in math skills, and Writing Proficiency Standardized Test (WPST) preparation.

Interviewee 3 was admitted to the university in 2010 as a first-time freshman. He is currently enrolled in 14 units, and was admitted to SSS in spring 2011. Much of his time is taken with working off campus. Therefore, he desires to attend more workshops and be more active with the Student Support Services program. However, he spends most of his SSS time by regularly visiting his academic advisor and in the computer lab. When he first applied to the program, he listed his concerns as curriculum planning, improving reading and writing skills, and assistance with note taking.

Interviewee 4 attended the university as a first-time freshman in 2011, and has kept her original major and added another. She is a double major in psychology and

sociology, and is currently enrolled in 17 units. She has goals of working with teens, and is also focused on social welfare. She too would like to be more involved in SSS, but is unable to due to time constraints. She has held several student assistant jobs at the university including with housing and student services. This student was first admitted to SSS in Fall 2013, and identified having challenges with math and course planning, as well as having academic probation concerns.

The final phase involved examining all three data sources to determine mutual themes. The goal of this part of the research project was to identify any patterns within the data that might supply the researcher with evidence to support *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model*. This process was thought to provide a more in-depth summary of this study in an effort to achieve a better understanding of how well the Student Support Services program assist with student success.

The total data sources included archival data from two databases from the institution and SSS, 19 survey questions with 105 participants, 5 hours of interviews with four participants, and 5 hours of reviewing documents. This researcher also used notes and recorded the interviews to ensure validity. As recommended by Creswell and Clark (2011), this study included the triangular process using themes recognized throughout all data sources to help with clarity.

Presentation of Findings

Introduction

Participants of this study provided evidence to support the Student Support Services programs, including academic advising, inviting study areas, and Peer

Mentors help SSS students achieve their academic goals. One-hundred and five SSS students completed the survey, and four students from the respondent list were interviewed. Participants represented across-the-board SSS student characteristics that included age, sex, enrollment status, classification, planned graduation term, and the use and purpose of using program services.

Archive

The archival information provided several SSS population characteristics. At the time of the study, the total number of SSS students was 230. All data provided was based on the Fall 2013 census date, defined as the 20th day of instruction.

Table 5 provides the following demographics: 83.48% of the SSS population are upper- division students with 40.00% being seniors and 23.48% juniors. Lower division students make up the remaining 36.52% with 18.26% freshmen and the same for sophomores. Age ranges were as follows: 49.56% were 21 to 25 years of age; 37.83 were under 21; 6.52 were over 30 and 6.09% were 26 – 30 years of age. Females outnumbered males three to one, at 73.04% and 26.96%, respectively. Many ethnic groups make up the SSS student population, with most being Hispanic or Latino (77.83%) and 22.17% being Asian, African American, White, Unknown, or Two or more races combined.

Table 5

SSS Student Demographics I

SSS Student Characteristic	Count	%
Enrollment Classification		
Upper Division	146	83.48%
Lower Division	84	36.52%
Age		
Less than 21	87	37.83%
21-25	114	49.56%
26-30	14	6.09%
Over 30	15	6.52%
Gender		
Female	168	73.04%
Male	62	26.96%
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latin	179	77.83%
Asian	20	8.70%
Black/African Am	11	4.78%
White	11	4.78%
Unknown	7	3.04%
More Than 1 Race	2	.87%

The first demographic table, above, and the demographic table below show that most SSS students are upper division students which compliments the Schwartz study discussed in Chapter II, whereby several identity stages have been identified for students who adjust to college. It seems that upper division students are at the moratorium stage, meaning that students have identified specific goals to help them with their academic goals.

The following table indicates the number of years students have been part of SSS. Many (27.39%) of the survey respondents are in their first year with SSS, and a

few more are in their second year (31.30%). There are slightly more fourth-year program participants, with 14.78%, than third-year participants (13.48%). Fifth-year students numbered 26 (11.30%). The smallest group was 6+-year participants, with only four (1.73%).

Table 6

SSS Archival Demographics II

Year in SSS	Count	Percent
First	63	27.39%
Second	72	31.30%
Third	31	13.48%
Fourth	34	14.78%
Fifth	26	11.30%
Sixth	3	1.30%
Past Sixth	1	.43%

The archival demographics in the following table summarize the current enrollment status of SSS students when admitted to the university as well as their number of years at the university. The majority of students (79.57%) started the Student Support Services program as continuing students. Some began SSS as transfers (10.43%), while others (9.13%) started as first-time freshman (FTF). Only two were Returning Transfer (RT) students.

Table 7

Student Demographics III

Current SSS Enrollment Status	Count	%	Number of Years at CSU Stanislaus		
			Count	%	
Continuing	183	79.57	1	45	19.57
Transfer	24	10.43	2	50	21.73
FTF	21	9.13	3	50	21.73
RT	2	.87	4	35	15.22
			5	38	16.52
			6	10	4.35
			>6	1	.43

The third demographic table shows that SSS students are continuing their education while completing their educational goals within six years.

Other demographic information from this data source revealed that the expected graduation date varies from class to class. The farther along the classification, the more likely the graduation year had changed. Table 8 summarizes student terms to graduate. Notice that it is likely that as freshman, students have less defined and accurate expectations, having only one intended graduation term. However, as time goes on, students make adjustments to their academic plans, and several terms are indicated.

Table 8

Student Demographics IV

Classification	Expected Graduation		Count	%
Freshman	Spring	2017	42	18.26
Sophomore	Spring	2016	5	2.17
	Spring	2017	37	16.08
Junior	Spring	2015	5	2.17
	Spring	2016	14	6.09
	Spring	2017	21	9.13
Senior	Fall	2013	17	7.39
	Spring	2014	55	23.91
	Summer	2014	2	.87
	Spring	2015	12	5.21
	Spring	2016	1	.43
	Spring	2017	4	1.74

The final demographic table shows that many survey participants plan to graduate between Spring 2014 and Spring 2016, and are representative of the goals of upper division SSS students. The other distinction is that lower division students seem to have a four or five year goal for completing degree requirements, with graduation goals between Spring 2016 and Spring 2017.

Survey

Two-hundred and thirty SSS students were invited to complete the survey, 106 responded, and 105 surveys were used in this study. Table 9 summarizes the demographic data for gender, class level, age, race and ethnicity, and the SSS students' status when beginning the program. The majority of the participants are upper division students with 42.0% seniors and 27.0% juniors, while sophomores and freshmen respondents made up the rest at 18.0% and 13.0%, respectively. The age groups represented, in order of largest to smallest are as follows: 50 students were age

21 to 25; 36 were under 21; eight were 26 to 30; and six were over 30 years of age. The survey participants were 70.0% female and 30.0% male. A good representation of diversity occurred among the survey participants with the greatest percentage being Hispanic or Latino at an overwhelming 71.0%. Additional groups included Asian with 10.0%, “Other,” including Mexican American, Assyrian, Mexican, Hmong and Asian-Indian were self-reported by survey respondents at 9%; Black or African American with 6.0%, American Indian with 1.0%; and White and More than One Race tied at 2.0%. A majority (63.0%) of survey participants began the SSS programs as first-year students; 23.0% started as transfer students; and 14.0% began as continuing students.

Table 9

SSS Survey Participant Demographics I

Enrollment Status	Count	Percent
Upper Division	72	69.0%
Lower Division	33	31.0%
Age		
Under 21	36	35.0%
21-25	50	49.0%
26-30	8	7.8%
Over 30	6	5.8%
Gender		
Female	74	70.0%
Male	31	30.0%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latin	75	71.0%
Asian	10	10.0%
Other	9	9.0%
Black/African Am	6	6.0%
White	2	2.0%
More Than 1 Race	2	2.0%
Am Indian	1	1.0%

Year Started in SSS		
First Year Student	65	63.0%
Transfer Student	24	23.0%
Continuing Student	15	14.0%

Note: n = 105 for class level, gender, and ethnicity; n = 104 for enrollment status when starting SSS.

The survey participant tables are similar to the program's demographic tables, including most survey respondents were comprised of upper division students, were female, and are Hispanic.

Table 10 indicates other demographic information about the survey participants. Most of the survey respondents started at the university within the last 6 years (27.0%); these represent students beginning college in 2013. Twenty percent began their college experience in 2012, and 15.0% started in 2011. In 2010, 18.0% of SSS student respondents started college; the same percentage was true for the year of 2009. Not many respondents (2) are still in the SSS program who started college in 2008. Moreover, the majority of the respondents started SSS at the university with 89.0% compared to 11.0% who did not.

Table 10

Survey Participant Demographics II

Start year at University	Count	%	Start SSS at another college or university	Count	%
2013	28	27.0%	Yes	11	11.0%
2012	21	20.0%	No	93	89.0%
2011	16	15.0%			
2010	19	18.0%			
2009	19	18.0%			
2008	2	2.0%			

In summary, there are more upper division students in the SSS population, at 83.48%, compared to survey participants (69.0%). However, the smaller percentage of the survey is partly due to the fact that not all SSS students completed the survey.

Another note was the race/ethnicity characteristic. The institutional and program data had more Black or African-American students in the SSS population with 11, compared to students who distinguished their race or ethnicity as unknown with seven. However, the opposite occurred among survey respondents: More students identified themselves as race unknown compared to Black or African Americans with nine and six, respectively.

Student Assessment of the Student Support Services Program

The second set of survey questions explored perceptions of SSS services and participant involvement in the SSS program. The top three services used by program participants were academic advising with 96.0%, the Computer Lab with 83.0%, and workshops with 67.0%. Over half of the respondents indicated that they utilized Peer Mentors and the Writing Specialist with 58.0% and 53.0%, respectively. According to the respondents, 30% used tutorial services, and 25.0% used the Wellness Zone, ranking these as the least used services.

Table 11

SSS Student Use of Services (Q10)

SSS Service	Count	%
Academic Advising	100	96.0
Computer Lab	86	83.0
Workshops	70	67.0

Peer Mentors	60	58.0
Writing Specialist	55	53.0
Tutorial Assistance	31	30.0
The Wellness Zone	26	25.0
<hr/>		
N = 104		

Again, the Schwartz research may be attributed to Table 11 whereby students have identified services they feel will help them succeed.

Table 12 discloses the survey respondents' rating of their views of SSS services that assisted them. A 5-point scale was used to describe their perceptions, whereby strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, or strongly agree were the identifiers. Most students strongly agreed or agreed that SSS helped them succeed by using a number of services, including (1) reaching their educational goals, (2) reaching personal goals, (3) maintaining good grades/GPA, (4) persisting toward graduation, (5) successfully completing basic skill courses, (6) successfully completing graduation requirements, (7) successfully completing the Writing Proficiency Standardized Test, (8) successfully completing graduate school requirements, and (9) SSS services being offered during a convenient time. Overall, the respondents agreed that SSS is helpful with meeting their academic and individual goals.

Table 12

SSS Student Assessment of How Services Helped I (Q11)

Service Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	N
11-1	2.9%	0.0%	3.8%	37.5%	55.8%	4.43	104
11-2	1.9%	1.9%	16.3%	43.3%	36.6%	4.11	104
11-3	2.9%	2.9%	11.5%	41.3%	41.3%	4.15	104
11-4	2.9%	0%	8.7%	33.7%	54.8%	4.38	104
11-5	2.9%	1.9%	30.8%	30.8%	33.7%	3.90	104
11-6	2.9%	.96%	10.6%	36.6%	49.0%	4.28	104
11-7	2.9%	3.8%	24.0%	26.0%	43.2%	4.03	104
11-8	2.9%	4.8%	33.7%	30.8%	27.9%	3.76	104
11-9	3.8%	2.9%	8.7%	31.7%	52.9%	4.27	104

Notes: 11-1 = Clarify how I can reach my educational goals; 11-2 = Clarify how I can reach my personal goals; 11-3 = Maintain good grades/GPA at CSU Stanislaus; 11-4 = Persist toward graduation; 11-5 = Successfully complete basic skill courses; 11-6 = Successfully complete graduation requirements; 11-7 = Successfully complete the WPST; 11-8 = Successfully complete graduate school requirements; 11-9 = SSS services are offered at times and days that are convenient for me.

Table 13 combines the identifiers for a better understanding of the respondents' SSS services assessment:

Table 13

SSS Student Assessment of How Services Helped II (Q11)

Service Question	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Mean	N
11-1	2.9%	3.8%	93.3%	4.43	104
11-2	3.8%	16.3%	79.9%	4.11	104
11-3	5.8%	11.5%	82.6%	4.15	104
11-4	2.9%	8.7%	88.5%	4.38	104
11-5	4.8%	30.8%	64.5%	3.90	104
11-6	3.9%	10.6%	85.6%	4.28	104
11-7	6.7%	24.0%	69.2%	4.03	104
11-8	7.7%	33.7%	58.7%	3.76	104
11-9	6.7%	8.7%	84.6%	4.27	104

Tables 12 and 13 illustrate how students value SSS services. Top services include helping to: reach educational goals, persist toward graduation, complete graduation requirements, and maintain good grades.

Table 14 lists the SSS services that were identified as having been most helpful to the respondents. Advice and assistance in course selection scored highest with 81.73%; “The Lab,” including computer lab, study area, and printing scored 69.23%. The SSS scholarship was next at 49.04%, with peer mentoring close behind at 48.07%. Probation counseling with 7.69%, and math skills with 5.77% ranked lowest. Participants were allowed to select as many services they felt were helpful.

Table 14

Most Helpful SSS Services (Q12)

SSS Service	Count	%
Advice and assistance in course selection	85	81.73%
The Lab (computer lab, study area, printing)	72	69.23%
SSS scholarships	51	49.04%
Peer Mentoring	50	48.07%
Financial and or economic literacy	45	43.26%
Academic and life skill workshops	40	38.46%
Time Management	38	36.53%
Career assessment	29	27.88%
Interacting with other SSS students	29	27.88%
Study skills	28	26.92%
Test preparation	26	25.00%
Test anxiety	26	25.00%
Academic events	26	25.00%
Referrals to other campus resources	25	24.00%
Assistance with completing and or applying for financial aid	24	23.06%
Tutoring	23	22.11%
Oral communication	21	20.19%
Assistance in applying for admission to graduate school	20	19.23%
Improve reading and or writing skills	20	19.23%
Skill assessment	18	17.30%
Orientation to the University	18	17.30%
Note taking tips	17	16.34%
First Year Experience (FYE) course	11	10.58%

Learning community	10	9.61%
Probation counseling	8	7.69%
Math skills	6	5.77%
Other	3	2.88%
<hr/>		
<i>N=104</i>		

The services that SSS survey participants have identified to be most helpful are related to intellectual wellness. Intellectual wellness involves mental stimuli that allows for creativity and knowledge to be learned and explored. Therefore, SSS students are more likely to perceive services as most helpful when services assist them with concerns that interest them, including the understanding of how to adjust to college expectations.

Students who completed the survey were asked to rate their level of involvement in the Student Support Services program. As represented in Table 15, *Level of Involvement I*, 48 of 105 respondents (46.15%) considered themselves high users of the program by utilizing services weekly with 46.15%. Thirteen respondents reported using the services fewer than two times per semester, and had the lowest percentage of 12.50%. In Table 16, *Level of Involvement II*, respondents who took part of the program's services are shown by how they would like to be more involved. Most respondents indicated that they would like to be more involved by strongly agreeing or agreeing with a total rating of 85.57%; some students (12.50%) neither agreed nor disagreed; and very few students strongly disagreed or disagreed with 2.88% combined.

Table 15

Level of Involvement I (Q13)

Service Usage	Count	%
High	48	45.71
Moderate	44	41.90
Low	13	12.38

Note: Low = Use of SSS services 2 or fewer times per semester; Moderate = Use of SSS services 1-2 times per month; High = Use of SSS services at least weekly

Table 16

Level of Involvement II (Q14)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	N
14	.96%	1.92%	12.50%	45.19%	40.38%	4.20	105

Note: Q14 = I would like to be more involved with SSS services

Both tables display the SSS service usage and the SSS survey participant's desire to utilize it more. It is likely that SSS students would be more active if time conflicts did not get in the way.

Question 15 was one of the survey's two, open-ended questions. It asked SSS students to specify how they would like to be involved, or to identify other services they would like SSS to provide. Results from this question mirrored the response to Question 10 that asked SSS students to identify the services they perceive to be the most helpful them. Of 52 responses, almost half (25) wanted to be more involved in workshops, but did not say which ones:

“I would like to go to more workshops.”

“I would like to attend as much (sic) workshops as possible because all are important. “

A few respondents stated that they would like to attend workshops, but time conflicts did not allow them to attend. Some of their comments:

“I can never attend the literacy workshops because of time conflicts with my classes...”

“I would like to attend more workshops, but I can’t make the times they are offered.”

“I would like to go to the workshops more often; unfortunately the workshops that are offered during the month do not always fit into my weekly schedule.”

One workshop enthusiast had this to say about being involved more with SSS,

“I would like to offer a workshop.”

Sixteen students responded that they were interested in events or trips, peer mentoring, and academic socials. These themes are summarized by the following comments:

“Every time the graduate forum is hosted, something comes up and I am unable to attend. This is something I have been wanting to do.”

“I would like for us as part of the SSS program to involve with each other and get to know more people.”

The remaining commented on how SSS students want to be more involved or mentioned of ideas of other possible SSS services to consider, including career and other services, with three combined responses.

“I would like to have more time to be involved in receiving advice for my career goals.”

“I wish I had time to be in the Wellness Zone.”

Graduation goals were also part of the survey. Most SSS respondents (53) plan to graduate between Spring 2014 and Spring 2015. Some students plan to graduate between summer 2015 and spring 2016 with a number of 25 altogether. Other students' graduation date is planned between Summer 2016 and Spring 2017 with a combined total of 20. Very few students have intentions of graduating between Summer 2017 and Spring 2018, with a five as the number of respondents and only one with a graduation date planned later. Table 17 summarizes the responses to survey Question 16. After a review of the institutional data of SSS students from Fall 2004 to Fall 2007 start terms, nearly 91.54% of SSS students graduated in less than or equal to six years. These SSS graduation dates correspond with survey respondents' graduation goals, whereby 74.26% of respondents plan to graduate between Spring 2014 and Spring 2016.

Table 17

Academic Goal (Q16)

Graduation Term & Year	Count	%
Spring 2014	23	21.90
Fall 2014	7	6.66
Spring 2015	23	21.90
Summer 2015	2	1.90
Fall 2015	6	5.71
Spring 2016	17	16.19
Summer 2016	2	1.90

Fall 2016	2	1.90
Spring 2017	16	15.23
Summer 2017	3	2.86
Spring 2018	2	1.90
Fall 2018	1	0.95
Other	1	0.95

Note: N = 105

Table 17 shows similar graduation goals as the overall SSS program in that many students hope to graduate between the Spring 2014 semester and Spring 2016 semester, followed by a number of students planning who plan to graduate by the Spring 2017 semester.

Students were asked about their interests after graduation. Table 18 recaps Questions 17 and 18 by listing SSS students' plans after graduation as regards attending graduate school or working. Most respondents strongly agree or agree that they plan to work soon after graduation with a number of 94 altogether; nine respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and only one strongly disagreed or disagreed. However, academic plans after graduation were more spread out. Respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with planning to attend graduate school after graduation with a combined percentage of 65.38. A little more than a quarter of the students were neutral with 26.92%, and 7.69% strongly disagreed or disagreed with graduate school plans soon after graduation. The latter data imply that SSS students have other plans, or that they are unsure of their endeavors after graduation.

Table 18

Career and Academic Goals Post Graduation (Q17 & Q18)

Question	Strongly Disagree		Neutral	Strongly Agree		Mean	N
	Disagree	Disagree		Agree	Agree		
17	0.00%	1.90%	8.57%	22.86%	66.67%	4.54%	105
18	2.88%	4.80%	26.92%	27.88%	37.50%	3.89%	104

Note: 17 = I plan to work after graduation; 18 = I plan to attend graduate school after graduation

Clearly, most SSS survey participants have a goal of working or attending graduate school after completing degree requirements, indicating that students will feel prepared. The final identity status, achievement, described by Schwartz and Associates (2010) is demonstrated here. The achievement status is when students receive some type of fulfillment that is associated with a psychological well-being. *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model* is also depicted in the above example because it reiterates the relationship of student motivation and student success, including post-graduation endeavors.

The final survey question was open ended. The respondents were asked to provide a brief description of any other topic or concern related to SSS that was not already discussed. The 34 responses to the open-ended question were summarized into the following categories: (1) Did not have more to share; (2) Pleased with SSS/Gratitude; (3) Academic Advising; (4) Other staff; and (5) Dissatisfaction. The majority of respondents felt that the survey was conclusive, meaning that 11 of them had nothing else to add or contribute. Fifteen respondents were pleased with SSS, and shared positive remarks. Academic advising received positive feedback from seven respondents, and some had something positive to say about other SSS staff. Three

students shared their dissatisfaction with the Student Support Services program.

However, one student started to comment in a negative way, but ended with

encouragement.

The comment categories and some responses are captured in Table 19.

Table 19

Respondents Comments (Q19)

Category	Comment
Did not have more to share	<p>“I think that all topics were covered.”</p> <p>“N/A (All topics were addressed).”</p> <p>“Everything was addressed on the survey, and I can’t think of anything else than the ones I was surveyed.”</p>
Pleased with SSS/Gratitude	<p>“I don’t have any concerns about SSS. I love this program, and everyone has been friendly and helpful to further my career goals.”</p> <p>“...everything I needed was provided by SSS. There is nothing I can ask for more when there is more than enough provided. Thanks!”</p> <p>“Overall, [SSS] is a great program and a special highlight are the goodies that they give out. Pencils, erasers, and other freebie’s that are available are very useful for students who are short on money.”</p>
Academic Advising	<p>“My academic advisor has helped me a lot!”</p> <p>“I think everyone is very nice and willing to help especially my advisor...always know how to give excellent advice.”</p>
Other Staff	<p>“Peer mentors are friendly and welcoming.”</p> <p>“All the employees are doing a great job.”</p>

*Table 19 Respondents Comments
(Q19), cont.*

Dissatisfaction

“...Attending the workshops were tedious in my case because I felt that the topics were common sense. But of course, I know that isn't the case for all other SSS students.”

“I was unsatisfied with the new workshop make-up policy... There should be also a graduation recognition both semesters. Other than that, I think the academic advisors, writing specialist, peer mentors, and staff are doing a great job! Thank you!”

Note: N = 34

Table 19's summary of open its open-ended question compliments the previous survey questions; in general, SSS survey respondents appreciate the services.

Interviews

The main focus of the interview was to further investigate student points of view regarding SSS services. Four SSS students were selected to be interviewed. The interview transcripts complement survey responses in several ways. For the first question, interviewees noted that their first semester college experience was not as positive as it could have been, and that they became more informed about their choices that helped with their academic goals. Participants answering the second question had evidence that a guide of some sort was needed. Academic advising was a shared valued service, and coincided with survey participants' perceptions because of their expertise and means to motivate students.

In response to Question 3, the interviewed students commented on the need to precisely understand program requirements, and relied on their academic advisors.

Other important services relevant to interviewees include having school supplies, scholarship opportunities, and the computer lab. They also shared the importance of SSS scholarship opportunities to help with their academic endeavors.

Question 4 offered more insight to the perceptions of SSS students as they expressed their use of other SSS services.

Students interviewed shared in Question 5 that having a plan and being encouraged was essential to their college experience. Moreover, in Question 6, participants look forward to being part of a supportive or social environment with the Student Support Services program.

The last interview question asked participants to clarify some of the survey responses. Interviewees were asked to comment on one or more of the following questions:

Q12 – The SSS services which have been most helpful to me are... (a list of SSS services was provided); academic advising was the number one choice with 82%.

Q15 – Please specify how you would like to be involved, or identify other services you would like SSS to provide; 47% of survey respondents wanted to be more involved in workshops.

Q19 – Please share a brief description of any other topic or concern related to SSS services that you feel was not addressed in this survey. Of 34 respondents, the majority (11), shared that the survey covered everything. The second-highest number of respondents (9) commented on being pleased with SSS.

In the following tables, the thematic patterns from the interviews are shared to better understand interview participants' points of view regarding common survey responses. Overall, academic advising was a reoccurring theme.

Table 20

Interview Themes I

Question	Theme	Comments
1. Tell me about your college or University experience	Early and general college experience	<p>“When I first came here, I had no idea of what to expect.” “The (First Year Experience) class really guided me with what I’m supposed to be doing.”</p> <p>“I’ve been very involved during college, and I have had a good experience.”</p> <p>“So far my college experience is interesting because I work.”</p> <p>“My freshmen year, I wasn’t very active...if you are not a part of something, you can really get lost.”</p>
2. How does SSS help you with student success?	Academic advising	<p>“My academic advisor was a great help to me.”</p> <p>“Having an advisor helps me a lot with many questions. Also, the Relaxation Center (Wellness Zone) helps me to relax.”</p> <p>“The most important part of SSS is having an advisor because she motivates you and provides information about classes.”</p> <p>“Some of the majors do not have advisors that grow with you.” I found that my SSS advisor does. It seems that this whole department is set up for helping people.”</p>
3.	Academic advising SSS Scholarship	<p>“Academic advising is great.” The director checks up on me...helps me to stay focused.”</p>

What does SSS offer to help you stay in school?

“SSS offers many things, like the scholarship, or with other peer mentors.”

“The academic advisors are the key roles and the computer lab; it’s a place that offers an environment I can do homework and work on projects.”

“The scholarship will help me because I do not receive very much financial aid.”
“SSS offers some kind of an escape in the computer lab.”

Table 21

Interview Themes II

Question	Theme(s)	Comments
4. What does SSS offer to help you stay in good academic standing?	Other SSS services	<p>“The academic scholarship is an incentive to get good grades.”</p> <p>“One of the main things is that I have reminders. For example, drop dates to help with GPA. “Consulting with advisor is helpful when considering classes.”</p> <p>“Tutoring helps me when I’m having difficulty in classes.”</p> <p>“Grade reports scare me; I don’t want to be a disappointment.”</p>
5. What does SSS offer to help you graduate within 6 years?	Having a plan Academic advisors	<p>“The main thing is the 4-year plan... I know exactly what classes to take.”</p> <p>“Retention services help to keep us going, and planning our schedules.”</p> <p>“The advisors helped you stay focused.” I am a first generation student, and this program knows how to help students like me.”</p> <p>“Meeting with academic advisors is amazing, especially coming from a major that do not offer advising except</p>

6: What are other considerations SSS offers to help you with student success that has not already been addressed?	Social and supportive environment	<p>what's on paper. The advisor is really what keeps me staying on top, and making sure that I am doing everything.”</p> <p>“A big help is the First Year Experience course. It covers taking notes, test anxiety...it's been really good.”</p> <p>“The Writing Specialist and workshops are helpful too.”</p> <p>“I think just like the environment. I did not know anything...I remember that I needed helped, and was directed to SSS. I consider this as a family. I consider this for mental and emotional support...more of a comfort zone.</p> <p>“The support network would be the underlying service to help you.”</p> <p>“The literacy workshop was very helpful. I would like to attend more, but I have time conflicts.”</p> <p>“The socials give SSS students a chance to meet other SSS students.”</p>
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Table 22

Interview Themes III

Question	Theme(s)	Comments
7. Other comments based on survey responses/open-ended questions	<p>Enjoy workshops</p> <p>Time conflicts</p>	<p>“I think different variations of workshops would be good because I learned many of the information from the (First Year Experience) class.” I realized that after the first few weeks of the class, that my perception was wrong about being a college student. I learned so much.”</p> <p>“I enjoy the hard work that academic advisors put into their students.”</p> <p>“The workshops are very helpful because they are not just about academics, they are about life skills.”</p>

“Having more diverse workshops or bringing in more people to help present may be helpful.”

“My main concern is that I don’t want to study in the library because people tend to distract you. When you’re in the (SSS) computer lab, it helps you to stay more focused. It has computers and printers available if you do not have one at home.”

“I wish I could attend more workshops, but I work in the morning and go to classes in the afternoon. I am interested in career planning and internships as workshop topics.”

“I want to take advantage of the many services SSS has to offer, and to be more involved.”

Note: Interview Q7 asked interviewees to provide clarifications to survey questions 12, 15, or 19; Survey Q12 – The SSS service which have been most helpful to me are (select from list); academic advising was number one choice with 82%; Survey Q15 – Please specify how you would like to be involved, or identify other services you would like SSS to provide; 47% wanted to be more involved in workshops; Survey Q19 – Please share a brief description of any other topic or concern related to SSS services that you feel were not addressed in this survey; 26% responded with being pleased with SSS

The interview themes summarized in Tables 20 through 22 all provided a deeper understanding of what and why SSS services are important to interviewees.

Composite Analysis

The survey and interview data revealed several areas that may contribute to student success. The archival data identified the average SSS student as having the following demographic characteristics: (1) enrollment status as an upper division student; (2) most are between 21 – 25 years old; and (3) there are more female participants than males.

The summary of SSS services utilized is as follows:

Utilizing services from their academic advisor	81.73%
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Using the computer lab	69.23%
Financial literacy, peer mentors, and scholarship	43.26% - 49.04%
Interests in time management and workshops	36.53% -38.46%
Oral communication, tutoring, financial aid assistance, referrals, test preparation, test anxiety strategies, academic events, study skills, career assessment, and interaction with other SSS students	20.19% - 27.88%
FYE, note taking tips, skill assessment, orientation to the University, graduate school assistance, and reading and writing improvement	10.58% - 19.23%
Math skills, probation counseling, learning communities, and other	2.88% - 9.61%

Hettler's *Six Dimensions of Wellness* was the framework used when rating SSS services. Chapter III contains more information about *The Six Dimensions of Wellness*. Table 23 recaps recurring patterns throughout all data sources and attaches wellness components to the SSS services.

Table 23

Common Themes

SSS Service	%	Wellness Component	Identified Common Theme
Tutoring	22.11%	I	*
Oral communication	20.19%		
Assistance in applying for admission to graduate school	19.23%	I,S	
*Improve reading and or writing skills	19.23%	I	*
Skill assessment	17.30%		
Orientation to the University	17.30%		
Note taking tips	16.34%	I	*

First Year Experience (FYE) course	10.58%	I,E
Learning community	9.61%	
Probation counseling	7.69%	
Math skills	5.77%	
Other	2.88%	

*N = 104. *Includes the Writing Specialist and WPST preparation*

Table 24

Common Themes (Continued)

SSS Service	%	Wellness Component	Identified Common Theme
Referrals to other campus resources	24.00%		
Test preparation	25.00%		
Test anxiety	25.00%	I	*
Academic events	25.00%	I,S	*
Study skills	26.92%	I	*
Career assessment	27.88%		
Interacting with other SSS students	27.88%	S,E	*
Time Management	36.53%	I	*
Academic and life skill workshops	38.46%	I,S	*
Financial and or economic literacy	43.26%		
Peer Mentoring	48.07%	I,S,E	*
SSS scholarships	49.04%	I	*
The Lab (computer lab, study area, printing)	69.23%	I,S	*
Advice and assistance in course selection (Academic Advisors)	81.73%	I,S	*

N=104

Tables 23 and 24 show wellness dimensions assigned to 26 of 35 SSS services, and reflect the majority of health and wellness experts' opinions of the wellness dimension that is most appropriate for each SSS service; a complete list of wellness dimension assignments is found in Tables 2 and 3. Additionally, 13 themes were identified by this researcher that correspond with survey respondents and interview participants.

Quality of Research

The researcher took several steps to ensure that the collected data were reliable and trustworthy. Confidentiality and honesty was also a concern, and a criteria was followed to protect survey respondents and interview participants. A number of steps were also taken to appropriately review institutional and program documents for this research to reduce insider bias (Vogt, 2007).

Collecting data from several sources, including archival, survey, and interviews was one of many assets of this study. Likewise, triangulation of the data was utilized to increase validity and credibility, and to gain a richer understanding. This was a useful technique when checking for consistency. Peer debriefing occurred for each interview to prove or disprove themes or patterns identified by this researcher.

Member checking and peer debriefing were other techniques used to confirm the interview findings. This is a process by which the interview transcript is provided to each interviewee, giving them an opportunity make any corrections. To reduce errors, the interviews were recorded and notes were taken by the researcher. When transcribing, the recording was played for each interview, followed by reading and rereading to safeguard against inaccuracy. This process was repeated at least three times so that quality of data was maintained.

The researcher also used peer debriefing to help analyze the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A journal was maintained with analytic memos when collecting and analyzing the interview data. Also, the researcher regularly met with the dissertation

chair during this all-inclusive process. Chapter III details the steps mentioned in this section.

Conclusion

The impression of wellness components being embedded in SSS services is apparent in the surveys and interview data of this research. Intellectual, social, and emotional wellness dimensions are consistent with student perceptions of SSS services, the ratings of health and wellness experts, and this researcher's understanding. The benefits of wellness supported programs and services seem to be sustainable and important to the well-being of students.

In this chapter this researcher reported the archival, survey, and interview data of student perceptions involved in the Student Support Services program at California State University, Stanislaus. This project included collecting data from the university and the SSS program. Chapter IV also described the data collection process, followed by how the data were analyzed using five phases using validity and reliability techniques. Background information of SSS was also included for general knowledge. The chapter concluded with data describing the SSS population.

In Chapter V, this researcher will interpret the findings while reviewing the research questions that directed this project. In addition, the researcher will provide an analysis of the findings and the limitations of this study, and offer some

recommendations for future research. Finally, Chapter V will offer the author's personal thoughts learned from this dissertation process.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter addresses the findings of the research study. Hettler's *Six Dimensions of Wellness*, characterized by social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical, and occupational wellness dimensions, was one of the conceptual frameworks used in this study. Wellness components, adapted from Hettler's research, are an essential part of this research. The other conceptual framework, *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model*, created by this researcher, is described by considering the social, emotional, and intellectual wellness components as part of academic support programs and services that may positively affect student success, particularly GPA and graduation rates.

There were 19 survey questions that were designed to explore the research questions (Appendix I). One of the questions asked for consent; eight of the questions were used to obtain respondent demographics information; one question, with the option of selecting more than one choice, asked about SSS services; two questions were designed to identify helpful SSS services and included the option of more than one choice; two questions requested respondents report about their involvement in the program; one question inquired about graduation goals; two questions made inquiries about postgraduation goals; and two questions were open ended. The first open-ended question was designed to elicit information on how respondents would like to be

more involved, which additional SSS services may be helpful, or additional comments about the Student Support Services program. The other open-ended question asked respondents to share a brief description of any SSS topic or concern that had not been already addressed in the survey. Altogether, there were 11 multiple-choice, two fill-in, four rating-type, and two open-ended questions.

The chapter begins with a review of previous chapters and restatement of the research questions. The design of the study, including instruments used, demographics, and the sample population, are discussed and followed by conclusions from the data analysis along with a literary review. Next, implications for practice in response to the analysis are addressed. Finally, suggestions for educational institutions and future research are presented.

Summary of Previous Chapters

Chapter I

The introduction of the study was discussed in this chapter. Academic wellness may facilitate student success by helping students deal with concerns that may impact their academic performance. Concerns, including adjustment and underpreparedness, may cause college and university students to feel overwhelmed. For that reason, wellness services may be a good solution for institutions, and benefits are two-fold: (1) to offer students proper assistance to meet their academic goals while minimizing student apprehensions (Kauffman & Creamer, 1991); and (2) to increase retention and graduation rates.

This researcher attempted to connect academic wellness and student success as understood by college students. This research project examined how a public 4-year institution provided students with a federally-funded Student Support Service (SSS) program that included academic wellness as part of its features. The goal of SSS is to increase the number of students who stay in school and graduate within 6 years.

As previously noted, two conceptual frameworks were used in this study. This researcher developed the second concept, *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model*. The model considers the factors that affect student success. *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model* uses the lens of wellness and suggests certain academic characteristics that may be associated with how students value their educational experience. This concept was used to compare SSS students' self-identified needs to wellness components. The wellness component model, known as the Six Components of Wellness, encompasses the following factors: intellectual, occupational, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual (National Wellness Center, 2013). The wellness components represent how academic wellness contributes to student success.

Chapter II

This chapter shared applicable literature relevant to wellness and college and university students as it pertains to student success. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012) made available some health and wellness tips for college students to reduce hectic lifestyles typical of college students. The advice included

maintaining mental health, campus safety, and healthy relationships. Other topics discussed in this chapter included ways to keep students alert about health, wellness, and safety, including the suggestion for campuses to utilize student peers to promote awareness (Luo & Rosenthal, 2013).

To help with setting the foundation of the program used in this study, TRiO was mentioned. TRiO is the overarching federal agency of the Student Support Services program and was also discussed in Chapter II. TRiO offers eight resource programs for students to get the help they need for academic wellness during their college experience. SSS is one of them, and was used for this research. Peer mentoring, academic advising, significant academic and life-skills workshops, and one-on-one attention to students are some examples of SSS wellness services that influence a positive outcome. Along the same thoughts of supporting student success, a good program will not be effective if the institution does not share similar values. Based on review of these studies, this researcher chose to focus on California State University, Stanislaus, which believes in providing services to help students succeed.

The university encourages wellness by providing a good university experience for students as they address a number of concerns, including building relationships with staff and faculty; understanding degree requirements; having social support; and staying motivated (Tinto, 1987; Stolar, 1991; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Still more of Chapter II delved more deeply into student success by sharing information on the goals of student success as well as college students' experiences, including learning styles and social transitioning. Nontraditional students and program effectiveness

were also discussed to ensure vital ways of offering good programs and services that deliver academic support to these and other at-risk students.

Chapter III

Details of the sequential mixed methods research design were discussed in Chapter III. Three sources were used to collect the SSS data: institutional and program archives, student surveys, and interviews. Two-hundred and thirty SSS students were requested to take the survey to identify (1) which SSS service were used; (2) the number of times the services were used; (3) why they used SSS services; and (4) the perceived benefits of SSS services.

Demographic information that signified the general SSS population, including class levels and graduation goal expected to be achieved in one year, made up the sample. Six to nine interview participants were planned to be interviewed, but after careful review and analysis of the survey, four were selected. Strong themes resulted from the survey and interviewees. Additionally, survey respondents were selected to be interviewed to gain an in-depth understanding of students' opinions of the SSS program benefits. Interviews were followed by coding and analysis to uncover patterns among interviewee responses.

Chapter IV

Chapter IV, divided into four sections, described the findings that resulted from discovering academic wellness and SSS student perceptions. Section 1 presented this study and introduced the research questions, and provided the purpose of using CSU Stanislaus as the site for this study. A timeline of research activities and

sample explanations from participants were also presented, and the background that included any dissertation proposal changes was also included. Section 2 comprised a number of items important to this study: (1) data collection, (2) analysis, (3) interview set-up, (4) record keeping, (5) participant selection, and (6) documents in this study. Section 3 offered the findings of all data sources and included a composite review of archival, survey, and interview data. Theme results and chapter summary were discussed. The last section of Chapter IV shared the quality of this research.

Summary of the Findings

There may be a link between wellness components and student success with the Student Support Services program. A better college experience is perceived by students in the Student Support Services program through guidance, academic advising, peer mentoring, and the writing specialist to help improve student outcomes. This finding was a direct link to the Kuh, Schuh, and Whitt (1991) study, which promoted this same concept. Their research implied that student achievement is more likely to occur when the institution invests in its students with meaningful supportive programs. The results from their study led to the subsequent discoveries. Meaningful academic advising challenges students to do well, and provides direction for course planning, degree completion, and academic independency. To help explain the connection between wellness and student success, multiple SSS services were reviewed by survey respondents and interview participants. Attention was given to what services were used, how often services were used, SSS students' plans to use the services, and how they perceived SSS would help them succeed. Later, a wellness

assignment sheet was used to determine wellness components for each SSS service by experts in the field.

Academic advising was the most popular SSS service utilized. Survey respondents and interview participants also reported that using the computer lab, attending workshops, meeting with their peer mentors, and meeting with the writing specialist were also SSS favorites. All of these services had over a 50% response rate in the surveys, and most were identified as interview themes or categories. Specific findings of the data are discussed below.

Archival

California State University, Stanislaus and the Student Support Services program were sources of the archival data to represent the SSS population. The following summarizes demographic information: (1) juniors and seniors made up the majority of the population with 83.48%; (2) the largest age group was 21-25 with 49.56%; (3) there were over twice as many females as there were males (168 vs. 62); and (4) the largest ethnic group was Hispanics, with 179 students, or 77.83%. Other information concerning the SSS population is that many students were in their second year (31.30%), the majority of students (79.57%) started the program as continuing students, and that by the time they reached their senior year, students had changed their graduation goal several times.

Survey

One hundred and five of the 230 surveys were used for this research. Respondents' characteristics were similar to the archival data. Survey respondents

were also asked to share their perceptions of SSS services. One hundred respondents, or 96%, reported utilizing academic advising. Other services respondents reporting using were the computer lab, workshops, peer mentors, the writing specialist, tutoring, and the Wellness Zone, with the latter two used the least, at 30.0% or less. Most respondents reported agreeing or strongly agreeing that SSS helped them with educational and personal goals including maintaining good grades, persisting toward graduation, and successfully completing graduation requirements. Advice and assistance in course selection, the computer lab, and SSS scholarships were identified as the top three most helpful services. Although 88.45% of respondents reported utilizing SSS services at least once or twice a month, 85.57% still reported wishing they could be more involved. As to goals after graduation for SSS respondents, most (74.26%) reported that they (1) planned to graduate in the next two years (between Spring 2014 and Spring 2016); (2) planned to work after graduation (89.53%), and (3) 65.38% planned to attend graduate school.

Two open-ended questions gave respondents an opportunity to comment on their involvement with SSS, to suggest additional SSS services, or to discuss something that has not already been asked in the survey. Fifty-one respondents answered the first open-ended question. Of these, 47.0% wanted to attend more workshops, while others commented on wanting to attend more academic trips and socials. Thirty-four respondents commented on the other open-ended question, which asked respondents to share additional suggestions or comments. As detailed in Table 25, *Respondent's Comments*, their comments were placed in the following categories:

1. Pleased with SSS/Gratitude (35.32%)
2. Did not have more to share (32.40%)
3. Academic advising (17.64%)
4. Other staff (8.82%)
5. Dissatisfaction (8.82%)

Interview

Interviews were another important data source to help this researcher better understand student perceptions of the Student Support Services program. Several categories were developed, including early college experience, the SSS scholarship, and workshops. Additionally, academic advising was important to participants regarding their academic goals, as it was a reoccurring theme throughout this phase. There seemed to be a special emphasis on the help received from academic advisors, reconfirming the survey respondents' select choice of service. The significance of academic advisors is shared in the following excerpt:

The whole...meeting with your academic advisor...is amazing, especially when coming from a major that really does not require you to regularly meet with them [faculty]...it's amazing [that academic advisors help] to make sure that I am on track; I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing...I am not taking classes that are leading me off [track]. It's really good to know that I am not wasting my time...The advising is really helping me stay on track...to make sure that I graduate.

Composite

Data analysis followed the five phases, which included archival, SSS survey, wellness dimension survey, interviews, and composite. A comparison of institutional data with SSS data was made to note any differences. Survey questions were developed to elicit SSS student perceptions of the Student Support Services program, and when its data were collected, it was confidentially maintained in locked cabinets. Interview questions were generally developed from survey responses, and the data collected were also kept confidential and in locked cabinets. This researcher's reflection on the research process was formalized from transcribing the interviews into analytic memos. The analytic memos helped this researcher to develop the categories used to present the findings that are presented later in this chapter. Additional information on the archival, survey, interview, and composite analysis, including research phases, demographic information, content review procedures, survey tools, and findings, were discussed in Chapter III. .

Research Questions for the Study

This study used an explanatory mixed method design to collect and analyze the data. *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model* and the *Six Dimensions of Wellness* were the two frameworks used as a baseline for the study. Descriptive statistics and coding were used to analyze the data and helped to clarify the following research questions:

RQ 1: Which Student Support Services are SSS students using?

RQ 2: How often are SSS services used by students?

RQ 3: What are the purposes that students indicate for using SSS services?

RQ 4: What are the perceived benefits for SSS students using the services to help

with student success? Related questions are:

RQ 4A: What do SSS college students perceive as SSS factors that assist with retention?

RQ 4B: What do SSS college students perceive as SSS factors that assist with GPA?

RQ 4C: What do SSS college students perceive as SSS factors that assist with the number of years to graduate?

RQ 5: What wellness components are part of SSS services?

Research Question One

The first research question sought to determine which Student Support Services program services are being used by SSS students. The survey respondents (see Table 11, *SSS Student Use of Services*) noted that their academic advisor is the most widely used service with 96.0%. Eighty-three percent of the respondents use the computer lab, and 67.0% attend various workshops. This finding corresponds to several studies that have shown university qualities that encourage good college experiences for students, including building relationships with staff and faculty, understanding degree and program requirements, participating in self-development workshops, and having social support (Tinto, 1987; Stolar, 1991; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Research Question Two

This question is summarized in Tables 15 and 16, *Level of Involvement I and II*. It examined how often students use SSS services. Of 105 respondents, 48 reported using the services on a weekly basis, 44 reported that they use the services once or twice a month, and 13 use the services no more than a couple of times per semester. Most of the respondents agreed that they would like to be more involved with SSS, with 85% agreeing or strongly agreeing and a mean of 4.2.

Workshop attendance was identified by students as the primary service they wanted to avail themselves of more frequently. However, due to time conflicts, they were unable to attend as often as they desired. Class and work schedules were cited as the most popular reasons why students had conflicts. According to a study by Forbus, Newbold, and Mehta (2010), working over 30 hours per week, being first generation, and having to take care of a family are some characteristics of nontraditional students, who as a result often have time management concerns. Most SSS students share one or more of these characteristics, and the Forbus et al. study draws a parallel to many SSS student characteristics.

Research Question Three

The third question was concerned with determining the purposes that SSS students indicate for using SSS services; the results are summarized in Table 14, *Most Helpful SSS Services*. Overall, “advice and assistance in course selection” was the top purpose, with 81.73% of respondents choosing this reason. Sixty-nine percent of respondents use SSS for the computer lab, followed by those receiving SSS

scholarships (49%), with the use of peer mentors a close fourth reason (48.07%). To coincide with the above results, Table 14 shows complementary findings: 93.3% of the replies indicate that SSS students want to use the services to clarify how they can reach their educational goals; 88.5% believe that the services will help them persist toward graduation; and 85.6% believe that the services will help them complete the graduation requirements successfully. Consequently, academic support may help SSS students to adjust to college as suggested in Kalsner's (1991) research, and reduces the risk of negative outcomes.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question sought to determine the perceived benefits for SSS students using the services to help them be successful. As described above, students count on a variety of assistance to help them with their academic endeavors, and is a reminder of Esch's point of view on educators considering the needs of today's student (Esch, 2009). The factors that students count on affect student efficacy, and include class scheduling and institutional deadlines. Therefore, it seems essential to better understand and value student perceptions regarding a good college experience. The following related questions explore these considerations, and are derived from the interviewees of this study (Tables 20 to 22, *Interview Themes*).

Research Question 4A. This question sought to determine the perceptions of SSS students regarding SSS factors that assist them with retention. Academic advising and the SSS scholarship were named as services that helped interviewees to stay in school.

Research Question 4B. This researcher wanted to know the perceptions of SSS students regarding factors that assist them with improving GPA. The Student Support Services program's financial assistance and academic Advising, which includes grade reports and tutoring, were services mentioned by participants.

Research Question 4C. This question sought to determine what SSS students perceived as SSS factors that helped them with the number of years to graduate. The two key factors were having and understanding their academic plan and their academic advisor.

Respondents shared that their academic advisors were helpful with retention, GPA advice, and number of years to graduate. It seems that SSS students want help with bringing the whole college experience together, and they rely on academic advisors to do that. Academic advisors inform students of program and institutional requirements for completion, discuss personal and academic interests, remind students of their responsibilities, are interested in academic progression, and offer advice on personal matters. Realizing that some students may require more time than others, advisors understand that some SSS students may meet with them for an hour, while others meet for less than 30 minutes. This is representative of SSS academic advisors' commitment to being available to students. Furthermore, academic advisors advocate for students by (1) offering student specific advice, (2) sharing helpful resources, (3) offering guidance with policy and procedures, (3) strategizing a success plan, and (4) encouraging problem solving and decision making. In general, academic advisors help to further develop students.

In a sense, academic advisors may be seen as coaches. They assist and inspire SSS students to reach their academic goals by encouraging them to maximize their potential. Academic advisors have numerous skills with providing academic support, and their focus is on student outcomes, which may also benefit the institutions for which they work. Some important factors that contribute to student success are helping students to be more socially, emotionally, and intellectually prepared to learn (Campbell & Nutt, 2008). It is likely that when students are equipped with these wellness dimensions, they are able to thrive in the classroom and the workforce. This preparedness also helps with institutional goals because academic advisors help students with having a good college experience. For example, part of the mission of CSU Stanislaus is to "...encourage personalized student learning..." (California State University, Stanislaus, 2013). Academic advisors are eyewitnesses to providing individualized attention to students and are a testament to student satisfaction and retention.

Research Question Five

Part of this study included determining which wellness components were part of SSS services (Tables 23 and 24, *Common Themes*), and the results were included in the final research question. Phase Three of this study involved wellness experts assigning wellness components using Hettler's *Six Dimensions of Wellness* as a guide. To avoid researcher bias, wellness components were only allocated to a SSS service that health and wellness experts assessed, and not from this researcher. The intellectual wellness component is most popular with SSS services. It makes sense

because intellectual wellness engages students and encourages them to be creative. Furthermore, Zajacova et al. (2005) suggest that good academic standing and retention are factors that seem to be linked to student success, and their study supports the importance of intellectual well-being of students. “Social” and “emotional” were the second most widely used wellness components, indicating that there may be a need to include social and emotional support to assist students with their college goals. These wellness dimensions seem to be associated with students interacting with others while having a place they can call their own.

Study Design and Instrumentation

Archival, survey, interview, and composite analysis were used in this study. The university and SSS provided archival information whereby SSS students’ demographic information was obtained. More demographic information also came from Qualtrics, an online survey tool. Information collected included age, ethnicity, gender, enrollment status with SSS, and planned graduation goal. The purpose of gathering archival data was to assess characteristics among SSS students, and to determine similarities among them.

Qualtrics was also used to survey all 230 SSS students. A little less than half of the population, 105, agreed to participate. A set of 5-point scale questions was given to respondents in order to better understand their views of SSS services. Interviews were constructed using semistructured and open-ended questions. The idea behind this method was to allow participants to feel comfortable about sharing their thoughts on SSS services and to recognize their ideas on the benefits of SSS.

A composite analysis of all data sources was used to gain more awareness of student perceptions of SSS services. This method of analysis helped to explain the results of this study by sharing two or more data sources that are compared with each other (Creswell & Clark, 2008). The composite analysis also reinforced the need of engagement opportunities for college students. This study revealed that SSS respondents tend to gravitate toward people and places that meet or exceed their expectations. Academic advising, the computer lab, peer mentors, and workshops are some of the top services that SSS students look forward to. All of the identified services involve a form of engagement, which is important to student success. Tinto (1993) described student engagement as having a strong commitment to the quality of education. Institutions of higher education should consider offering students a myriad of services to mold student achievement with college experience.

Discussion, Analysis, and Implications

This section will share relevant information in relationship to the sample as well as the five research questions. Findings will also be compared to current literature. Limited research is available on wellness dimensions and academic support programs; as a result, the objective of this study was to gather data from three data sources to explore SSS student perceptions and identify wellness characteristics of the Student Support Services program. This study sought to discover SSS student perceptions of SSS services and how the program may contribute to student success. The findings of this study can be used to contribute to a better understanding of

student challenges and the degree of assistance that may be needed to improve GPA, retention, and graduation rates.

The Student Support Services program's academic advisors seem to be appreciated by SSS students because academic advisors "...truly care and invest time in each student," as stated by one survey respondent. SSS students often turn to their academic advisors when they experience challenges during their college experience, and rely on them for help in making a smooth progression toward their degree. Likewise, nontraditional students, described as students with certain characteristics that may interfere with their college life, and underserved students, described as students who do not receive enough academic support, may want to rely on programs and services to help with their academic pursuit. Time management may be challenging for nontraditional and underserved populations (Forbus, Newbold, & Mehta, 2010) because other obligations, such as work or family, must be considered. In 2008, over one third of undergraduates were over 25 years old, and one quarter of them had children (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Furthermore, if students do not perceive that appropriate services are available to them, it is possible for students to feel overwhelmed and to become discouraged. If challenges facing students are not addressed, meeting the demands of college may become increasingly difficult, and dropping out may seem to be a more practical solution (Kalsner, 1991).

On the other hand, with the right kind of support, students may recommit to their academic goals; they will transform. Mezirow, Edward, and Associates (2009)

did extensive research on the transformative process, and shared that learning redefines learning and understanding. Their study showed that transforming is a process of 10 phases, including self-examination, exploration, planning, a course of action, and reintegration (Mezirow et al., 2009). To help enable this progression, SSS's academic support emphasizes Mezirow's theory by recognizing and encouraging personalized learning (Cranton, 2006). Therefore, getting to know students is important in order to involve students in their learning.

For the sake of both student well-being and institutional success, college and university officials may want to consider providing adequate resources, including staff, time, and financial assistance, so that academic advisors can offer quality and effective services. Specifically, academic advising is a multifaceted service that involves thorough understanding of student needs and institutional policies and procedures. For example, understanding the federal financial aid mandate of the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) and university academic policies regarding academic probation and disqualification can avoid negative consequences to students that could occur if they are not properly advised. As a result, unmet requirements may create a dilemma for students to remain academically eligible. Satisfactory Academic Progress considers all attempted units, and student must pass 75% of all attempted units. However, according to university requirements, students have the option of earning a No Credit (NC) as a grade so that it will not affect their GPA. Notice the following academic advising scenario, while keeping in mind that full-time status requirements and other academic standards are not considered: A student is enrolled

in two classes, totaling six units. An A grade is earned in one class, and an NC is earned in the other. As far as the university is concerned, the student's GPA is 4.0 for the semester, and he or she is therefore in good academic standing. However, SAP rules would have the student placed on probation because 75% of attempted units were not passed; the student's financial aid funding is now jeopardized. This hypothetical case illustrates one of many reasons why competent and caring academic advising is essential to the livelihood of students.

The Value of SSS

Upon comparing the institution's GPA (2.9 for Fall 2013) and the program's GPA (3.0 for Fall 2013), there does not seem to be much of a difference between SSS and non-SSS students. However, the benefit of SSS was exposed when comparing Cohort 2006's institutional retention rates with the program's rates. Of institutional students, only 49.2% graduated within 6 years. Contrast that figure with SSS students, who registered an impressive 88% graduated within 6 years. This result is a testament to the potential outcomes of institutional goals when student-centered services help with students' academic progression. It may be helpful for administrators, faculty, and staff to be aware of their potential influence to student success (Greenleaf, 1991).

Three wellness experts evaluated SSS services and assigned wellness components to them. Hettler's *Six Dimensions of Wellness* was used as a guide (Phase Three of the study). Additional information about *Six Dimensions of Wellness* is found in Chapter II and Appendix A. The intellectual wellness component was the most widely used. Though it was assigned to all SSS services by two of three experts

used in this study, stress management, referrals, and SSS socials were the only services that were not agreed on by all of the wellness experts (Tables 2 and 3 , *Health and Wellness Expert Ratings of SSS Services*).

With the understanding that intellectual wellness involves being open to new ideas, improving skills, and experiencing life more fully (National Wellness Center, 2013), it may be reasoned that academic advising may include the intellectual wellness component. Academic advising promotes a better college experience by helping SSS students to better understand graduation requirements while encouraging use of other SSS services to improve their experience.

The Student Support Services program helps to change the mindset of students by providing opportunities for students to learn ways to cope with obligations and expectations of higher education. Academic advisors and peer mentors encourage engagement. Engagement opportunities are important because they empower students to get involved in their own education; this allows students to be motivated about their learning process. As students continue to participate in SSS, they realize their academic potential can develop in and out of the classroom. Another way that SSS assists students with their learning, development, and success is by creating a friendly and helpful environment. Personalized academic advising, computer lab, wellness zone, and student-selected workshops all help to cultivate a student-centered environment. Students tend to choose SSS for help with their academic goals because the program (a) pays attention to what matters to students, (b)

believes in them, (c) maintains a positive outlook on their academic potential, and (d) guides students to adapt to change and overcome academic challenges.

To facilitate the above goals, services must be developed to assist students with their approach to learning. As a result, SSS helps to encourage a change in behavior, including attitude toward learning and achievement. Student learning goals may be more attainable to SSS students because they can direct their learning experience via their own motivation. Providing consistent academic support impacts student outcomes. The combination of a student-centered educational program and a supportive environment makes way for transformational learning. The transformational process breaks old habits of thinking and doing. As a result, the holistic student can now be considered (Davis & Arend, 2013).

The holistic student is important in higher education because learning does not have to stop in the classroom. The sooner students realize their potential in and out of the classroom, the sooner they will be ready to plan for their success in higher education and society.

The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model

Student success means a balance of college experiences with academic wellness. Certain factors should exist to facilitate the well-being of students. Student success has much to do with how students value their educational experience. Students in the Student Support Services program identify their academic needs on the SSS application. In addition to academic advising and curriculum planning, other areas SSS students want assistance with are reading and writing, tutoring, personal

counseling, note taking, WPST exam preparation, and time management. *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model* considers the social, emotional, and intellectual wellness components that may be embedded in academic support programs. This may lead to better coping with college expectations, which may ultimately lead to student success, including higher GPA and retention, and fewer years to graduate. The findings of this research suggested that *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model* can be used to help with student motivation especially when students are undergoing challenges that may discourage them.

The Importance of Invested Academic Advising

Academic advising was a common thread throughout this study. This researcher wanted to further examine why SSS respondents and interview participants identified academic advising as the most used and helpful service. SSS students met with their academic advisors a total of 389 times during Fall 2013. Furthermore, 33 SSS students spent time talking to their advisor on the phone, and 247 email communications were completed. With two SSS advisors, and an average of 30 minutes per appointment, plus email communication, one can conclude that a lot of time is dedicated to the academic well-being of SSS students (see Table 25, *Frequency of SSS Services*.) Aside from academic advising, other top SSS services reported by survey respondents and their frequency of use are contained within the table and include workshops, peer mentoring, and the computer lab.

This study found that suitable academic advising helped with self-efficacy when students were satisfied with the services. Positive attitude is a big part of

student success. Social transition (Kirst & Venezia, 2006) may affect students' attitudes about achievement, and may possibly hurt one's self-esteem regarding academic performance. SSS Academic advisors extend beyond course scheduling by guiding students through aspects of the academic experience, including assistance with goal setting and personal growth, monitoring academic progress, help with financial matters, and clarification of academic and university policies.

Table 25
Frequency of SSS Services (in total minutes)

SSS Service	Count
Academic Advising	
Appointments/Walk-ins	389
Duration (min./appointment)	30
Email Contacts	247
Email Notices	221
Phone	33
Computer Lab	
Semester (total visits)	147
Usage (per student)	24
Duration (min/person)	40
Workshops	
Number of Attendees (for all workshops)	267
Number of Workshops	32
Duration (min/workshop)	60
Peer Mentors	
Walk-ins (total)	363
Duration (min./student)	20

Note: Workshop topics are presented by peer mentors and include topics on financial literacy, financial aid, housing, resume building, campus safety, stress management, and internship opportunities. Email contacts are email exchanges between the academic advisor and student. Email notices are informational only.

It is important to note that although scheduled appointments are ideal, the option of students being able to walk-in to receive quality services is also vital to SSS students and student success.

It is likely that SSS students felt that their academic advisors helped them with academic, social, and personal concerns when adjusting to the university. Kalsner (1991) suggested in her study that student perception and interactions on campus are helpful with students' educational pathways, which in turn is expressed as the desire to make social connections. Academic advising provides guidance to build coping strategies for students, including college expectations, student perceptions, and assessment of academic skills. This study also suggested that as students learn about the resources available to them, they became more independent and self-reliable. However, it takes good services to mold the student: "Academic advisors grow with you," said one interviewee, who shared the significance of receiving support throughout her academic career.

The Student Success Plan

The findings of this study suggested that SSS students may not only need good academic planning, but may also require assistance with other aspects of college and life skills; a focus on the holistic student may need to be considered. A good plan is more valued by students when the process embraces realistic goals, taking action, and self-evaluation. Expediting the plan is critical to students as well as their academic advisors. As the whole student is more developed, commitment and

involvement will come. This means that there should be an allowance for change because students change.

An effective student success plan is driven by students while addressing students' needs to help them achieve their academic goals. When such a plan is created, a better outlook on achievement for students seems more possible because the collection of services are student-specific. When students find that the allocated services cater to their academic needs, students are more invigorated (Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005).

Analysis and Implications

Improving the quality of higher education, promoting student success, and improving retention and graduation rates are the desires of many institutions when considering ways to improve the success of students. Likewise, to promote student success it is important to provide student-centered services. Jennings, Lovett, Cuba, Swingle, and Lindkvist (2013) wrote that students defined student success as good grades and engagement from freshmen year to senior year. The authors also indicated that educators do not always have the same definition as students, and it usually depends on the campus, its mission, achievement, and the students they serve (Jennings et al., 2013). The Student Support Services program keeps in mind that institutional and student definitions may coexist (Navarez, & Wood, 2010).

As mentioned, the transformative process is an important part of students' well-being because it helps them to stay motivated during their college experience. Two major strands (individual development and growth) are part of the

transformative process that eventually leads to meaningful results; this result is a blend of individual benefit and social benefit.

Transformative learning encourages students to engage in critical reflections of their learning experience by recognizing a new perspective on their beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions (Mezirow, Taylor, & Associates, 2009), and could involve how one thinks and values a service. It also identifies with this researcher's social, emotional, and intellectual wellness components when academic professionals recognize individualized differences among their students. The link here is relationship building or social wellness. There are ideal ways to recognize individualized differences in the transformative process. The goal is to encourage students to commit to their own learning (Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009). Specific to academic wellness, such methods stimulate self-evaluation; transformation is likely to take place when the students and their institution transform their way of doing things (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, Taylor, & Associates, 2009). Higher education professionals should consider identifying creative ways to transform traditional teaching formats to a teaching that challenges students to think differently.

Student achievement for adults may be determined by a developmental and individualized process through mentoring (Flumerfelt, Ingram, Brockberg, & Smith, 2007). Another author describes transformative education as the opportunity to provide learning experiences that involve student engagement in life-changing behaviors impacting knowledge and performance (Moore, 2005). Academic wellness

is part of the recommendations of the above educational experts. The underlining point of transformative education is the mentoring component that aids in learning. Though the Student Support Services program has peer mentors who are part of the staff (and who were distinguished as being among the top four SSS services selected by survey respondents), all university faculty and staff may have the potential to be mentors. Hence, the quality of learning is a better experience for students because of relationships developed and maintained during their learning experiences; their well-being will be enriched.

Intellectual concepts are great motivators for transforming the well-being of students. Bailin, Case Coombs, and Daniels described in an article that critical thinking is to have a reasonable quality of judgment (1999). Therefore, their description implies the significance of sound thinking standards. Bailin et al. further suggest that one would have to conceptualize good thinking habits without being careless, including problem-solving and decision making (1999; Appendix C). To promote quality judgment leading the critical thinking, they believed that the following intellectual resources are needed: (1) criteria for judgment—having knowledge that governs quality of thinking (clarity, coherence, accuracy, fairness, etc.); (2) critical concepts or vocabulary—concepts that facilitate thinking and judgment (premise and conclusion, bias, point of view, balance, etc.); (3) habit of mind—the attitudes or values considered for critical thinking, including open-mindedness, intellectual work ethic, respect for high quality of performance; (4) background knowledge—information necessary for thoughtful consideration ; and (5)

strategies or heuristics – useful strategies to consider when thinking through a problem, including using models, creating a list of pros and cons, and simplifying the problem with the use of symbols (Bailin et al., 1999). The concepts identified by Bailin et al. may be helpful to educators when creating engagement opportunities for students, and they highlight the intellectual wellness component. In summary, students may need to participate in the transformative process, have mentors, and be intellectually supported to promote critical thinking and student success.

The following table portrays how the top four most helpful SSS services relate to academic wellness and student success while using intellectual wellness as the most common wellness dimension.

Table 26
Academic Wellness and Student Success

Most Helpful SSS Service	Common Wellness Dimension	Explanation
Academic Advising	I	Use of the mind to evaluate and apply knowledge
Computer Lab	I	Promotes reading and writing
SSS Scholarship	I	Encourages critical thinking opportunities
Peer Mentor	I	Use of the mind to engage in new ideas

Note: Health and Wellness Expert Responses – I – Intellectual: dedication to learning

The table is a reminder of how academic wellness may already be embedded in services designed to help student and institutions achieve their goals.

Challenges That May Interfere With Student Success

Methodical process. Though this study supports the need of academic support programs with wellness characteristics, by reporting SSS student perceptions

and values of SSS services, challenges exist globally and locally. One challenge is the slow, time-consuming methodical process of education. Alfred (2003) describes the educational bureaucracy from a global perspective: “There is a wolf at the door of many of our colleges and it is clothed in questionable tactics that are part of an almost insatiable will to grow and succeed” (p. 17). Here Alfred is portraying how education is more interested in efficiency than service. This observation of the bureaucratic nature of education is an echo of Dewey’s (1956) comments on formal education and how it potentially strips away the greater social context, reminding educators to be aware of processes and procedures that may result in nonproductive outcomes: “The standing danger is that the material of formal instruction will be merely the subject matter of the schools, isolated from the subject-matter of life-experience” (Dewey, 1956, p. 8). The author was discussing the ideas of socialization, but his connotation is relevant to education topics that are discussed over and over until the reality of implementation becomes difficult.

Financial. Another challenge is that support programs can be expensive. Over one 5-year period, the U.S. Department of Education spent almost \$2 million for one CSU campus (Grant Award Notification, 2010). Some CSU campuses have multiple academic and student service programs, and these programs easily cost several millions of dollars each year.

Accountability. Academic support programs may want to consider standards to meet to maximize benefits, and include the following when implementing student centered support: (1) deliver and manage student and academic services; (2)

understand strengths and weaknesses; (3) gather and assess data for full evaluation; and (4) make and implement recommendations for program improvement.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations are associated with this study. This study only looked at SSS students at California State University, Stanislaus. As a result, the remaining campus population and the populations of other institution, both in state and out of state, were excluded from this study. Moreover, the study focused on SSS students, and did not attempt to include the points of view of other academic support services that may provide similar services.

Of the SSS student population, 45.65% completed the survey, and four interviewees were selected from survey respondents. Therefore, perspectives from students who did not complete the survey were not included in this study.

Consequently, the results of this study may not be generalized to other colleges and universities. However, it may assist administrators in higher education by providing a better understanding of its campus population regarding academic support services, wellness components, and student success.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Educational Institutions

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are suggested for college and university administrators and faculty:

1. Administrators may want to consider implementing wellness dimensions in more academic support services campuswide. Particularly, the use of Hettler's *Six*

Dimensions of Wellness and this researcher's own *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model*, may help administrators gain a more in-depth understanding of how the conceptual frameworks may enhance the college experience when keeping in mind the above wellness components.

2. The results of this study suggest that social, emotional, and intellectual wellness components are important to student success. When incorporating wellness into the curriculum and service, faculty, staff, peer health mentors, and other campus personnel may have a positive impact on the well-being of students.
3. The Student Affairs division may want to collaborate more with the Academic Affairs division to assess the overall experiences of students, and to determine if wellness components are already embedded within the institution.
4. Student Affairs and Academic Affairs divisions may want to collaborate with Institutional Research to conduct quantitative and qualitative studies to gain a richer understanding of students' perspective of services that help them to be successful.
5. Administrators and faculty may benefit from these results. The results may be used to revise the curriculum of first year experience courses that focus more on coping skills, including social, emotional, and intellectual wellness.

In conclusion, institutional leaders may want to consider wellness components to help students with adjusting to college and student success. Student perceptions are also worth mentioning to better understand their academic concerns. Their concerns are important because available services should address their concerns for a better college experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research was conducted at a medium-sized institution, located in a rural community. Therefore, the following are recommended for future research:

1. Conduct longitudinal pretest and posttest research studies to analyze the results of wellness components embedded in resources for students.
2. Additional research is needed to better understand student success for each class level to determine how and why student perceptions of academic services and college experiences may differ.
3. Expanding this study to other campuses in the California State University system, other kinds of systems, and across states may provide significant results. A wider geographic area may yield different results.
4. Conduct a follow-up study on the general campus population, selected to have corresponding demographics as SSS students, including first generation, low income, or having a disability, to determine worthwhile services that students will use and identify services that will help improve student success. While using SSS students as the comparative group, GPA, retention, and years to graduate will be examined.
5. Expand the study to the campus population, and interview more students using Dedoose software to determine thematic codes.
6. Assign wellness dimensions to campuswide academic support services and programs by health and wellness experts.

In summary, several recommendations are suggested by this researcher to further explain why some services are valued by students, and how wellness dimensions are part of student success.

Reflections of the Researcher and Conclusions

This researcher is a full-time manager of the Student Support Services program, and has over 15 years' experience working with diverse students at the site location of this study, including acting as lecturer in some health courses. California State University, Stanislaus is a medium size, 4-year public university in California's Central Valley. As the director of SSS, this researcher has experience with working with low-income, first generation students who satisfy the SSS criteria for program consideration. This researcher has also spent a considerable amount of time working with preadmitted and admitted students to help them along the academic pathway, including admission and graduation requirements, campus resources, financial assistance, and graduate preparation. The professional experiences gained from working with preadmitted and admitted students coupled with health and wellness promotion have led to the ability to identify better ways to advance student success. Therefore, this researcher used her own expert opinions and educational training to guide her with this study, and believes that wellness components are needed to help with student success (see *The Adaptive Theory of Student Success Model*).

The review of the SSS program concerning student perceptions of its services and identifying wellness components that are embedded within them has the potential to modify the educational experience for students. For this transformation to be

effective, it should be supported by all who possibly affect students, including administrators and faculty. Furthermore, appropriate financial support will help with staffing concerns so that quality services can be provided. The data show that academic advising, the computer lab (having a place to study and free printing), workshops, and peer mentoring are important to SSS students; such items may likely be important to the general student population. Likewise the assessment of SSS services and the allocation of wellness components give rise to an understanding of why intellectual wellness and other wellness support is needed.

Optimal student success may include academic wellness so that educational challenges may be better controlled by the student. Students and services should be a collaboration of careful planning and commitment to receive the most benefit: part of academic wellness and student success involves time and commitment. When academic wellness is intertwined with academic support, the initiative to learn improves: (1) intrinsic motivation is likely to develop and improve for students and faculty; (2) strong relationships are created; (3) commitments are taken seriously; (4) critical thinking and engagement are promoted; (5) active and holistic learning opportunities increase, and (6) goals are achieved as a result of the student faculty team (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2009; Barr & Tagg, 1995; Diamond, 2008; Clayton & Ash, 2004; Benson, 2009; and Gaff & Ratcliff, 1997).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE SIX DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

Component	Example	Emphasis	Goals to Consider
Spiritual	Values; Recognizing the unexplained	Appreciate the unknown or unexplained	Determine the meaning of life
Intellectual	Critical Thinking; Dedication to Learn; Imagination	Lifelong learning	Challenge the mind
Emotional	Feelings; Cognition; Emotions	Contentment with various emotions and feelings (happiness, anger, sadness, determination, and others)	Effectively manage and govern feelings and emotions
Occupational	Skills; Qualifications; Employment; Finances	Utilize skills effectively while working, and maintains personal satisfaction	Contributes skills in a meaningful way to the community Maintain happiness in the work you do Maintain a good balance with financial fulfillment and personal accomplishment
Physical	Healthy habits	Know your physical body and how you treat it	Keep good nutrition Regular and adequate exercise for improved strength, endurance, and flexibility Understand the body, and recognize that it is always changing
Social	Relationships; Interactions with the community	Relationships with others	Maintain healthy relationships Contribute to the wellness of your community

Adapted from Hettler's *Six Dimensions of Wellness*

APPENDIX B

STUDENT LEARNING AND LEARNING STYLES

Building an effective higher education model for the 21st century is possible when the college or university students' well-being is considered. Some tenets of this ideology in higher education are to provide a supportive environment to help with student success, prepare students for a job or career, and to remediate students. Other qualities include increased earning potential, providing increased career mobility, increased workforce satisfaction, and reduced crime rates (Nevarez, 2010).

Many considerations contribute to higher education and its purpose to students. Student achievement, motivation, self-reliance, and value are some characteristics that relate to the well-being of students. The author's philosophy on higher education has to do with transforming staff, faculty, and students to improve student learning and provide a better higher educational experience.

Education may be thought of as the student success system comprised of several parts centered on student learning: faculty, staff, student services and resources, campus mission, administration, the transformative process, and the higher education experience. Each part contributes to student learning. Student well-being can be expected when students' needs are being met, and when all parts of the student success system work collectively.

Literary author, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1844, p. 484), wrote, "The years teach much that the days never know," and it possibly sums up what education is all

about. This idea conveys a concern that supports students. Being in tune with students redefines the role of educators. As educators, there is a duty to advocate for *diversity-learning*, a term used to describe learning opportunities in the classroom as well as other environments. Examples of learning outside of the classroom are the cafeteria, front counter, or a basketball game. Taking advantage of teachable moments, diversity-learning can be achieved through engagement. Therefore, an aspect of this philosophy centers on students: students will value higher education when higher education values them. Wellness may be thought of as a demonstration of symbiotic values.

A holistic approach to learning styles was presented by Gavin Reid. He considers the information processing cycle to include input, cognition, and output (Reid, 2005). Some challenges of learning may be resolved by creatively presenting the materials to students during the information processing stages:

Input – Recognize the student’s preferred learning style; present information in small intervals; take time to consider the impact and influence of the learning processing.

Cognition – Organizational strategies are encouraged to assist students in the learning concepts; relate information to something familiar.

Output – Encourage structure by use of summaries; identify key points to aid in development and processing of written assignments.

(Reid, 2005)

APPENDIX C

CHANGING THE MINDSET OF TRADITIONAL LEARNING

Noticeable shifts described by Clayton and Ash (2004) were significant in prioritizing learning over traditional teaching approaches. The stages for the instructor and learner were (1) They start the semester being hopeful and confident; (2) they experience some form of difficulty as a shifting take place (the instructor may be faced with having to be more flexible, while the learner may be faced with self-analysis); and (3) both the instructor and learner will gradually resolve their issues and their difficulties will lessen.

Service learning is essential to academic wellness because it functions as a motivating factor for student centered learning. In other words, service learning promotes self-directed learning. This is in line with one of the roles of Student Support Services: to provide students with personalized academic advising while encouraging short and long-term goal setting by students. Some health and wellness workshops and the First Year Experience course are designed to enhance critical thinking skills among students and retention (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Service learning could be a method that develops metacognitive skills necessary for lifelong learning.

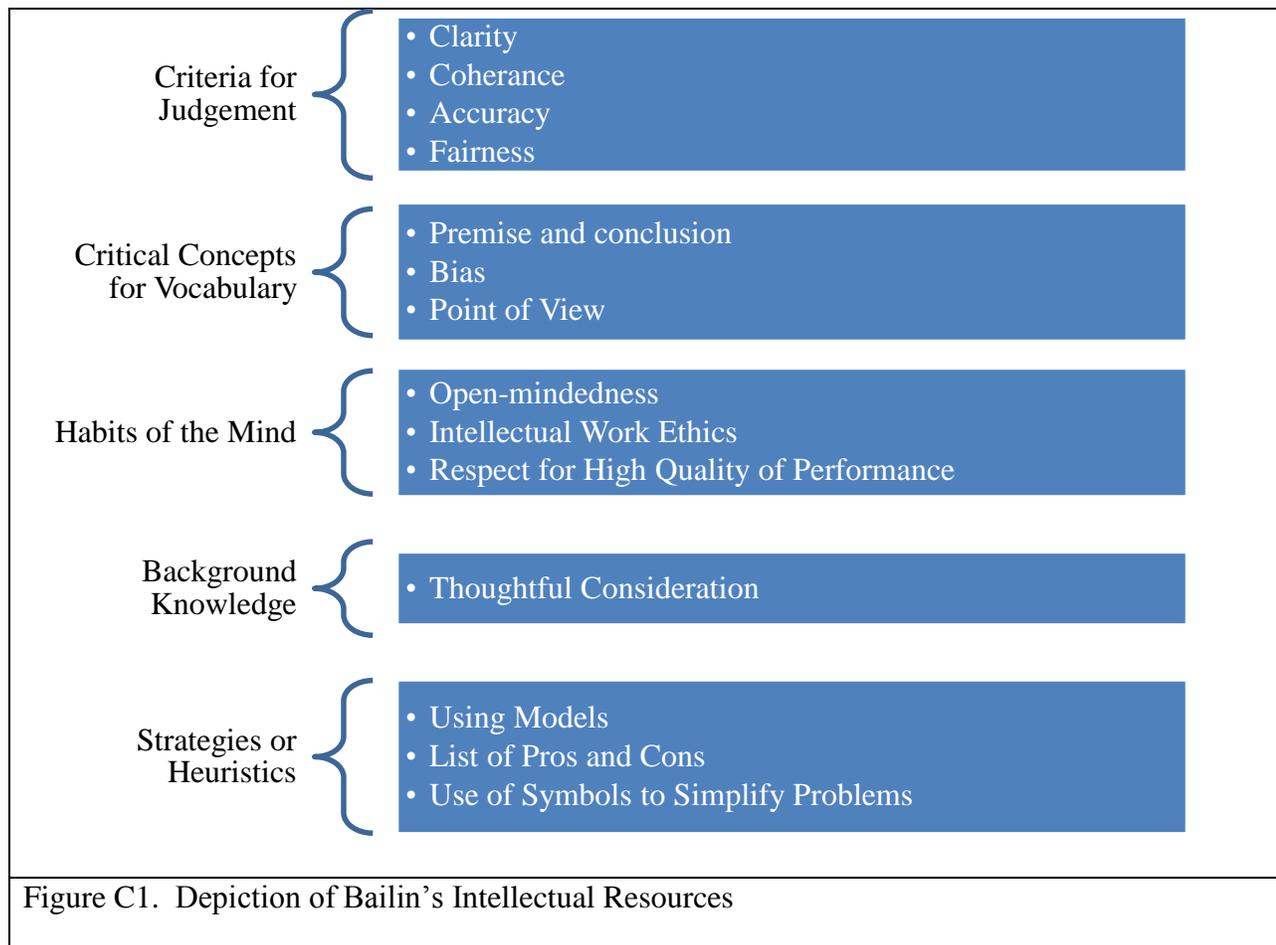
Cranton (2006) describes theoretical developments of transformative learning in adults. Theories such as Dirkx's ideas regarding the significance of imagination and spirituality in transformative learning; Belenky's information on the connections

of knowing; Mezirow's cognitive model of self-reflection and transformation; and Knowles's approach to self-directed learning are examples of the transformative process explained in Cranton's book. Furthermore, she shared the importance of how educators are relevant in the classroom, and are key to fostering transformative learning. She provided insight on cognitive improvement by sharing practical approaches and ideas on holistic models that promote individualized learning from the learner's perspective.

Cranton's works have demonstrated effective ways to recognize individualized differences in the transformative process. This concept is also an important factor to consider when assisting students. Many services provided encourage students to commit to their own learning (Mezirow, Edward, and Associates, 2009). Specific to health and wellness, Dr. Cranton's methods stimulate self-evaluation which is significant to wellness. She also shares that transformation is likely to take place when the instructor and learner transform.

Intellectual concepts are excellent motivators for transforming the well-being of students. Hare and Portelli edited a series of essays from numerous educators, and presented them in a book, *Key Questions for Educators* (2007). Subjects of the essays include education, curriculum, leadership, multiculturalism, accountability, social justice, and critical thinking. The latter is what this annotation will concentrate on, *What is Critical Thinking?* Bailin states in her essay that critical thinking is to have a reasonable quality of judgment. Therefore, her description implies for one to have good thinking standards. She further suggests that one would have to conceptualize

good thinking habits without being careless (i.e. problem-solving and decision making). To promote quality judgment leading to critical thinking, Bailin believes that intellectual resources are needed: (1) Criteria for judgment – having knowledge that govern quality of thinking (clarity, coherence, accuracy, fairness, etc.); (2) Critical concepts or vocabulary – concepts that facilitate thinking and judgment (premise and conclusion, bias, point of view, balance, etc.); (3) Habit of mind – the attitudes or values considered for critical thinking, including open-mindedness, intellectual work ethic, respect for high quality of performance; (4) Background knowledge – information necessary for thoughtful consideration ; and (5) Strategies or heuristics – useful strategies to consider when thinking through a problem, including using models, creating a list of pros and cons, and simplifying the problem with the use of symbols. Below is the author's rendition of Bailin's view of quality judgment: Figure 5, *Depiction of Bailin's Intellectual Resources*.



More insight also came from Bailin to help with developing critical thinking concepts. Restructuring the curriculum, teaching tools that will provide opportunities for learning, and building a community of thinking are recommended to foster critical thinking. The five intellectual concepts discussed earlier are excellent motivators for promoting the well-being of students. The Hare and Portelli edited essays of this chapter support the well-being of students.

Mezirow, Edward, and Associates (2009) worked diligently to identify ways to apply transformative learning by informing educators of transformative learning theories and issues. They discussed the grounded theory methodology, and shared

findings from earlier transformative research that resulted in 10 phases of learning. Some of the phases include self-examination, planning a course of action, acquiring knowledge and skills to implement plan, and building self-confidence in a new role. Evolving the way one thinks could be applied to health and wellness decisions made by students.

Previous insight into transformative learning was identified with Mezirow's 10 phases of the transformative process:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognizing a connection between discontent and the process of transformation
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

(Mezirow, 2007, p. 19)

Recognizing that students' well-being may be directly associated with support services and programs, Table C1, *The Transformative Learning Tenets*, captures Mezirow's theories that support the transformative process. The underlying role of transformative learning is to include learning that redefines learning and understanding.

Programs and services that include the transformative process equip students with a sense of value for their education. In addition to the transformative process, other literature suggests that students who are actively engaged in learning are more likely to be successful (Tillman, 2002; Tinto, 1993; Low, 2000).

Table C1

Transformative Learning Tenets

Theory	Explanation
Cognitivism	Assumptions on how students learn according to their developmental stages, brain function, and relationship learning; how students process information
Constructivism/Social Development	Based on how students make sense of something in order to understand; how meaning and understanding of a phenomenon is developed
Behaviorism	Based on how students' behavior can form to improve their learning; comes from procedural knowledge
Humanism	The understanding of how learning can be used to help students reach excel; achieved by facilitating the learning process
Critical Learning and Empowerment	Derived from how learning may be used to empower students; learning empowers more learning for students (Mezirow, 2007)

APPENDIX D

EVALUATION WORKSHEET OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Question	Stakeholder	Relevance of Question	Information Needed to Answer Question	When and How the Info Will be Collected	Analysis and Interpretation
(1) Have 75% of all SSS participants persisted from one academic year to the next or did they graduate?	Director, Staff, VP	We need to meet program goals for refunding purposes.	Program data, APR, and campus' database	All info and data is already collected and is available upon request from SSS	A list of all participants from one academic year to the next will be reviewed and evaluated by the Evaluation Committee
(2) Have 75% of all enrolled SSS participants met performance level requirements to stay in good academic standing?	Director, Staff, VP	We need to know if the program is meeting performance requirements	Program's data, APR, and student files	All info and data is already collected and is available upon request from SSS	The Evaluation Committee will analyze a list of enrolled SSS students and their semester grades. An overview will be shared with SSS staff and assistants recommendations.
Question	Stakeholder	Relevance of Question	Information Needed to Answer Question	When and How the Information Will be Collected (Method)	Analysis and Interpretation
(3) Have 40% of new SSS participants served each year graduated within 6 years?	Director and Staff	We need to know if students will graduate within 6 years.	Program data, APR, and campus database	All info and data is already collected and is available upon request from SSS.	A collection of graduation data on SSS participants will be completed in July analyzed by the Evaluation Committee.
(4) Are the students' needs met (identified by the program)?	Director and Staff	We need to know if students are having their needs met.	End of semester and Exit surveys; program data	All info and data is already collected and is available upon request from SSS.	The students' needs will be assessed by the Evaluation Committee, and any recommendation will be made according to areas that need attention.

Adapted and modified from Sanders & Sullins (2006)

APPENDIX E

HEALTH AND WELLNESS EXPERT REVIEW OF SSS SERVICES

Time Required: Approximately 15 minutes

Number of Reviewers: 3

Purpose: This researcher has hypothesized three health and wellness dimensions as popular dimension used by SSS students as part of her study. In an effort to minimize researcher bias and increase validity and reliability, your participation is needed. I appreciate your willingness to help me with making my research project more meaningful and accurate. Please note that you must be 18 years old or older.

Please assign one or more health and wellness dimensions next to each SSS service: E – Emotional S – Social I – Intellectual O – Occupational Sp – Spiritual P - Physical	
SSS SERVICE	HEALTH AND WELLNESS DIMENSION
SSS PLACES	
Computer Lab	
Wellness Zone	
EVENTS/ACTIVITIES	
Graduate Forum	
Scholarship Award	
Teacher Conference	
CBEST Preparation	
WPST Preparation	
SSS Summer Orientation	
First Year Experience Course	
Year End Graduation	
SSS Socials	
WORKSHOPS	
Study Skill	
Financial Literacy	
Financial Aid	
Academic Policy	
Campus Resources	

Learning Styles	
Stress Management	
Study Skills	
Healthy Living	
Job Hunting	
Budgeting	
Parenting and Academics	
Alcohol Abuse	
Career Exploration	
Banking	
Public Speaking	
OTHER	
Referrals	
Personal Guidance	
Graduate School Information	
Academic Advising	
Tutorial Assistance	
Peer Mentoring	
Writing Specialist	
Academic Advising	

APPENDIX F

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This is a Memorandum of Understanding regarding Jacquelyn Forte, a doctoral student at California State University, Stanislaus, hereafter referred to as this researcher or author and the Institutional Research office at California State University, Stanislaus.

This researcher seeks to conduct a sequential explanatory mixed method study on the Student Support Services (SSS) program to better understand potential links between wellness related programs and services, and student success among SSS students. This researcher is also interested in better understanding the SSS students' perception of the benefits of the SSS wellness services they participate in. The study is for a dissertation, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Education Doctorate degree (Ed.D.).

To consider the issue, the author will be given access to the CSU Stanislaus SSS program and institutional database to collect demographic information, including age, classification, first generation status, planned graduation year, and ethnicity. Education experts have identified demographics as possible indicators of efficacy and education experience which may be linked to student success.

This researcher will also survey 250 SSS students during the 2014 spring semester. The survey instrument will follow guidelines of the University. Students who complete the survey will provide data for determining the frequency of use of the SSS program, the purposes of using the SSS program, and the benefits of using the SSS program. After the analysis has been completed, a comparison of the survey responses with SSS students' GPA and number of years to graduate will be made.

Interviewing six to nine SSS participants will also occur in the 2014 spring semester to better understand how wellness dimensions may potentially effect academic adjustment, and ultimately may affect student success. Finally a composite analysis of the archival data, survey data, and interview data will be completed.

There is no cost to CSU Stanislaus nor the participants of this study. All publications, public distribution, or presentations of the research project will not reveal the identity of any participant. Furthermore, all research procedures involving human subjects will be reviewed and approved by the CSU Stanislaus' University Institutional Review Board to be certain of University regulations and appropriate laws prior to data collection.

If you have questions about this research project, please contact this researcher, Jacquelyn Forte, at (209) 667-3050, or this researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Jim Riggs at (209) 667-6789.

I agree to the terms outlined in this Memorandum of Understanding:

Signature

Jacquelyn Forte, California State University, Stanislaus
Doctoral Student and Researcher

Date

Signature

Institutional Research, Director
California State University, Stanislaus

Date

APPENDIX G

UNIVERSITY STUDENT SURVEY CONSENT FORM

1. This research study will examine possible connections of SSS services and student success. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer survey questions that identify your perceptions of how SSS services help with your academic success. Please note that you must be eighteen years old or older.
2. You are free to discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also skip any survey question that may make you feel uncomfortable.
3. If you agree to complete the survey, it will take approximately 30 minutes.
4. Your survey responses will be strictly confidential, and this researcher respects your rights to privacy.
5. All data from this study will be kept from inappropriate disclosure, and will be accessible only to this researcher and her faculty advisor.
6. This research is designed to reduce the potential of any negative experiences as a result of participation. Risks to participants are kept to a minimum. However, if your participation in this study causes you any concerns, anxieties, or distress, please contact the Psychological Counseling Services at (209) 667-3381.
7. The author of this research study is Jacquelyn Forte, a doctoral student at California State University, Stanislaus. The faculty advisor is Dr. Jim Riggs, Ed.D. professor at CSU Stanislaus. If you have questions, please contact this researcher at (209) 667-3050 or Dr. Riggs at (209) 667-6789.
8. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you may contact the Director of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, CSU Stanislaus at (209) 667-3493.

Participation in this study does not promise any benefits to you. However, possible benefits include the fact that you may learn something about how research studies are conducted.

- 9. You will be provided with an unsigned copy of this consent form at the beginning of the survey.
- 10. By clicking the button below, you verify that you are at least 18 years old.
- 11. By clicking the button below, you are free consenting to participate in this research study.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

If you are willing to be interviewed, please provide your best contact number:

APPENDIX H

GUIDELINES FOR CONTENT REVIEW OF STUDENT SURVEYS

Time Required: Approximately 30 minutes

Number of Reviewers: 2

Purpose: As part of a research project to fulfill a doctoral dissertation, I am developing several survey questions designed to assess use of SSS services. I appreciate your willingness to help me review the survey questions, and providing me feedback on your understanding and perception of the survey questions. Your individual responses and comments in the review phase will only be used for designing the survey questions. Please note that you must be eighteen years old or older

Process:

1. Please note how much time is required to answer and complete all questions.
2. Once you have completed the survey, respond to each question in four ways:
 - a. Clear – Was the question clear? That is, did you have to read the question more than once to understand what it was asking? Was the meaning of the questions straight-forward?
 - b. Only a single response – Was the questions written in such a way that you could have answered it more than one way?
 - c. Loaded – Was the question written in such a way that there was only one obvious answer for you? In other words, considering the way the question is worded, was it highly likely that respondents would be able to respond using more than one response choice?
3. Please circle yes or no for each question.
4. For any questions you answered “no,” please explain why you responded this way in the comment section.

Is it clear?	Only a single response?	Was it loaded?	Any comments?
Use of SSS services I tend to use which of the following SSS services (select all that apply) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Academic Advisor b) Writing Specialist c) Peer Mentors d) Tutoring e) Workshops f) Computer Lab g) Wellness Zone 	Yes No	Yes No	

Yes No			
SSS Services helped me: clarify how I can reach my educational goals a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
clarify how I can reach my personal goals a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
maintain good grades/GPA at CSU Stanislaus a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
persist toward graduation a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree Yes No			
successfully complete the basic skill course(s) (remedial math and/or English) a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree Yes			

No			
<p>successfully complete graduation requirements</p> <p>a) Strongly agree</p> <p>b) Agree</p> <p>c) Neutral</p> <p>d) Disagree</p> <p>e) Strongly disagree</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>			
<p>successfully complete the Writing Proficiency Standardized Test (WPST)</p> <p>a) Strongly agree</p> <p>b) Agree</p> <p>c) Neutral</p> <p>d) Disagree</p> <p>e) Strongly disagree</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>			
<p>successfully prepare for graduate school requirements</p> <p>Graduate school requirements may include graduate exams, application process, letters of recommendation, essay, and resume or student vitae</p> <p>a) Strongly agree</p> <p>b) Agree</p> <p>c) Neutral</p> <p>d) Disagree</p> <p>e) Strongly disagree</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>			
<p>SSS services are offered at times and days that are convenient for me</p> <p>a) Strongly agree</p> <p>b) Agree</p> <p>c) Neutral</p> <p>d) Disagree</p> <p>e) Strongly disagree</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>			

<p>Benefits of SSS services</p> <p>The SSS services which have been most helpful to me are (select all that apply) :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Advice and assistance in course selection b) Tutoring c) Financial and or economic literacy d) Assistance in applying for admission to graduate school e) Assistance with completing and, or applying for financial aid f) Referrals to other campus resources g) Learning community h) Peer mentoring i) SSS scholarship j) Academic and life skills workshops k) Improve reading and, or writing skills l) Career assessment m) Skill assessment n) Test preparation o) Test anxiety p) Math skills q) Probation counseling r) Note taking tips s) Time management t) Oral communication u) Orientation to the University v) Study skills w) Interacting with other SSS students x) First Year Experience (FYE) class y) The Lab (computer lab, study area, printing) z) Academic event <p>Note: Academic events include the Graduate Forum and Teacher Conference)</p> <p>aa) Other _____</p> <p>Yes No</p>			
<p>My involvement with SSS</p> <p>I would rate my level of involvement in SSS services as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Low – Use SSS services 2 or fewer times per semester 			

<p>b) Moderate – Use SSS services an average of 1-2 times per month</p> <p>c) High – Use SSS services at least weekly</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>			
<p>I would like to be more involved with SSS services</p> <p>a) Strongly agree</p> <p>b) Agree</p> <p>c) Neutral</p> <p>d) Disagree</p> <p>e) Strongly disagree</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>			
<p>Please specify how you would like to be involved, or identify other services you would like SSS to provide</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>My academic and, or career goals</p> <p>I plan to graduate from CSU Stanislaus in:</p> <p>a) Spring 2014</p> <p>b) Summer or fall 2014</p> <p>c) Spring 2015</p> <p>d) Summer or fall 2015</p> <p>e) Spring 2016</p> <p>f) Summer or fall 2016</p> <p>g) Spring 2017</p> <p>h) Summer or fall 2017</p> <p>i) Spring 2018</p> <p>j) Summer or fall 2018</p> <p>k) Other (please specify) _____</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>			
<p>I plan to work after graduation</p> <p>a) Strongly agree</p> <p>b) Agree</p> <p>c) Neutral</p> <p>d) Disagree</p> <p>e) Strongly disagree</p> <p>Yes</p>			

No			
<p>I plan to attend graduate school after graduation</p> <p>a) Strongly agree</p> <p>b) Agree</p> <p>c) Neutral</p> <p>d) Disagree</p> <p>e) Strongly disagree</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>			
<p>Other</p> <p>Please share a brief description of any other topic or concern related to SSS services that you feel were not addressed in this survey.</p> <p>a) Strongly agree</p> <p>b) Agree</p> <p>c) Neutral</p> <p>d) Disagree</p> <p>e) Strongly disagree</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>			

APPENDIX I

SURVEY QUESTIONS AND PERMISSION STATEMENT

Informed Consent:

Participation in this study is voluntary, all responses are confidential, and I am eighteen years old or older. If I agree to participate in this study, I can choose not to answer any question or stop at any time. I am providing my consent to participate by selecting "Accept" below or I may choose not to participate by selecting "Decline."

Accept Decline

f) Please provide your University ID number _____

I. Student Demographics

g) Current class level

- a. Freshman
- b. Sophomore
- c. Junior
- d. Senior

h) Enter your actual age

a. _____

i) Gender

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Other

j) How do you identify your racial/ethnic heritage?

- a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
- b. Asian
- c. Black or African American
- d. Hispanic or Latino
- e. White
- f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- g. More than one race or ethnicity
- h. Other (please indicate) _____

Other may include Anglo-Saxon, Chicano Mexican-American, Creole, Mexican American, Middle Eastern, and Syrian

k) Enter your first year of enrollment at CSU Stanislaus _____

- a. 2006
- b. 2007
- c. 2008
- d. 2009
- e. 2010

- f. 2011
- g. 2012
- h. 2013

- l) I started the SSS program as a:
 - a. First year student
 - b. Transfer student
 - c. Continuing student
- m) I started the SSS program at another college or university:
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

II. Use of SSS services

- n) I tend to use which of the following SSS services: (select all that apply)
 - a. Academic Advisor
 - b. Writing Specialist
 - c. Peer Mentors
 - d. Tutoring
 - e. Workshops
 - f. Computer lab
 - g. Wellness Zone

III. SSS Services helped me:

- o) clarify how I can reach my educational goals
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- p) clarify how I can reach my personal goals
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- q) maintain good grades/GPA at CSU Stanislaus
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- r) persist toward graduation
 - a. Strongly agree

- b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- s) successfully complete the basic skill course(s) (remedial math and/or English)
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- t) successfully complete graduation requirements
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- u) successfully complete the Writing Proficiency Standardized Test (WPST)
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- v) successfully prepare for graduate school requirements
Graduate school requirements may include graduate exams, application process, letters of recommendation, essay, and resume or student vitae
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- w) SSS services are offered at times and days that are convenient for me
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

IV. Benefits of SSS services

- x) The SSS services which have been most helpful to me are (select all that apply):

- a. Advice and assistance in course selection
- b. Tutoring
- c. Financial and or economic literacy
- d. Assistance in applying for admission to graduate school
- e. Assistance with completing and, or applying for financial aid
- f. Referrals to other campus resources
- g. Learning community
- h. Peer mentoring
- i. SSS scholarship
- j. Academic and life skills workshops
- k. Improve reading and, or writing skills
- l. Career assessment
- m. Skill assessment
- n. Test preparation
- o. Test anxiety
- p. Math skills
- q. Probation counseling
- r. Note taking tips
- s. Time management
- t. Oral communication
- u. Orientation to the University
- v. Study skills
- w. Interacting with other SSS students
- x. First Year Experience (FYE) class
- y. The Lab (computer lab, study area, printing)
- z. Academic events
Academic events include the Graduate Forum and Teacher Conference)
- aa. Other

V. My involvement with SSS

- y) I would rate my level of involvement in SSS services as:
 - a. Low – Use SSS services 2 or fewer times per semester
 - b. Moderate – Use SSS services an average of 1-2 times per month
 - c. High – Use SSS services at least weekly
- z) I would like to be more involved with SSS services
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

- aa) Please specify how you would like to be involved, or identify other services you would like SSS to provide
-

VI. My academic and, or career goals

- bb) I plan to graduate from CSU Stanislaus in:

- a. Spring 2014
- b. Summer or fall 2014
- c. Spring 2015
- d. Summer or fall 2015
- e. Spring 2016
- f. Summer or fall 2016
- g. Spring 2017
- h. Summer or fall 2017
- i. Spring 2018
- j. Summer or fall 2018
- k. Other (please specify)_____

- cc) I plan to work after graduation

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

- dd) I plan to attend graduate school after graduation

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

VII. Other

- ee) Please share a brief description of any other topic or concern related to SSS services that you feel were not addressed in this survey.

APPENDIX J

GUIDELINES FOR CONTENT REVIEW OF STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Time Required: Approximately 30 minutes

Number of Reviewers: 2

Purpose: As part of a research project to fulfill a doctoral dissertation, I am developing several interview questions designed to assess SSS student perceptions of services and perceived benefits. I appreciate your willingness to help me review the interview questions, and providing me feedback on your understanding and perception of the interview questions. Your individual responses and comments in the interview question review phase will only be used for designing the interview questions. Please that you must be eighteen years old or older.

Process:

1. Please note how much time is required to answer and complete all questions.
2. Once you have completed the survey, respond to each question in four ways:
 - a. Clear – Was the question clear? That is, did you have to read the question more than once to understand what it was asking? Was the meaning of the questions straight-forward?
 - b. Only a single response – Was the questions written in such a way that you could have answered it more than one way?
 - c. Loaded – Was the question written in such a way that there was only one obvious answer for you? In other words, considering the way the question is worded, was it highly likely that respondents would be able to respond using more than one response choice?
3. Please circle yes or no for each question.
4. For any questions you answered “no,” please explain why you responded this way in the comment section.

Is it clear?	Only a single response?	Was it loaded?	Any comments?
Tell me about your college or University experience. Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
How do you think SSS helps you with student success? Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
What do you think SSS offers to help you stay in school? Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
What do you think SSS offers to help you stay in good academic standing? Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
What you think SSS offers to help you graduate within 6 years? Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
What are other considerations of SSS services that help you with student success that has not already been addressed? Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	

APPENDIX K

UNIVERSITY STUDENT INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

1. This research study will examine possible connections of SSS services and student success. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer interview questions that identify your perceptions of how SSS services help with your academic success.
2. You are free to discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also skip any interview question that make you feel uncomfortable.
3. If you agree to participate in the interview, it will take approximately 30 minutes.
4. Your survey responses will be strictly confidential, and this researcher respects your rights to privacy.
5. All data from this study will be kept from inappropriate disclosure, and will be accessible only to this researcher and her faculty advisor.
6. This research is designed to reduce the potential of any negative experiences as a result of participation. Risks to participants are kept to a minimum. However, if your participation in this study causes you any concerns, anxieties, or distress, please contact the Psychological Counseling Services at (209) 667-3381.
7. If you agree to participate in the interview, you also agree to be taped for purposes of this study.
8. The author of this research study is Jacquelyn Forte, a doctoral student at California State University, Stanislaus. The faculty advisor is Dr. Jim Riggs, Ed.D., professor at CSU Stanislaus. If you have questions, please contact this researcher at (209) 667-3050 or Dr. Riggs at (209) 667-6789.
9. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you may contact the Director of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, CSU Stanislaus at (209) 667-3493.

Participation in this study does not promise any benefits to you. However, possible benefits include the fact that you may learn something about how research studies are conducted.

10. You will be provided with an unsigned copy of this consent form at the beginning of the interview.
11. By clicking the button below, you verify that you are at least 18 years old.
12. By clicking the button below, you are free consenting to participate in this research study.

APPENDIX L
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your college or University experience.
2. How do you think SSS helps you with student success?
3. What do you think SSS offers to help you stay in school?
4. What do you think SSS offers to help you stay in good academic standing?
5. What you think SSS offers to help you graduate within 6 years?
6. What are other considerations SSS offers to help you with student success that has not already been addressed?